

Cancer screening and early detection

Strategies for equitable access to screening services for the early detection of high impact cancers should be implemented in all resource settings and integrated in all health settings.

Target 6



Universal access to screening and early detection for cancer



The Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs calls for population-based screening for cervical, breast, colorectal and oral cancers, linked to timely treatment.

National cancer burdens have been significantly reduced by ensuring the availability, accessibility and acceptability of affordable early detection programmes. A single cervical cancer screening test for women between the ages of 30 and 40 can reduce a woman's lifetime risk of developing cervical cancer by 25–31%¹³.

In several high-income countries, cervical cancer incidence has substantially declined with the introduction of screening programmes. Such programmes enable the detection of precancerous lesions, or early stage cancer, giving time for effective treatment which significantly improves patient outcomes. This in turn helps to dispel myths that cancer is an untreatable condition.

79% of countries reported availability of cervical screening, with breast screening available in 76% of countries. However, colon screening was only available in 40% of countries, and screening for oral cancer was not reported¹⁴.

Few of these programmes were described as population-based and access to screening services varies greatly across low-, middle- and high-income countries.



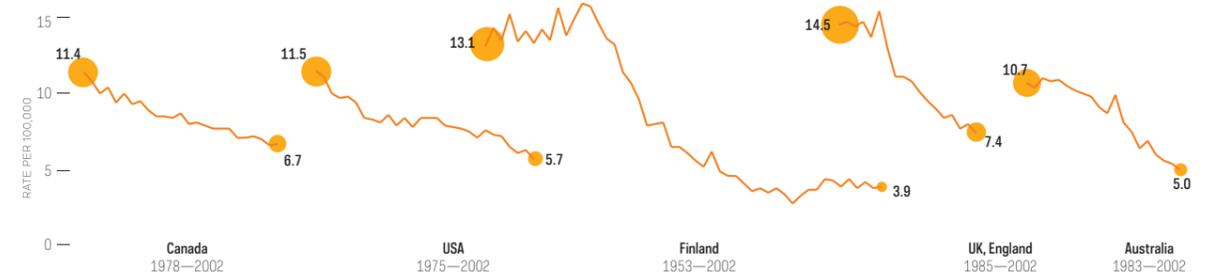
“One of the greatest cancer control challenges of the 21st century is to bring the benefits of effective interventions to as many people as possible, including low- and middle-income countries.”

Christopher Wild, Director, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

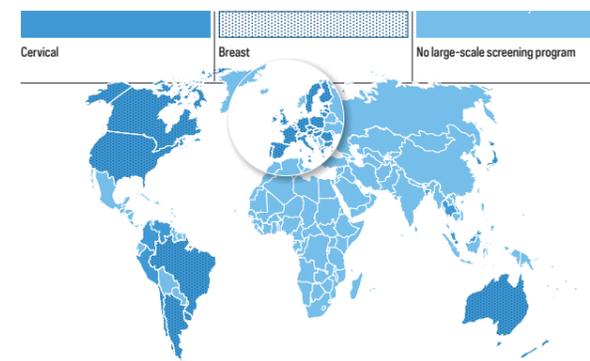
“In many countries, women are not diagnosed until they have late stage disease. In these settings, the promotion of early detection strategies followed by prompt effective treatment is critical.”

Benjamin Anderson, Chair and Director, Breast Health Global Initiative

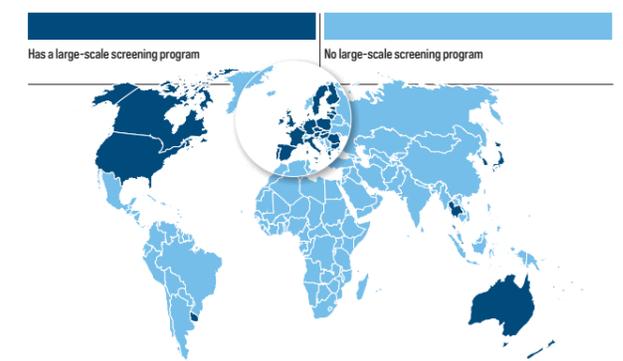
Trends in Cervical Cancer Age-Standardised Incidence Rate (World), 1953-2002



Countries with Large-Scale Cervical and Breast Screening Programmes, 2014



Countries with Large-Scale Colorectal Screening Programmes, 2014



Emerging opportunity: Cervical Cancer Action

Cervical Cancer Action (CCA) is a diverse community of organisations dedicated to taking cervical cancer prevention to scale and eliminating preventable cervical cancer deaths. CCA advocates for cervical cancer prevention be integrated into existing health services to ensure that they are universally accessible and affordable to women.

The coalition focuses on four key areas of work, which were discussed at an inaugural meeting in London, to ensure that individuals, organisations and countries generate the maximum impact from cervical cancer investments:

1. Advocacy for informed policy making and funding for HPV vaccination, cervical screening and preventive treatment
2. Mobilisation of champions from diverse groups, including youth and advocates for cancer, women's health, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS to support comprehensive cervical cancer prevention
3. Coordination between partners to ensure the effective use of resources and share lessons learnt
4. Collaboration with international agencies, government donors and private foundations to mobilise resources to take national programmes to scale.

¹³ Goldie et al. (2005) Cost-Effectiveness of Cervical-Cancer Screening in Five Developing Countries www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa044278#t=article [Accessed 19.08.16]

¹⁴ WHO, Assessing National Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (2015) <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/246223/1/9789241565363-eng.pdf?ua=1> [Accessed 19.08.16]