



Awareness of the benefits and limitations of cancer screening

Dr Mairead O'Connor, The National Screening Service, Ireland
The International Cancer Network Screening Conference,
Turin, June 22 2023



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service





ICSN 2015, Rotterdam



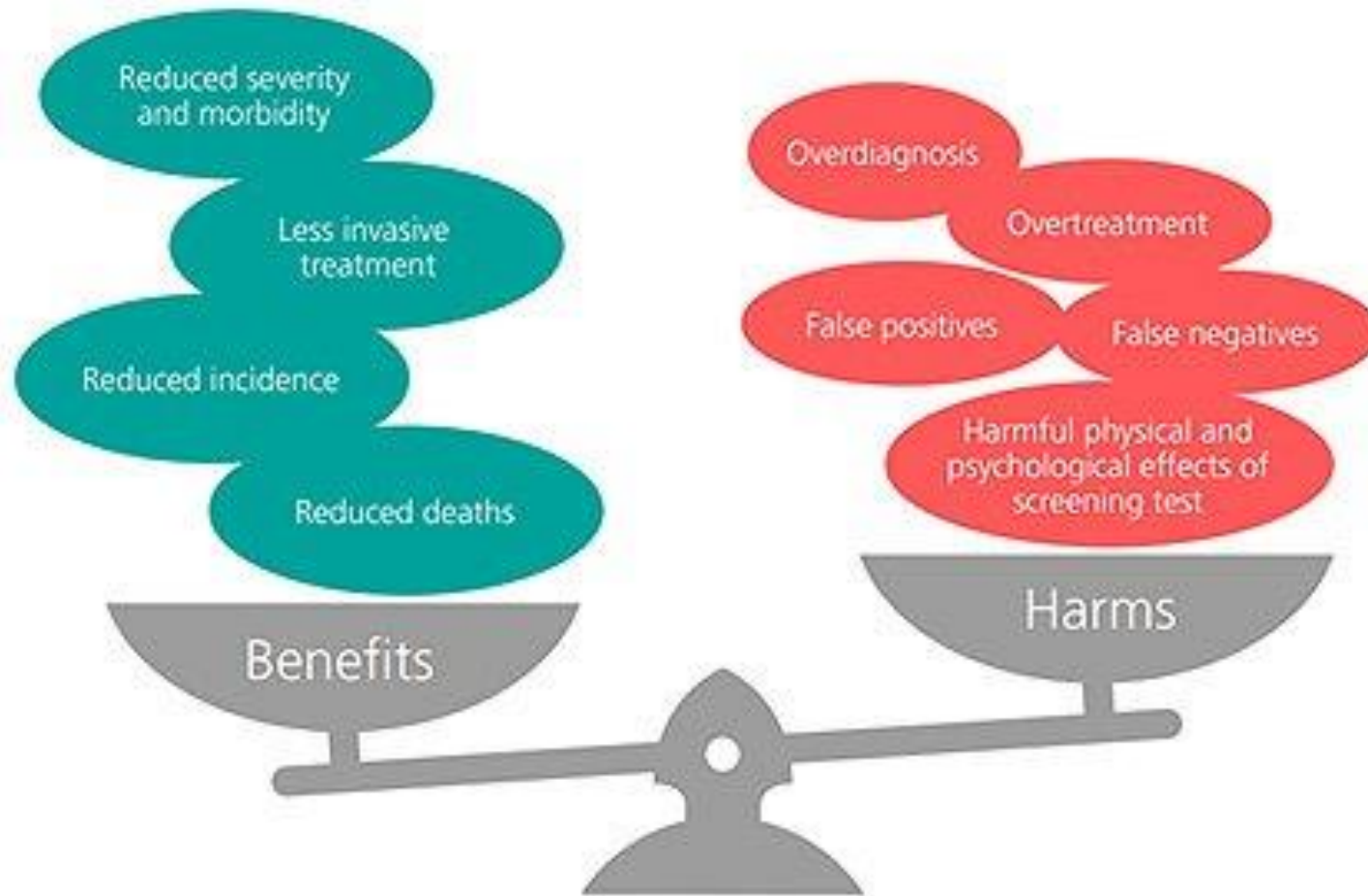
Cancer screening programmes in Ireland

- **Three national population-based cancer screening programmes:**
 - BreastCheck - The National Breast Screening Programme
 - CervicalCheck - The National Cervical Screening Programme
 - BowelScreen - The National Bowel Screening Programme





Benefits and limitations of cancer screening



Source: based on information contained in WHO Regional Office for Europe (1).

HE Study background

- 3 Expert Reference Groups (ERG)
Interval Cancer Reports published in Oct 2020
 - Suite of recommendations made.
- Communications working group established to:
 - (1) Strengthen participant information to help them make an informed choice to consent to participate
 - (2) build understanding and trust in screening programmes.
- Research needed from which to draw actions in completing the recommendations around communications.



HE Research Aim

To identify and explore peoples' perceptions of screening services in Ireland and what drives and inhibits them to attend screening

- Awareness & understanding of screening (general)
- Insights into knowledge on the three cancer screening programmes.



HE Methodology



An online survey nationally representative of adults aged 18+ years was conducted in Ireland in 2021



Quota sampling was used to ensure representativeness across geographical region, age and gender



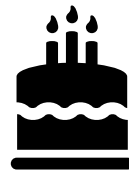
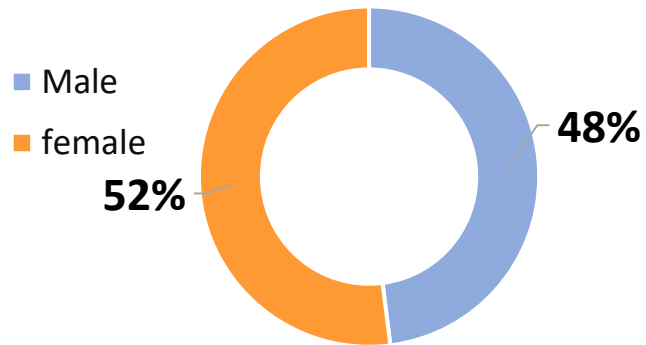
Survey shared among trusted market research panel provider via email invitation



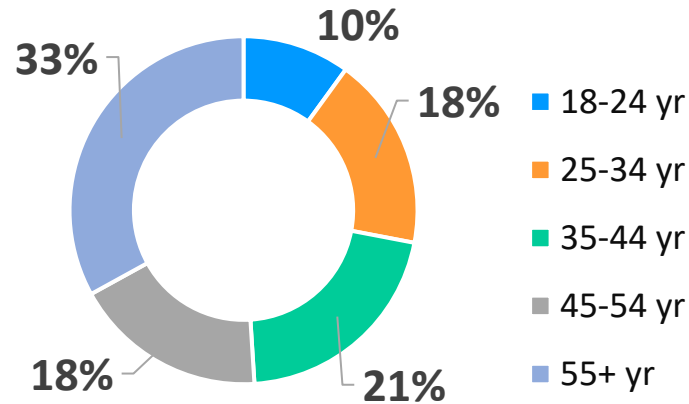
Results – sample characteristics



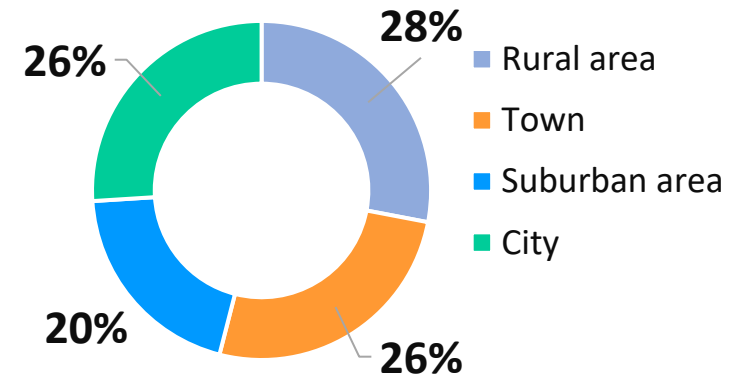
Gender



Age



Area of living



Total sample = 2000

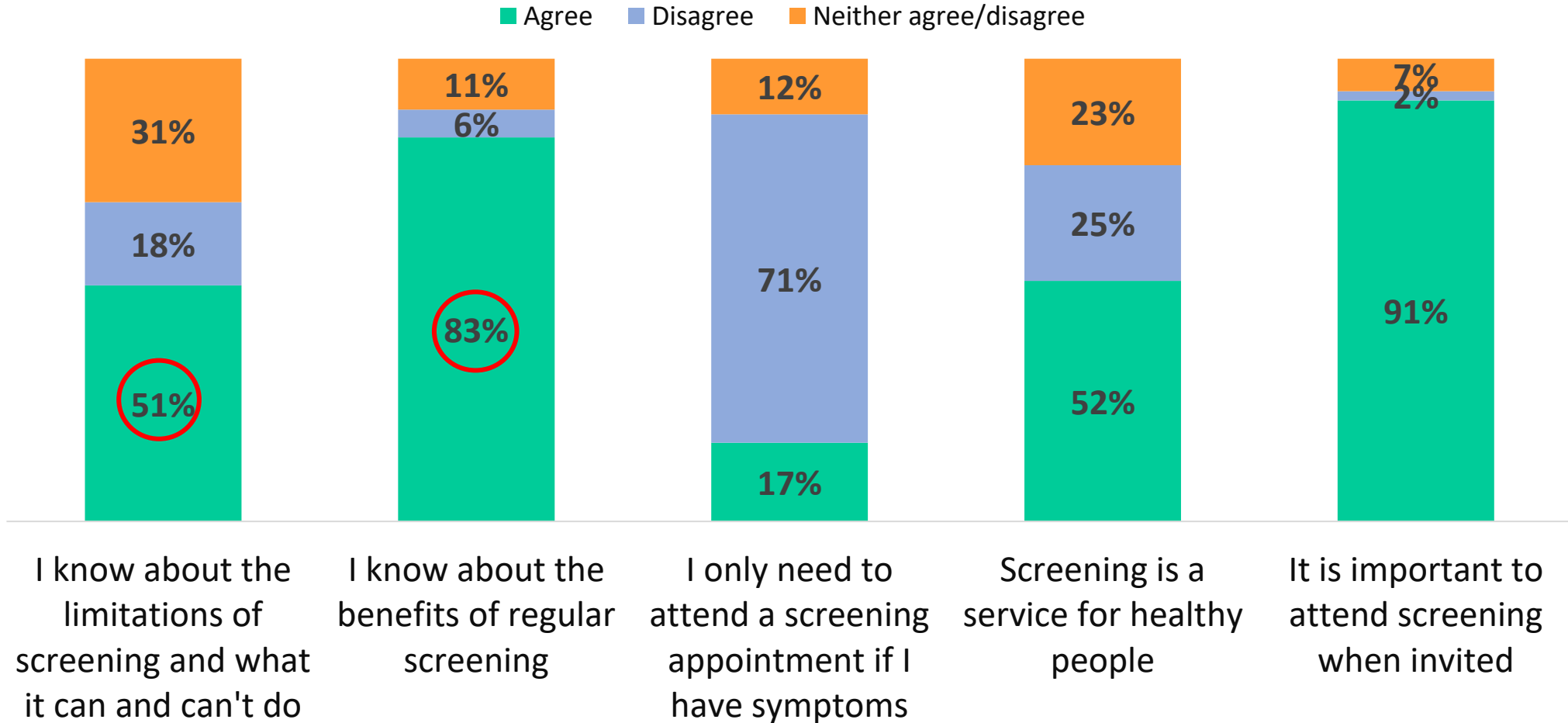
n = 348 eligible for breast screening

n = 782 eligible for cervical screening

n = 320 eligible for bowel screening



Knowledge of screening n = 2,000





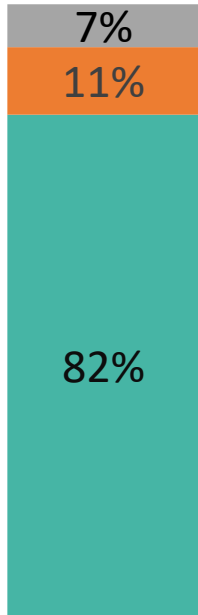
Knowledge of screening continued

n = 348

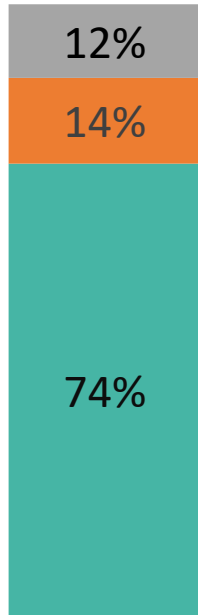
n = 782

n = 320

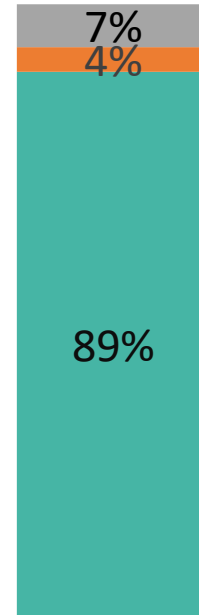
■ TRUE ■ FALSE ■ Not sure



The purpose of breast screening is to diagnose breast cancer



The purpose of cervical screening is to diagnose cervical cancer



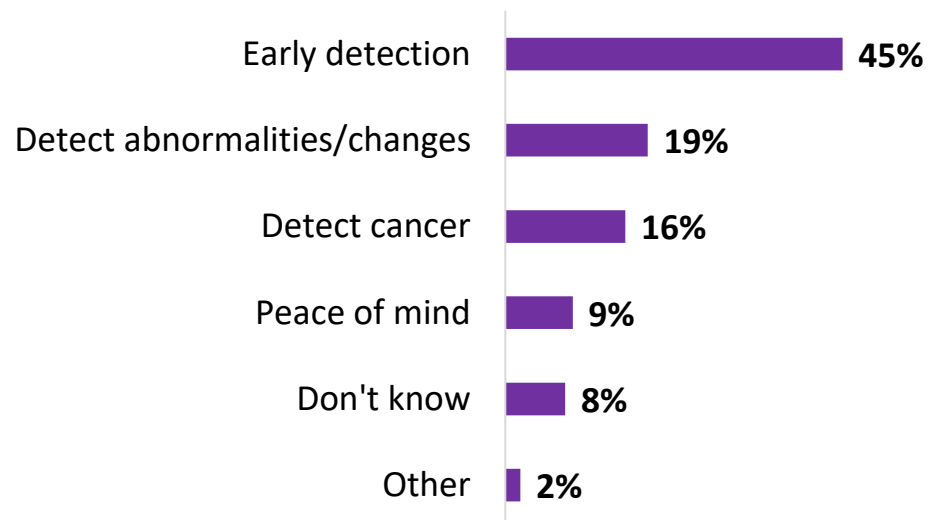
The purpose of bowel screening is to diagnose bowel cancer



Breast screening n = 348

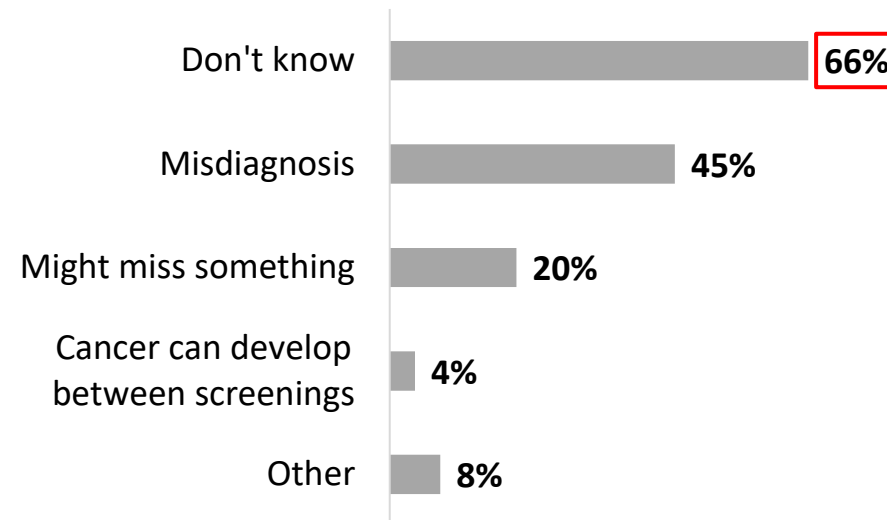


Benefits cited



Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the benefits, if any of breast screening? (Open-ended response)

Limitations cited

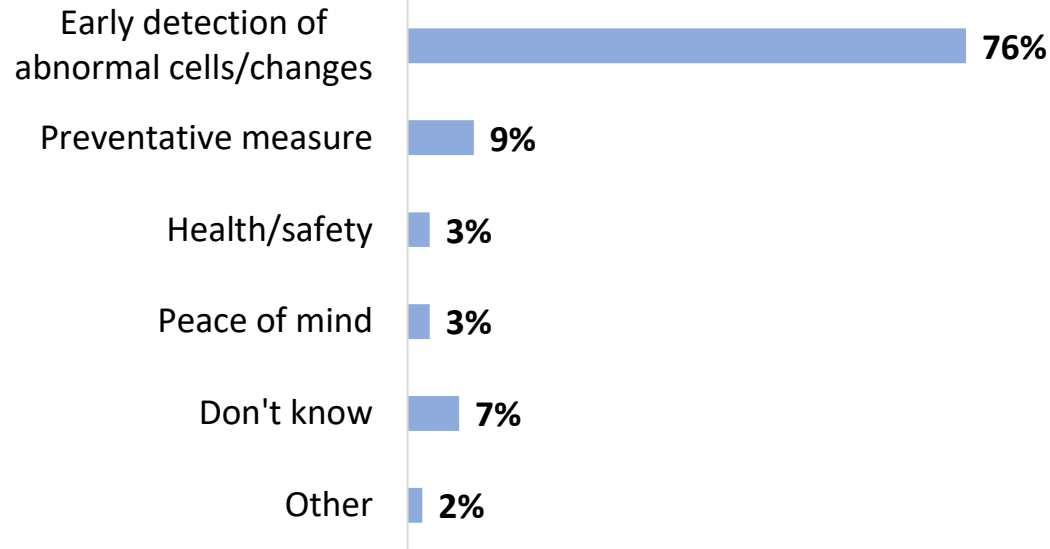


Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the limitations, if any, of breast screening? By limitations we mean things that breast screening may not be able to do or tell you (Open-ended response)



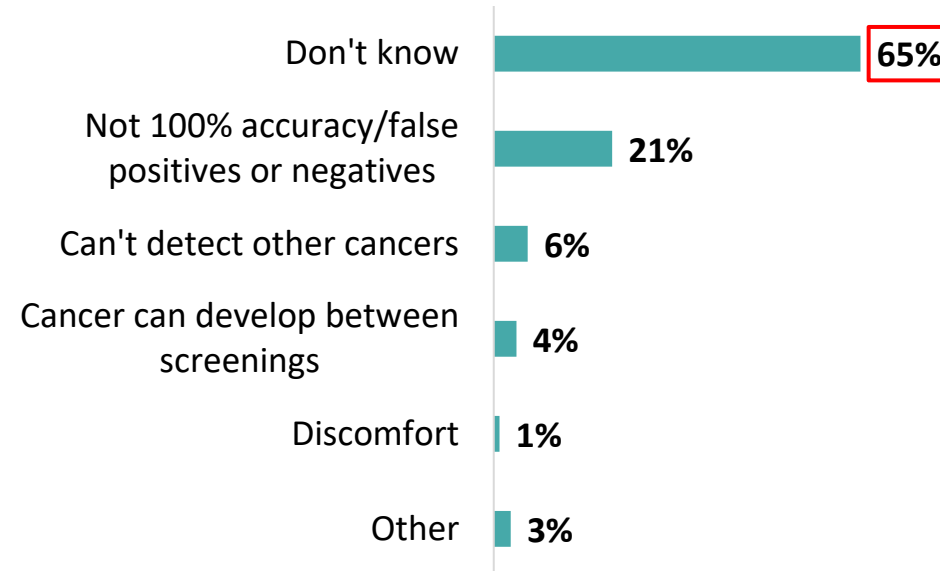
Cervical screening n = 782

Benefits cited



Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the benefits, if any of cervical screening? (Open-ended response)

Limitations cited

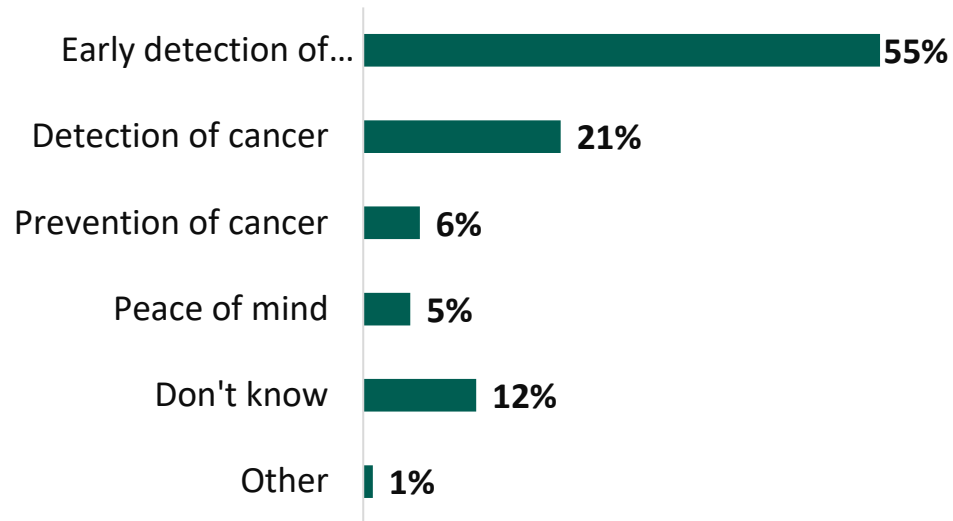


Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the limitations, if any, of cervical screening? (Open-ended response)



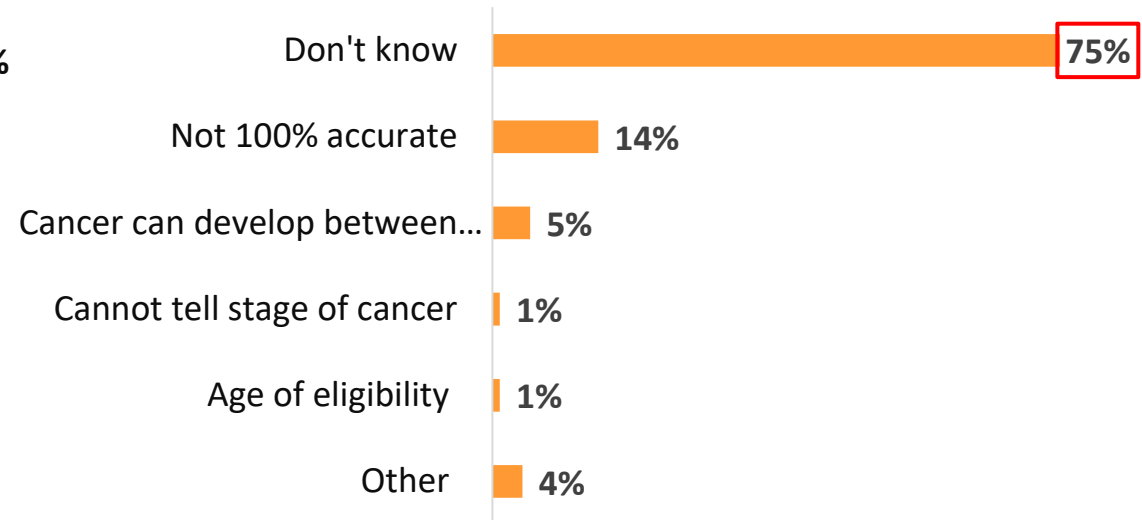
Bowel screening $n = 320$

Benefits cited



Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the benefits, if any of bowel screening? (Open-ended response)

Limitations cited



Q. From the best of your knowledge what are the limitations, if any, of bowel screening? (Open-ended response)



Conclusions

- Less than half of the population feel they are aware of the limitations of screening.
- Better awareness about the benefits of cancer screening but misunderstandings prevail (e.g. the purpose of cancer screening is to detect cancer).
- Survey has been repeated in 2023; results will be compared with 2021 survey results – increases in awareness?
- Findings will help inform the National Screening Service communication strategies.



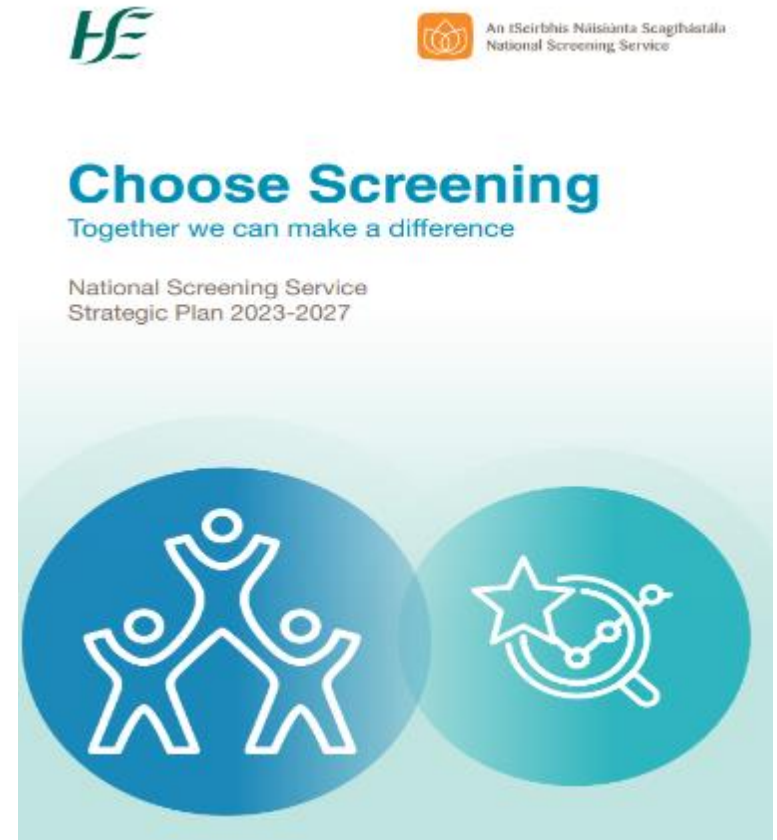
Communication about screening

Strategic objective

- **Improve communication and awareness**
Provide open and accessible information to increase health literacy and enable people to make informed and individual choices.

What we will achieve

- Strengthen engagement with international screening networks and communities to co-create strategic guidance and transparent, pragmatic communication in relation to the benefits, inequities and harms of screening.



https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/NSS_Strategy_FIN_AL.pdf

HE



Mairead.O'Connor@screeningservice.ie
Twitter: @MaireadOConnor8



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service