Knowledge of and barriers to cervical screening in the first invited cohort (25-29 year olds) and last (60-64 year olds)

This research was commissioned by Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust and launched during Cervical Cancer Prevention Week 2014 (Jan 19-25, 2014). All figures, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Censuswide; total sample size was 2,021 women aged 25-29 and 60-64 and fieldwork was undertaken between 6 and 12 December 2013. The survey was commissioned in order to look at awareness levels for the disease and attitudes towards cervical screening amongst the first (25-29) and last (60-64) age groups eligible for the NHS cervical screening programme. The most recent* figures show that 1 in 3 25-29 year olds fail to attend screening when invited and screening attendance in older women is lower than it was 17 years ago.

Key findings:

- Almost a third (31%) of women do not know what causes cervical cancer
- Over half (54%) fail to link the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) to its development
- 16% of women recognise non-attendance of cervical screening as a risk factor
- 13.7% believed that screening was a test that checked the health of the womb
- One in 10 women aged 25-29 thought it was a test for sexually transmitted diseases
- One in five of those surveyed believed cervical cancer to be hereditary
- Over a quarter (26%) of 25-29 year olds worried the procedure would be painful and embarrassing
- One in 10 25-29 year olds worried about what the results would say
- For those aged 60-64, 16.4% had had a previous bad experience
- 14.7% of 60-64 year olds had experienced pain since going through the menopause

The results of this survey are used to highlight the issues of non attendance of screening for young and older women as well as the barriers for these age groups. Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust has since created and run a major public awareness campaign; #SmearForSmear targeting young women and encouraging more women to attend screening. For older women the charity has since commissioned further research to understand barriers to screening amongst this age group.

* Cervical Screening Programme, England 2013-14, Published by HSCIC, November 25th 2014

Below is a summary of findings form the survey.
A test to check cells from the cervix to find pre-cancerous abnormalities

A test to find cervical cancer

A test to check the health of the womb

A test to find ovarian cancer

A test to find sexually transmitted diseases

Which, if any, of the following do you think cervical screening (a smear test) is?

Have you ever delayed a cervical screening (smear test) invitation?

Yes, I've never been for a cervical screening test

Yes, I've been delayed but have been for a cervical screening test

No, I always attend as soon as possible after receiving my invitation
If you have delayed a cervical screening test/tests, in your estimation what is the longest time you've delayed for?

- Up to 3 months: 21.50%
- 3-6 months: 23.20%
- 6 months - 1 year: 17.90%
- 1-3 years: 7%
- 3-4 years: 3.70%
- 4-5 years: 2.10%
- 5-10 years: 1.90%
- Over 10 years: 1.50%
- I can't recall: 8%
I kept putting it off/did not get round to going
I forgot all about it
I was worried it would be painful
I forgot all about it
I kept putting it off/did not get round to going

Which, if any, of the following have caused you to delay or not attend a cervical screening test?

Other reasons
I felt uncomfortable having a test carried out at my GP surgery and didn’t want to visit a Sexual Health Clinic
I have had a previous bad experience when attending screening
I found it hard to book an appointment at a convenient time
I couldn’t get time off work
I was worried about what the results would say
I presumed that nothing was wrong with me
I was worried it would be embarrassing
I have found it more painful since going through the menopause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>25-29yrs</th>
<th>60-64yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I kept putting it off/did not get round to going</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>34.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forgot all about it</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was worried it would be painful</td>
<td>26.20%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have found it more painful since going through the menopause</td>
<td>14.70%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was worried it would be embarrassing</td>
<td>26.60%</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I presumed that nothing was wrong with me</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was worried about what the results would say</td>
<td>26.60%</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t get time off work</td>
<td>18.30%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it hard to book an appointment at a convenient time</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had a previous bad experience when attending screening</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt uncomfortable having a test carried out at my GP surgery and didn’t want to visit a Sexual Health Clinic</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which, if any, of the following statements about cervical screening do you agree with?

- It’s not relevant to women of my age
  - 4.5% (60-64yrs)
  - 2.6% (25-29yrs)

- It's free, why wouldn't I take advantage of it?
  - 38.1% (60-64yrs)
  - 42.5% (25-29yrs)

- It's part of the healthy upkeep of a woman's body
  - 62.7% (60-64yrs)
  - 60.7% (25-29yrs)

- It's really important to have regularly
  - 75.7% (60-64yrs)
  - 70.5% (25-29yrs)

- It's a necessary health test for all women
  - 77.3% (60-64yrs)
  - 79.7% (25-29yrs)
I openly discuss cervical screening with my friends

60.1%

I encourage other women to take up their cervical screening invitation

50.5%

I find talking about cervical cancer intrusive

2.7%

12.3%

I have sought advice/support in the past about my cervical screening

12.3%

12.5%

I never discuss cervical screening with family members

12.3%

12.7%

I would rather have a female practitioner carry out the test

49.3%

53.7%

I am too embarrassed to talk about cervical screening

1.9%

6.5%

I never discuss cervical screening with friends

11.8%

14.0%

I openly discuss cervical screening with my family members

47.6%

47.1%

I would not seek advice/support if I were worried about my cervical screening

1.7%

2.9%

I have sought advice/support in the past about my cervical screening

12.3%

12.5%

I find talking about cervical screening intrusive

2.7%

8.0%

Which of the following statements do you agree with?
Thinking about the last time you attended a cervical screening test, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>60-64yrs</th>
<th>25-29yrs</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt at ease during the procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found the procedure embarrassing</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found the procedure painful</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt discomfort during the procedure but it was not painful</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>69.30%</td>
<td>72.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt at ease during the procedure</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the procedure the medical practitioner carrying out the test explained to me what would happen during the procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>60-64yrs</th>
<th>25-29yrs</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was explained to me what the result of the test would mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the procedure it was explained how and when I would receive the results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt at ease with the medical practitioner who performed the screening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking about the last time you attended a cervical screening test, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
How effective do you think cervical screening is in preventing cervical screening?
The human papillomavirus (HPV) infection

Thinking now more specifically about cervical cancer ... What do you think can cause it?
What would encourage you to have regular cervical screening (when invited)?

- Images on leaflets relating to your ethnicity
  - 60-64y: 0.90%
  - 25-29y: 2.40%
  - Overall: 2.60%

- Other (please specify)
  - 60-64y: 8%
  - 25-29y: 3.80%
  - Overall: 3.60%

- Posters in your GP surgery
  - 60-64y: 9.30%
  - 25-29y: 10.90%
  - Overall: 16.50%

- Images on leaflets relating to your age
  - 60-64y: 25.90%
  - 25-29y: 19.10%
  - Overall: 15.60%

- Friends reassuring you about the procedure
  - 60-64y: 13.80%
  - 25-29y: 27.70%
  - Overall: 25.90%

- Knowing someone who has had cervical cancer/abnormal cervical cells
  - 60-64y: 20%
  - 25-29y: 23%
  - Overall: 26.10%

- An option to self-sample with a home screening kit
  - 60-64y: 34.20%
  - 25-29y: 27.40%
  - Overall: 46%

- Education in schools
  - 60-64y: 9.30%
  - 25-29y: 31.50%
  - Overall: 28.40%

- More media coverage to raise awareness of the risks/facts of cervical cancer
  - 60-64y: 20%
  - 25-29y: 32.40%
  - Overall: 32.60%

- Nothing would encourage me to have a regular cervical screening
  - 60-64y: 16.90%
  - 25-29y: 19.10%
  - Overall: 33.50%