

Cervical screening data 2015–2016; Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type:	Data Quality Statement
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Data quality

Data quality statement summary:

Summary of Key Issues

- Cervical screening data are highly relevant and timely for monitoring trends in cervical screening participation and abnormality detection trends.
- Some duplication may occur where the same test is reported to the cervical screening register in two or more jurisdictions. AIHW is unable to identify or resolve these instances, but the level of duplication is believed to be small.

Description

All states and territories have legislation that requires pathology laboratories to send all cervical tests to the relevant state or territory cervical screening register. Cervical screening programs in each state and territory interrogate their own cervical screening register in accordance with detailed data specifications to supply aggregate data annually to the AIHW. These data are compiled into the only repository of national cervical screening data, although because these are aggregate and not unit record data, these data do not exist in a database per se, and cannot be interrogated further.

Any Pap test performed in Australia, unless the woman has opted-off, will be included in National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP) data. This means that NCSP data is a virtually complete repository of all cervical screening performed in Australia.

Institutional environment:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity established in 1987, governed by a management Board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians through better health and welfare information and statistics. It collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The Institute also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national datasets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these datasets and disseminate information and statistics.

The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#), in conjunction with compliance to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth), ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au.

The AIHW has been receiving cervical screening data since 1989.

Timeliness: Cervical cytology data are available within about 6 months (there can be a lag of up to 6 months in the transmission of test results from pathology laboratories to cervical screening registers), and data for the previous calendar year are supplied in July each year (rescreening and correlation data lag behind, as the specifications for these require more time to pass before this can be calculated). The current cervical screening data are for cervical cytology and histology tests performed in 2015 and 2016.

Accessibility: Cervical screening data are published annually in the report Cervical screening in Australia, available on the AIHW website <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cervical-screening/> where they can be downloaded without charge. Supplementary data tables that provide more detailed data are also provided to accompany each report, and these, too, are available on the AIHW website where they can be downloaded without charge. General enquiries about AIHW publications can be made to the Digital and Media Communications Unit on (02) 6244 1000 or via email to info@aihw.gov.au.

Interpretability: While many concepts in the report Cervical screening in Australia are easy to interpret, other concepts and statistical calculations are more complex. All concepts are explained within the body of the report presenting these data, along with footnotes to provide further details and caveats. Additional detail on the data sources, classifications, and the statistical methods used can be found in the Appendixes of the report.

Relevance: Cervical screening data are highly relevant for monitoring trends in cervical screening participation and abnormality detection trends. The data are used for many purposes by policy-makers and researchers, but are supplied and analysed specifically to monitor and inform the NCSP. Any Pap test performed in Australia, unless the woman has opted-off, will be included in NCSP data. This means that NCSP data is a virtually complete repository of all cervical screening performed in Australia.

Accuracy: All data provided by state and territory cervical screening programs, once analysed, are supplied back for verification. Further, National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council (NPAAC) Performance Measures for Australian Laboratories Reporting Cervical Cytology exist which allow some cervical screening data compiled and reported by the AIHW to be compared to data that are also sourced from state and territory cervical cytology registers for a different purpose. Some duplication may occur where the same test is reported to the cervical cytology data in two or more jurisdictions. AIHW is unable to identify or resolve these instances, but the level of duplication is believed to be small.

Coherence: Cervical screening data are reported and published annually by the AIHW. State and territory cervical screening registers change every day, and not just because new records are added; existing records are changed if new, more precise information becomes available or if typographical errors are discovered by routine data checking procedures. As a result, the number of women participating, as well as other data reported by the AIHW for any particular year may change slightly over time. Further data published by a jurisdictional cervical screening program at a certain point in time may differ slightly from what is published by the AIHW at a different time.

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [Cervical screening data 2014–2015; Quality Statement AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 03/07/2017
Has been superseded by [Cervical screening data 2016–2017; Quality Statement AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Standard 29/01/2019