



# BC Cancer Cervix Screening 2022 Program Results

December 2025

# Table of Contents

Program Overview .....	3
Program Results.....	5
a) Volume of Samples .....	5
b) Participation Rates .....	6
c) Retention Rate .....	9
d) Adequacy of Pap Test Samples .....	11
e) Screening Test Results.....	12
f) Follow-up of Abnormal Pap Test Results .....	13
g) Pre-Cancer Detection Rate.....	17
h) Cancer Incidence .....	18
i) Screening History in Cases of Invasive Cancer .....	21
Appendix – The 2014 Bethesda System.....	23

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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Cervical cancer screening in B.C. is organized under a partnership framework with regional health areas, laboratory service providers, primary care providers and specialists. BC Cancer provides oversight for organized cancer screening in B.C., and supports:

- development of provincial policies, guidelines and standards,
- strategies to increase public and health care provider awareness, including both benefits and limitations of screening,
- correspondence to eligible British Columbians about results, follow-up and rescreening,
- quality assurance and quality improvement, and
- reporting and monitoring of system performance and screening outcomes.

In B.C., regional health areas are responsible for the planning and delivery of healthcare services within their geographic areas. Regional health areas and community health service providers work with BC Cancer Screening to provide high quality screening and diagnostic services.

Primary care providers play the important role of identifying eligible individuals for screening. BC Cancer provides materials to help primary care providers discuss the benefits and limitations of screening with their patients. Once the decision to screen is made, the primary care provider directs the patient to the appropriate screening test and supports them throughout their screening journey.

In addition, as part of the Indigenous Cancer Strategy, BC Cancer Screening works collaboratively with the First Nations Health Authority, Métis Nation British Columbia and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres to improve cancer screening access and participation of Indigenous people.

The Cervix Screening Program started in B.C. in 1955. The data provided in this report is based on screening results for British Columbians registered in the Cervix Screening Program.

The screening pathway is initiated by primary care providers referring asymptomatic age eligible individuals for a screening test. In B.C., Pap tests are recommended every three years for eligible people 25-69 years of age. Pap tests are provided by primary care providers and trained nurses in the province and the tests are interpreted and reported by the Cervical Cancer Screening Laboratory (CCSL) of the Provincial Health Services Authority. **The CCSL transitioned from conventional cytology to liquid based cytology (LBC) starting in 2022.**

## **The Screening Process**

The Screening Process process consists of four stages:

1. Identify and invite the target population for screening
2. Conduct screening examinations
3. Investigate abnormalities identified during screening
4. Send screening reminders at the appropriate interval

For detailed information on the management of higher than average risk patients, see the BC Cancer Cervix Screening Overview document.

# PROGRAM RESULTS

## a) Volume of Samples

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PATIENTS WITH CERVICAL/ENDOCERVICAL PAP TEST SAMPLES, 2022**

	<20	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	All Ages
Number of Patients	142	2,676	31,418	77,947	67,618	65,002	56,491	3,169	304,463
Number of Smears	145	2,761	32,554	80,683	70,148	66,718	57,456	3,254	313,719
New Patients	124	1,966	14,580	11,665	4,364	2,448	2,023	152	37,322
(%)	87%	73%	46%	15%	6%	4%	4%	5%	12%

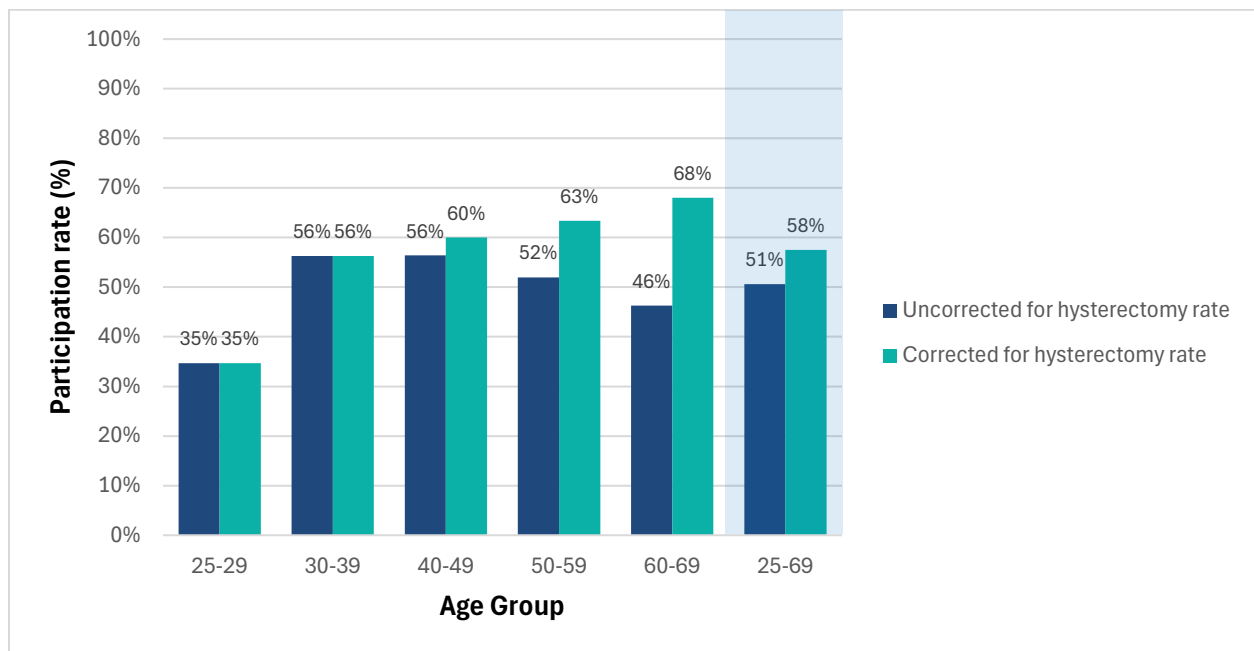
Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 29/5/2025
2. Age is computed on patient's last Pap test

## b) Participation Rates

Participation rate is defined as the percent of eligible people with at least one cervical/endocervical Pap test in a three-year period. Statistic Canada’s Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) data is used to adjust the denominator for hysterectomy rates in B.C. as most people who have had a total hysterectomy do not need routine screening. Hysterectomy rates can be calculated from the CCHS and applied to 10 year age groups at the provincial level. However, due to small sample size and large variation in rate estimates, they can only be calculated at the level of Health Authority across the target age group (25-69).

**FIGURE 2: PARTICIPATION RATES BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



**Notes:**

1. Based on average of 2022 and 2023 female population estimates
2. Population data source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024 (Aug 2024), BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Citizen’s Services
3. Hysterectomy adjustment calculated using 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey
4. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
5. Age is computed based on patient’s age at end of 2022

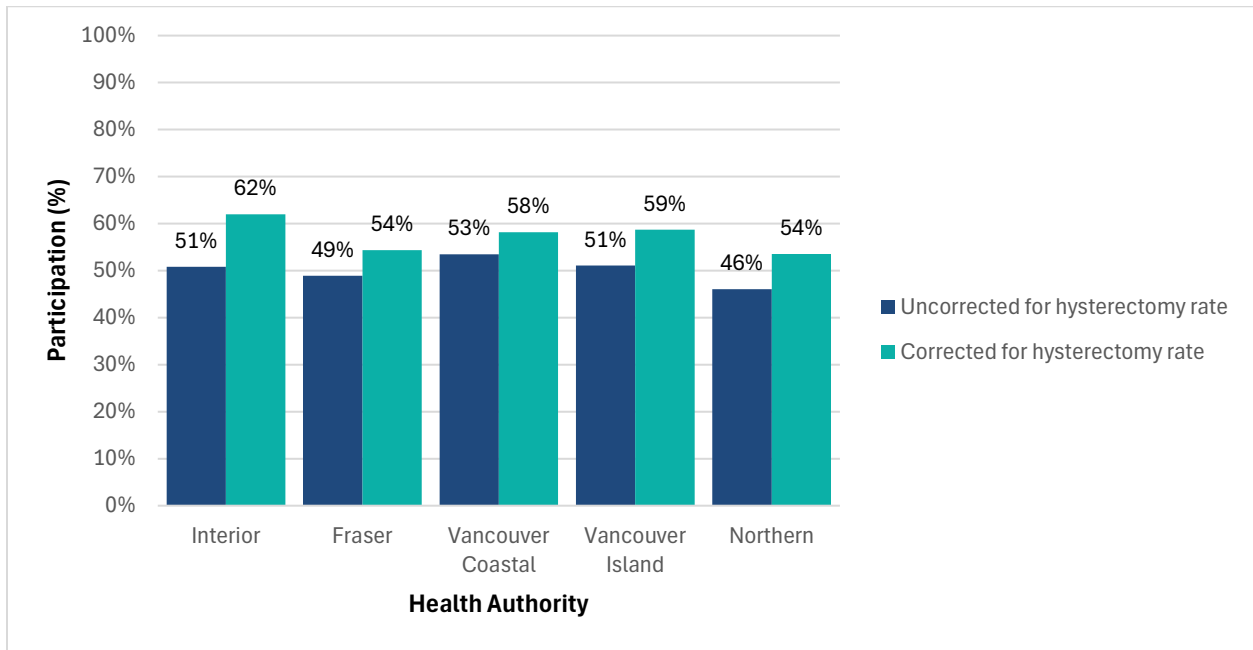
TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION RATES FOR AGES 25-29, 30-34, AND 35-39 BY HSDA, 2022

Health Authority	Health Service Delivery Area	25-29	30-34	35-39
Interior	East Kootenay	46%	60%	64%
Interior	Kootenay Boundary	47%	61%	63%
Interior	Okanagan	42%	60%	62%
Interior	Thompson Cariboo Shuswap	41%	58%	59%
Fraser	Fraser East	38%	55%	54%
Fraser	Fraser North	32%	51%	58%
Fraser	Fraser South	31%	50%	54%
Vancouver Coastal	Richmond	26%	47%	54%
Vancouver Coastal	Vancouver	30%	53%	65%
Vancouver Coastal	North Shore/Coast Garibaldi	40%	56%	62%
Vancouver Island	South Vancouver Island	37%	56%	62%
Vancouver Island	Central Vancouver Island	41%	57%	57%
Vancouver Island	North Vancouver Island	44%	59%	61%
Northern	Northwest	42%	56%	59%
Northern	Northern Interior	39%	54%	54%
Northern	Northeast	42%	54%	56%
<b>BC</b>		<b>35%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>59%</b>

## Notes:

1. Based on average of 2022 and 2023 female population estimates
2. Population data source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024 (Aug 2024), BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Citizen's Services
3. Hysterectomy adjustment calculated using 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey
4. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 24/4/2025
5. Age is computed based on patient's age at end of 2022

**FIGURE 3: PARTICIPATION RATES BY HEALTH AUTHORITY, 2022**



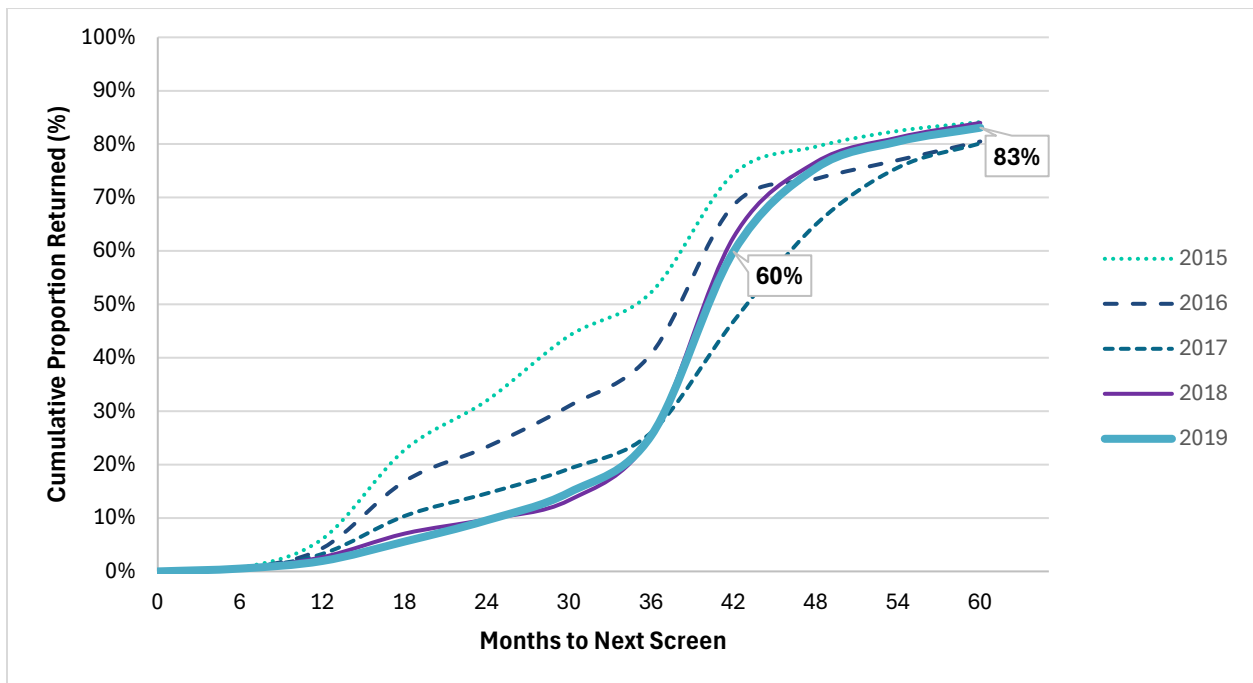
**Notes:**

1. Based on average of 2022 and 2023 female population estimates
2. Population data source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024 (Aug 2024), BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Citizen's Services
3. Hysterectomy adjustment calculated using 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey
4. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
5. Age is computed based on patient's age at end of 2022
6. Data includes patients between ages 25-69

### c) Retention Rate

Figure 4 compares return rate patterns by initial screen year (2015 – 2019) for up to 60 months. Retention rate curves changed for index screens in 2015 and 2016 due to a policy change in 2016 which extended the screening interval from two years to three years. Retention rate for 2016 index screens also started to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in early 2020 which affected access to health services. Retention rate is defined as the proportion of average risk participants with a previous negative screen who returned for a Pap test by 42 months.

**FIGURE 4: RETENTION RATES BY PREVIOUS SCREEN YEAR, 2015-2019**



Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 06/10/2025
2. Data includes patients between ages 25-69

Table 3 shows retention rates up to 42 months by age. Figure 5 compares 42 month retention rate for those previously screened in 2015 – 2019, by age.

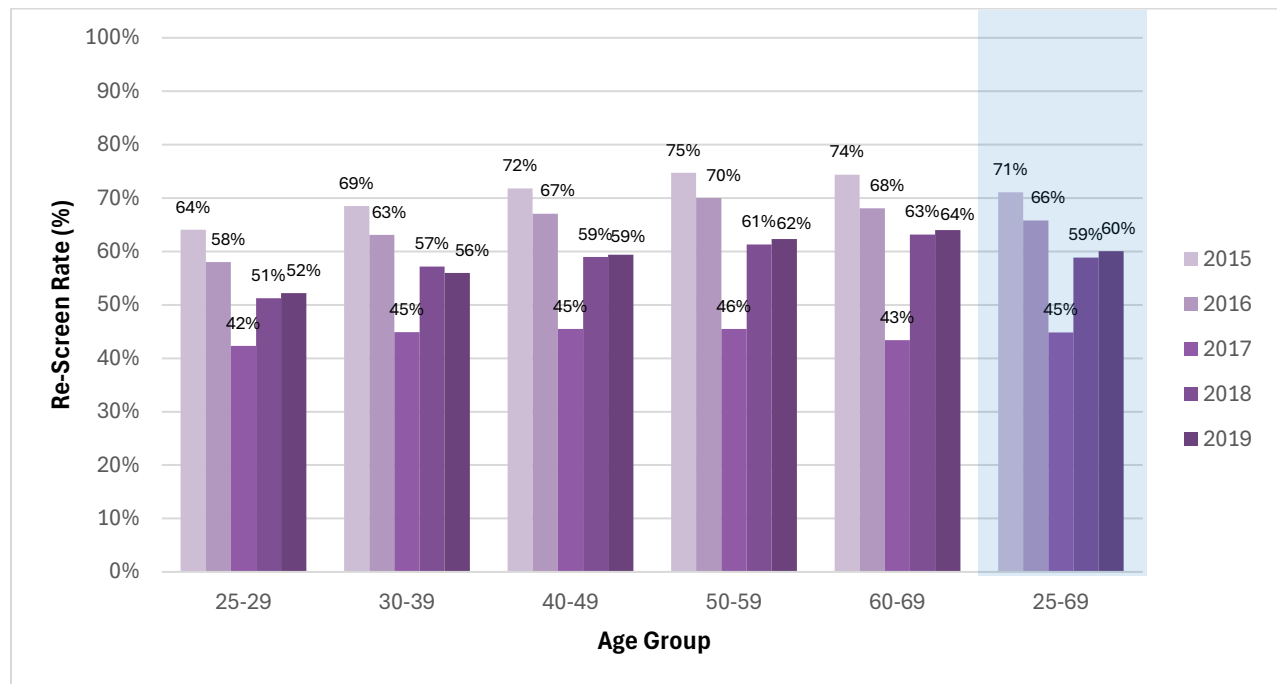
**TABLE 3: RETENTION RATES (%) BY AGE GROUP, 2019**

	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	25-69
Number of Patients	27,979	71,683	61,335	62,271	43,005	266,273
Re-screened by						
18 Months	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%
24 Months	10%	11%	9%	10%	8%	10%
30 Months	15%	17%	15%	15%	12%	15%
36 Months	25%	27%	25%	26%	23%	25%
42 Months	52%	56%	59%	62%	64%	60%

Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 06/10/2025
2. Age is computed based on patient’s age on report date of the index Pap test

**FIGURE 5: 42-MONTH RETENTION RATE BY AGE GROUP OVER TIME, 2015 – 2019**



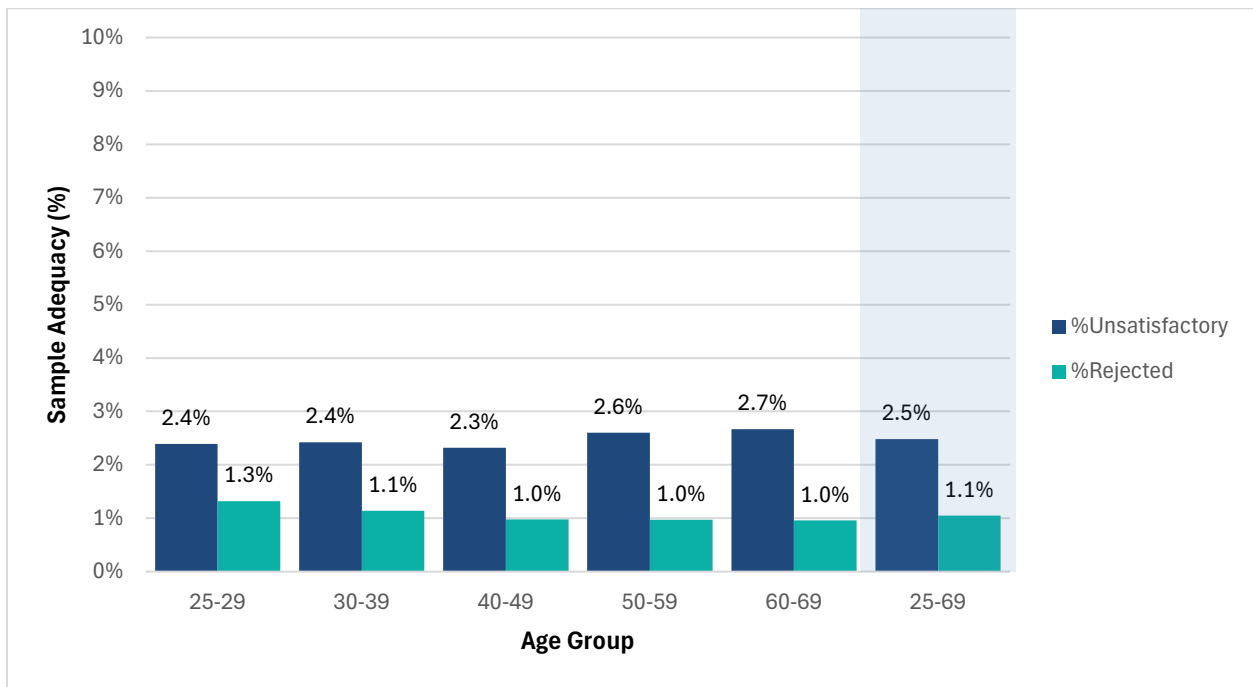
Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 06/10/2025
2. Age is computed based on patient’s age on report date of the index Pap test

### d) Adequacy of Pap Test Samples

The most cited reasons for an unsatisfactory cytology sample were insufficient squamous cellularity and obscuring inflammation, which represented 95% of the unsatisfactory samples. Additionally, some cytology samples were rejected by the CCSL. The most cited reason for a rejected cytology sample was due to missing or incorrect patient name or date of birth, which represented 95% of rejected samples. Multiple factors may be cited.

**FIGURE 6: CERVICAL SAMPLE ADEQUACY RATES BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



**Notes:**

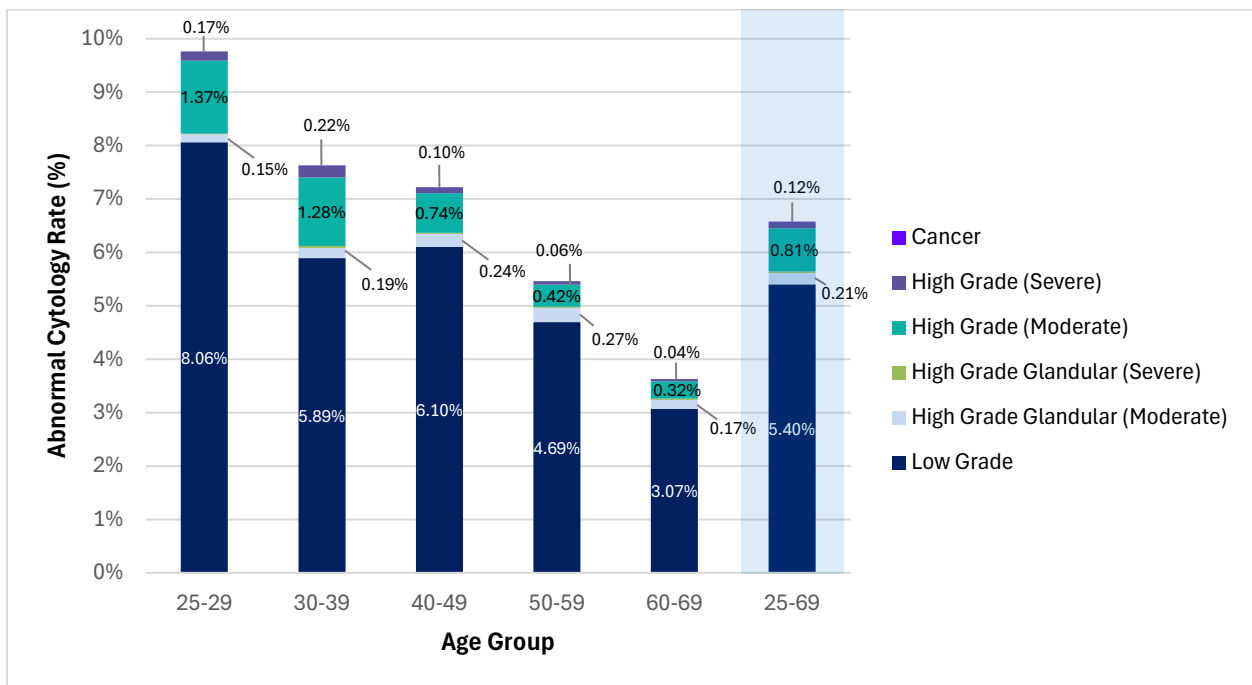
1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
2. Age is computed based on sample date

### e) Screening Test Results

Cytology turnaround time is the average number of days from the date the sample is received by the CCSL to the date the finalized report is issued. The target turn-around time is for 90% of reports to be issued within 28 days. In 2022, of the cytology tests submitted for ages 25-69, 90% of the cytology tests had a turn-around time of 131 days. Of the cytology tests submitted, 12% met the target turn-around time.

The CCSL uses the international standardized Bethesda nomenclature to report cytology test results (Appendix A).

**FIGURE 7: ABNORMAL SCREENING TEST RESULT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 5/8/2025
2. Age is computed based on sample date
3. **Cancer** includes adenocarcinoma, endocervical adenocarcinoma, endometrial adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma; **High Grade (Severe)** includes HSIL (Severe); **High Grade (Moderate)** includes ASC-H or HSIL Moderate; **High Grade Glandular (Severe)** includes AGC-FN, AEC-FN, atypical endometrial cells-favour neoplastic;; **High Grade Glandular (Moderate)** includes AGC; **Low Grade** includes ASC-US or LSIL

## f) Follow-up of Abnormal Pap Test Results

### Follow-up Recommendation

The current screening guideline is to follow ASC-US or LSIL results with a repeat Pap test at six-month intervals for up to one year. Colposcopy is recommended for either persistent ASC-US or LSIL or an initial interpretation of AGC, ASC-H, HSIL, AIS or invasive carcinoma. "Other Investigations" are predominantly recommendations for further investigation for suspected endometrial abnormalities.

**TABLE 4: FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATIONS BY AGE GROUP, 2022**

	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	25-69
Patients with ASC-US or LSIL	2,080	3,803	3,420	2,668	1,562	13,533
Repeat in 6 months	1,792	3,134	2,737	2,187	1,293	11,143
(%)	86%	82%	80%	82%	83%	82%
Colposcopy	288	666	680	481	268	2,383
(%)	14%	18%	20%	18%	17%	18%
Follow-up HPV Test or Routine Screening	0	3	3	0	1	7
(%)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
AGC, ASC-H, HSIL, AIS or carcinoma	558	1,385	777	508	309	3,537
Colposcopy	557	1,383	752	449	281	3,422
(%)	100%	100%	97%	88%	91%	97%
Other Investigation	1	2	25	59	28	115
(%)	0%	0%	3%	12%	9%	3%

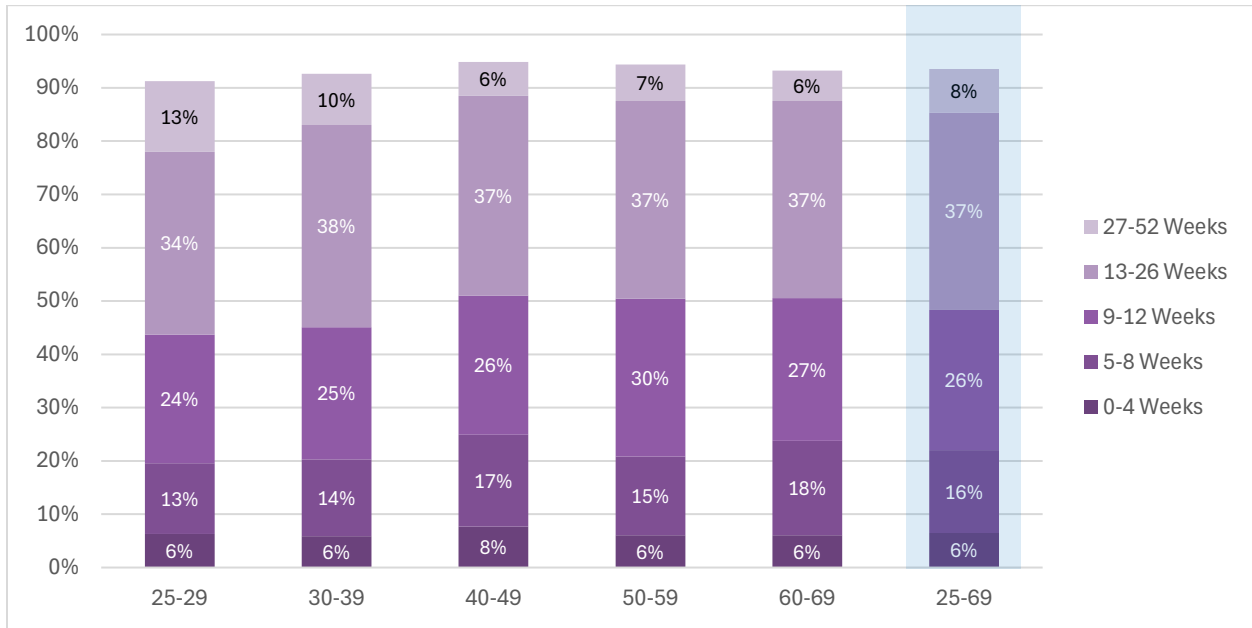
#### Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 30/5/2025
2. Age is computed based on the date of the patient's most recent Pap test in the year
3. All other investigations have "Refer to Colposcopy for investigation of endometrial abnormality" recommendation
4. Eight patients with ASC-US or LSIL were recommended a follow-up HPV test or routine screening.
5. Five patients with AGC, ASC-H, HSIL, AIS or carcinoma were about to age-out of program or recommended a repeat screening test in 6 months.

### Colposcopy Follow-up Rate

The colposcopy follow-up rate is the percentage of participants recommended to have a colposcopy examination that had the follow-up procedure within 12 months of the Pap test. Colposcopies performed within one week of the Pap test are excluded, as the Pap test is unlikely to be the reason for the colposcopy referral.

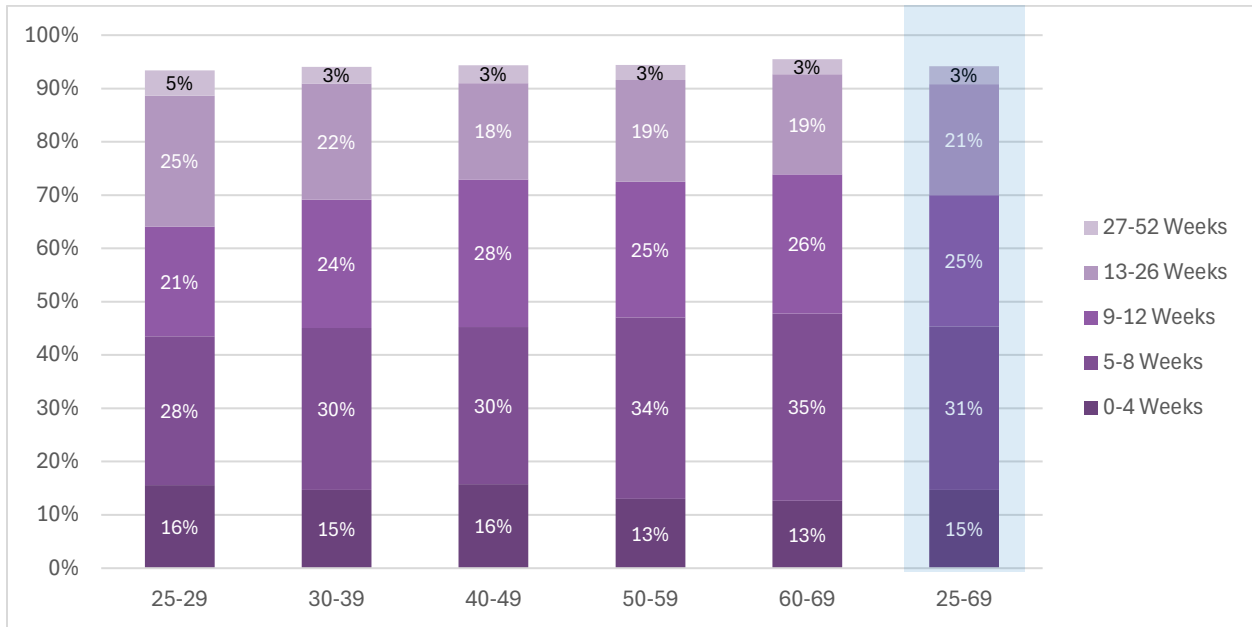
**FIGURE 8: COLPOSCOPY FOLLOW-UP RATES THOSE WITH PERSISTENT ASC-US OR LSIL PAP TEST RESULT BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



**Notes:**

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
2. Age is computed based on patient’s age on report date of the index Pap test

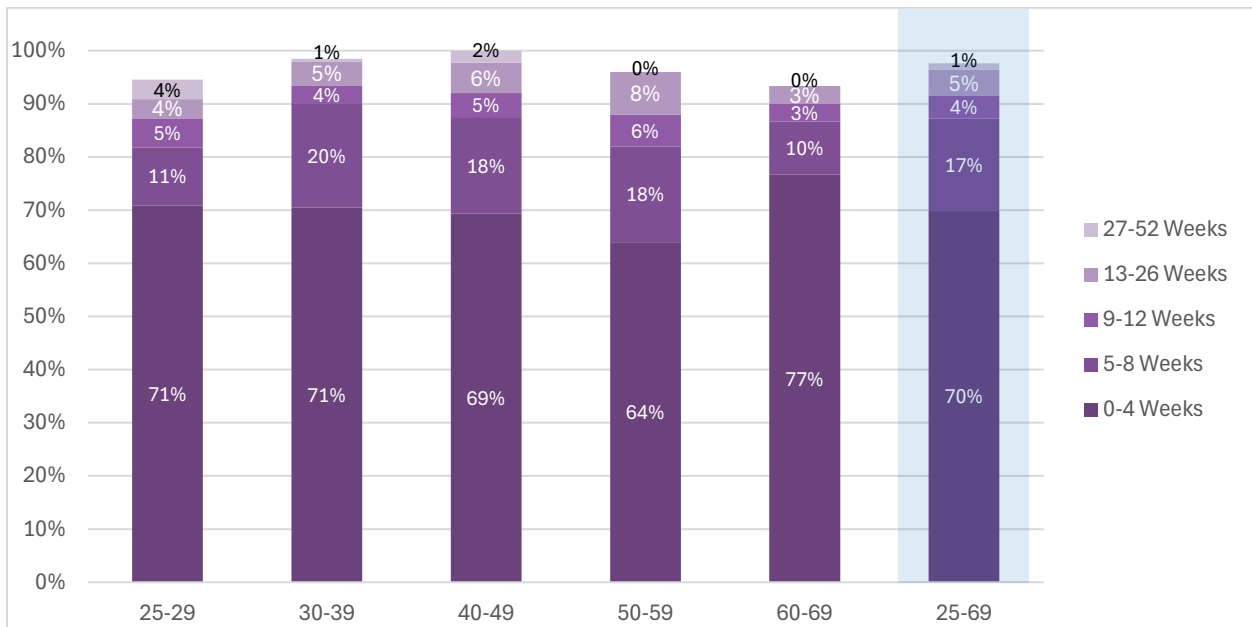
**FIGURE 9: COLPOSCOPY FOLLOW-UP RATES FOR THOSE WITH ASC-H, HSIL MODERATE OR AGC PAP TEST RESULT BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



**Notes:**

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
2. Age is computed based on patient’s age on report date of the index Pap test

**FIGURE 10: COLPOSCOPY FOLLOW-UP RATES FOR THOSE WITH AGC-FN, AIS OR HSIL SEVERE PAP TEST RESULT BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



**Notes:**

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 22/4/2025
2. Age is computed based on patient’s age on report date of the index Pap test

## Positive Predictive Value

The positive predictive value (PPV) is the chance of having histologically confirmed pathology when colposcopy has been recommended and a follow-up investigation with biopsy has been completed. For histology reporting cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) terminology is used.

**TABLE 5: BIOPSY RATE, 2022**

<b>2022</b>	<b>ASC-US or LSIL</b>	<b>AGC</b>	<b>ASC-H or HSIL Moderate</b>	<b>AGC-FN, AIS or HSIL Severe</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Recommended for colposcopy	2,380	544	2,451	427	5,802
Had Biopsy	2,115	480	2,241	408	5,244
Biopsy Rate %	89%	88%	91%	96%	90%

Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 16/7/2025

**TABLE 6: POSITIVE PREDICTIVE VALUE, 2022**

<b>2022</b>	<b>ASC-US or LSIL</b>	<b>AGC</b>	<b>ASC-H or HSIL Moderate</b>	<b>AGC-FN, AIS or HSIL Severe</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
CIN 2 or More Severe	264	85	1,303	366	2,018
CIN 2 or More Severe Rate %	12%	18%	58%	90%	38%
CIN 3 or More Severe	109	62	829	316	1,316
CIN 3 or More Severe Rate %	5%	13%	37%	77%	25%
Carcinoma	2	8	32	43	85
Carcinoma Rate %	0%	2%	1%	11%	2%

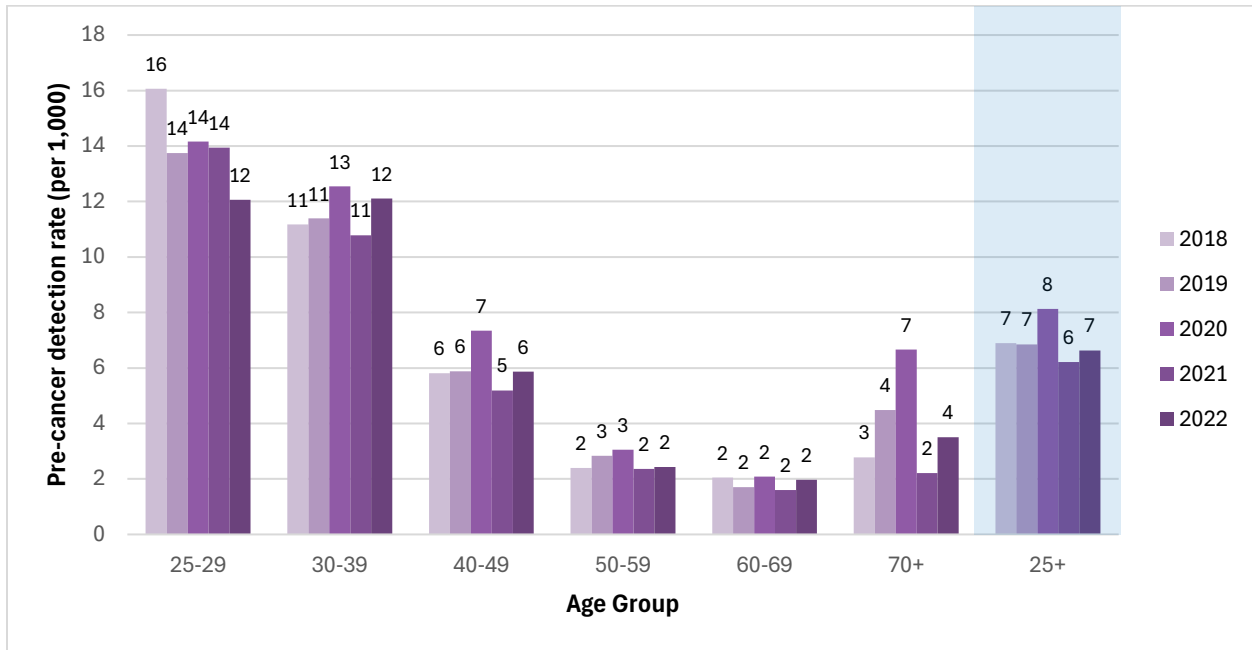
Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 16/7/2025

### g) Pre-Cancer Detection Rate

Pre-Cancer Detection Rate is defined as the number of pre-cancerous lesions detected per 1,000 people screened in a 12-month period. Pre-cancerous lesions are histologically confirmed CIN 2, CIN 3 or adenocarcinoma *in situ* (AIS).

**FIGURE 11: PRE-CANCER DETECTION PER 1,000 PEOPLE SCREENED BY AGE GROUP, 2022**



Notes:

1. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 16/7/2025
2. Age is computed based on the date of the patient’s most severe Pap result in the year

## h) Cancer Incidence

Age standardized incidence and mortality rates over time are shown in Figure 12. New invasive cervical cancers diagnosed in 2017-2021 were identified from the British Columbia Cancer Registry and the data collected by BC Cancer Cervix Screening. The age-specific cancer incidence rates for 2017-2021 are presented in Figure 13, and the cancer counts are shown in Table 7.

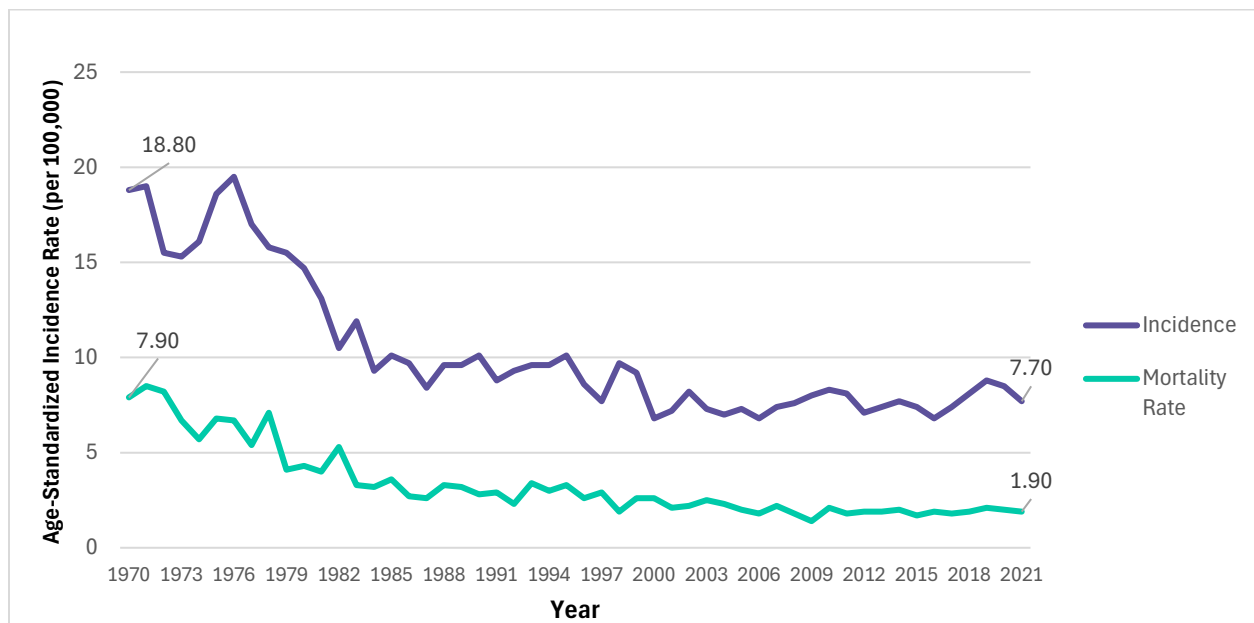
**Age-Standardized Incidence Rate:** weighted average of the age-range specific incidence rates, where the weights are the proportions of people in the corresponding age groups of the 2011 Canadian population (7.7/100,000, 2021).

**Age-Standardized Mortality Rate:** weighted average of the age-range specific mortality rates, where the weights are the proportions of people in the corresponding age groups of the 2011 Canadian population (1.9/100,000, 2021).

**Incidence Rate:** proportion of people in the population who develop cervical cancer in a given year, expressed as the number of cancer cases per 100,000 people.

**Mortality Rate:** proportion of people in the population who died of cervical cancer in a given year, expressed as the number of deaths per 100,000 people.

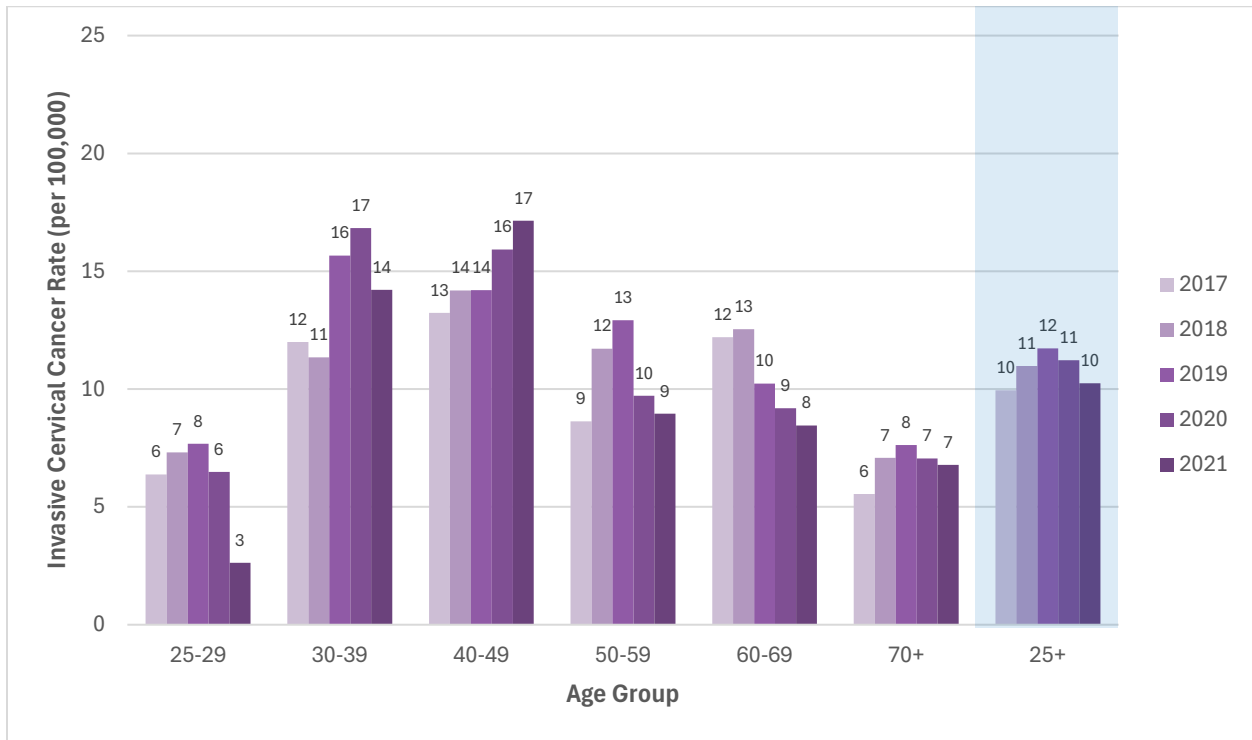
**FIGURE 12: AGE STANDARDIZED INCIDENCE & MORTALITY RATE OF INVASIVE CERVICAL CANCER IN B.C. OVER TIME**



Notes:

1. Rates are standardized to the 2011 Canadian population
2. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 23/4/2025

**FIGURE 13: INVASIVE CERVICAL CANCER INCIDENCE PER 100,000 BY AGE GROUP, 2017 – 2021**



Notes:

1. Population data source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024 (Aug 2024), BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Citizen’s Services
2. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 23/4/2025
3. Age is computed based on date of diagnosis

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF INVASIVE CERVICAL CANCERS BY AGE GROUP, 2017 – 2021

		20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	20+
2021	<b>Number of cases</b>								
	All cell types	0	5	55	58	32	30	26	206
	Squamous cell only	0	3	41	31	22	22	19	138
	<b>Incidence rate (per 100,000)</b>								
	All cell types	0.00	2.63	14.21	17.14	8.95	8.46	6.79	9.46
Squamous cell only	0.00	1.58	10.60	9.16	6.15	6.20	4.96	6.34	
2020	<b>Number of cases</b>								
	All cell types	0	12	63	53	35	32	26	221
	Squamous cell only	0	10	41	29	24	22	18	144
	<b>Incidence rate (per 100,000)</b>								
	All cell types	0.00	6.48	16.84	15.92	9.72	9.19	7.05	10.35
Squamous cell only	0.00	5.40	10.96	8.71	6.66	6.32	4.88	6.74	
2019	<b>Number of cases</b>								
	All cell types	1	14	57	47	47	35	27	228
	Squamous cell only	1	11	35	30	36	26	13	152
	<b>Incidence rate (per 100,000)</b>								
	All cell types	0.59	7.68	15.67	14.19	12.93	10.24	7.63	10.83
Squamous cell only	0.59	6.03	9.62	9.06	9.90	7.61	3.67	7.22	
2018	<b>Number of cases</b>								
	All cell types	0	13	40	47	43	42	24	209
	Squamous cell only	0	10	25	31	28	27	20	141
	<b>Incidence rate (per 100,000)</b>								
	All cell types	0.00	7.31	11.34	14.19	11.72	12.54	7.08	10.10
Squamous cell only	0.00	5.62	7.09	9.36	7.63	8.06	5.90	6.81	
2017	<b>Number of cases</b>								
	All cell types	0	11	41	44	32	40	18	186
	Squamous cell only	0	7	26	25	18	25	9	110
	<b>Incidence rate (per 100,000)</b>								
	All cell types	0.00	6.37	11.99	13.24	8.63	12.20	5.55	9.16
Squamous cell only	0.00	4.06	7.60	7.52	4.85	7.63	2.77	5.42	

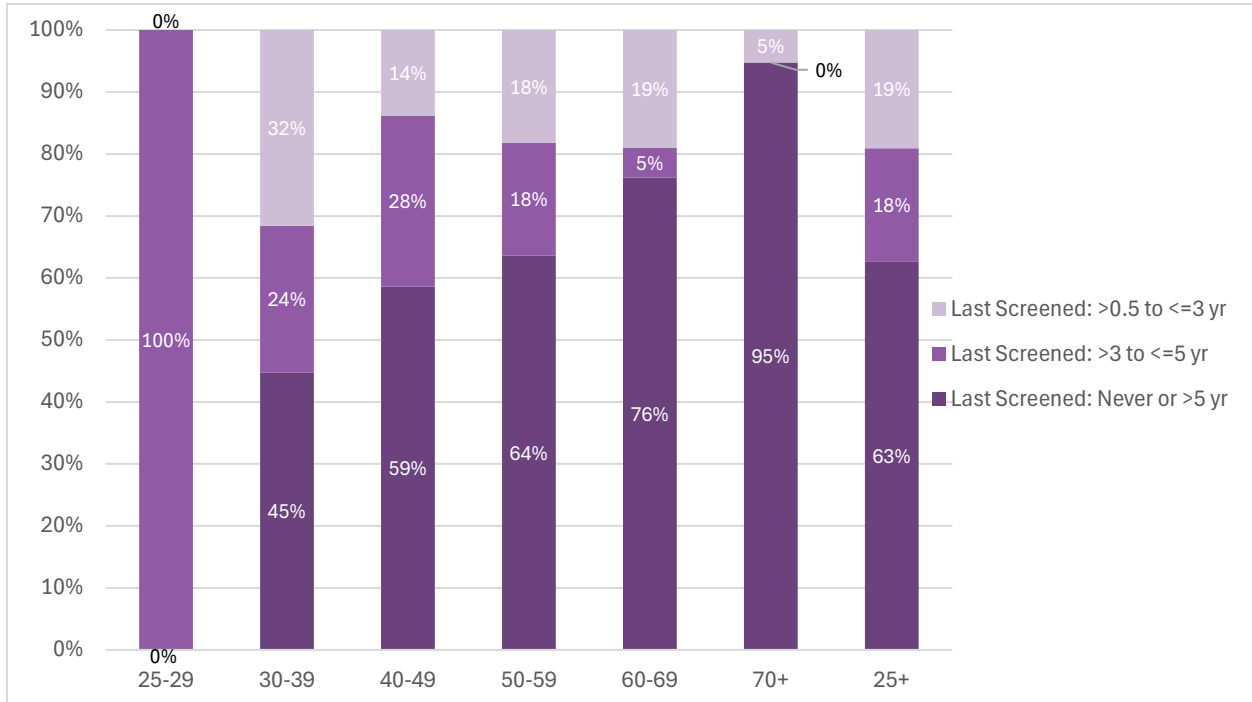
## Notes:

1. Population data source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024 (Aug 2024), BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Citizen's Services
2. BC Cancer Registry data extraction date: 23/4/2025
3. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 23/4/2025
4. Age is computed based on date of diagnosis

### i) Screening History in Cases of Invasive Cancer

Pap tests performed within six months prior to the invasive cancer diagnosis are less likely to be done for screening purposes; these Paps are disregarded in the categorization of screening history.

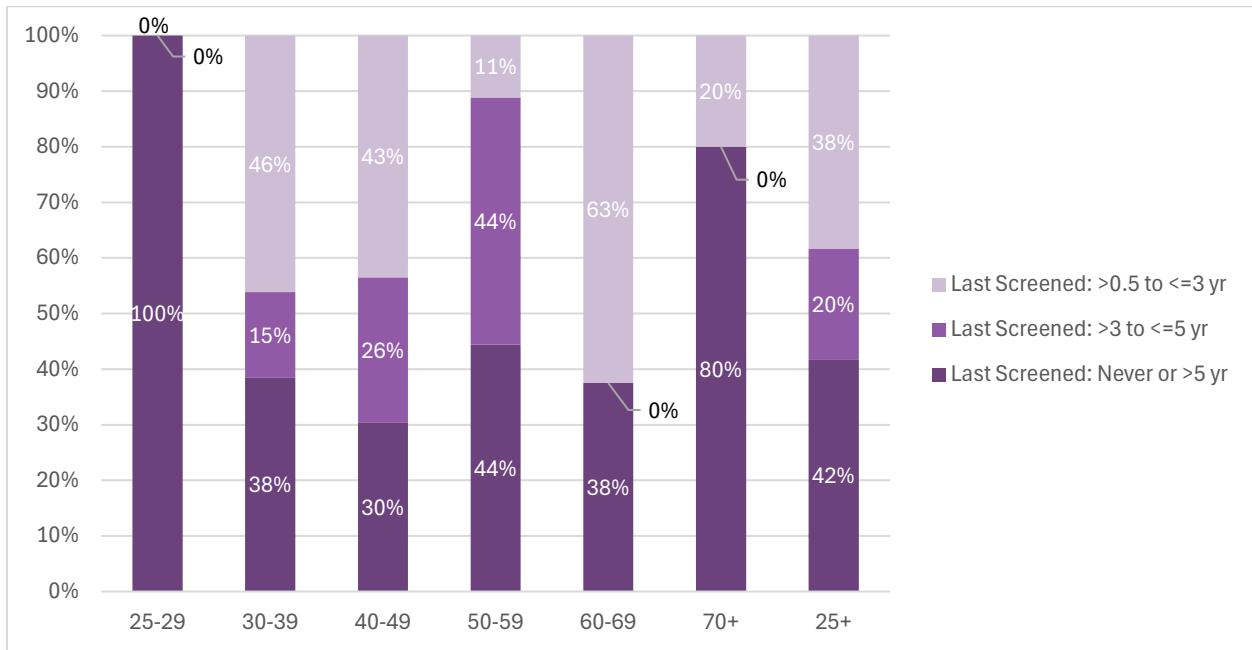
**FIGURE 14: SCREENING HISTORY OF THOSE DIAGNOSED WITH SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA, 2021**



**Notes:**

1. BC Cancer Registry data extraction date: 23/4/2025
2. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 23/4/2025
3. Age is computed based on date of diagnosis

**FIGURE 15: SCREENING HISTORY OF THOSE DIAGNOSED WITH ADENOCARCINOMA, 2021**



**Notes:**

1. BC Cancer Registry data extraction date: 23/4/2025
2. BC Cancer Cervix Screening data extraction date: 23/4/2025
3. Age is computed based on date of diagnosis

## APPENDIX – THE 2014 BETHESDA SYSTEM

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### SPECIMEN ADEQUACY

- Satisfactory for evaluation  
 Unsatisfactory for evaluation

### INTERPRETATION/RESULT

#### NEGATIVE FOR INTRAEPITHELIAL LESION OR MALIGNANCY

*(When there is no cellular evidence of neoplasia, state this in the General Categorization above and/or in the Interpretation/Result section of the report--whether or not there are organisms or other non-neoplastic findings)*

#### **Non-Neoplastic Findings (optional to report)**

##### **Organisms**

##### **OTHER**

- Endometrial cells (in a woman 45 years of age)  
(Specify if “negative for squamous intraepithelial lesion”)

#### EPITHELIAL CELL ABNORMALITIES

##### SQUAMOUS CELL

- Atypical squamous cells
  - of undetermined significance (ASC-US)
  - cannot exclude HSIL (ASC-H)
- Low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion (LSIL)  
*(encompassing: HPV/mild dysplasia/CIN 1)*
- High-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion (HSIL)  
*(encompassing: moderate and severe dysplasia, CIS; CIN 2 and CIN 3)*
  - with features suspicious for invasion (if invasion is suspected)
- Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)

#### GLANDULAR CELL

- Atypical (AGC)
  - endocervical cells (NOS or specify in comments)
  - endometrial cells (NOS or specify in comments)
  - glandular cells (NOS or specify in comments)
- Atypical
  - endocervical cells, favor neoplastic (AEC-FN)
  - glandular cells, favor neoplastic (AGC-FN)
- Endocervical adenocarcinoma in situ (AIS)
- Adenocarcinoma
  - endocervical
  - endometrial
  - extrauterine
  - not otherwise specified (NOS)

#### OTHER MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS (specified)