

26 May 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202205762

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 28 April 2022 for information regarding wait times for mammograms.

You stated:

On the 15th October 2021 TV1 News, you outlined "... the second lockdown across Auckland has again had an effect on coverage, we've now got 50,000 women to catch up on", (interview link <https://www.1news.co.nz/2021/10/15/breast-screening-backlog-up-to-50000-due-to-pandemic/>).

Please find a response to each part of your request below:

Breast Cancer Foundation NZ requests the methodology, data and calculation used to determine the "50,000 women to catch up on" under the official information act.

The impact from COVID-19 is estimated as the difference in 24-month BreastScreen Aotearoa (BSA) coverage from the pre-COVID-19 baseline (February 2020) compared with a coverage period in subsequent months. This provides the number of screens needed to get back to the pre-COVID baseline coverage. This calculation is based on BSA offering screening to women every 24 months.

For the 50,000 women to catch-up outlined in the TV1 News interview, the subsequent months coverage was the 24-month period ending August 2021. At that time there were approximately 53,000 screens required to catch up to the February 2020 pre-COVID baseline coverage. The number was rounded in the TV1 interview.

These estimates are based on 24-month coverage data for women aged 45-69 years (prioritised ethnicity). Coverage is the number of women screened as a percentage of women eligible. The numerator is the number of women screened and the denominator is the population eligible for breast screening (sourced from Stats NZ Census 2018 Population Projections (2020 update), using an estimate at midpoint in the monitoring period).

To calculate the number of screens required to catch up to the February 2020 pre-COVID-19 baseline, using the data in table 1 below, calculate the coverage difference and the number of screens to reach the pre COVID-19 baseline:

1. Coverage difference is the difference in percent coverage between a specified 24-month coverage period and baseline period ending February 2020.

For the 24-month period ending August 2021, the coverage difference is -6.8 percent. This is the difference between the coverage in August 2021 of 64.4 percent and the coverage in the baseline period ending February 2020 of 71.2 percent. Note the coverage and coverage difference percentages are expressed to one decimal point whilst the calculation utilises the true percentage to multiple decimal points.

2. The number of screens to reach the pre-COVID-19 baseline is found by multiplying the coverage difference by the current month count of eligible population. The eligible population is based on Stats NZ population projections at the midpoint of the 24-month coverage period. For example, for the 24-month period ending August 2021, this would be the population count projection estimate for August 2020.

For the 24-month period ending August 2021, the calculation steps are: multiply the eligible population count at the midpoint in the coverage period (785,233) by the coverage difference of -6.8 percent, to get the number of screens to reach pre-Covid baseline, being -53,430.

Table 1: Data and calculation for estimating the backlog in screens compared to pre-COVID-19 baseline (Feb 2020)

The blue text in the table describes the calculation

Month/ Year	Numerator (number of participants screened)	Denominator (Stats NZ population projection count)	Coverage (%)	Coverage difference (%)	Number of screens to reach pre-COVID baseline (Feb 20)
	Number of participants screened	Stats NZ popln projection est. (midpoint in coverage period)	Numerator divided by denominator (as %)	Current month coverage minus Feb- 20 coverage	Coverage difference multiplied by current month denominator
Baseline	Feb-20	544,865	765,154	71.2	0
Covid impact	Aug-21	505,733	785,233	64.4	-6.8

Data source: BSA data warehouse; Population data: Stats NZ 2018 Census Population Projections (2020 update)

Data extracted: approx. 20 Sept 2021

...we request the total number of women waiting for mammograms by BSA's 8 lead providers Waitemata / Northland, Auckland, Counties Manukau, Midland, Coast to Coast, South and Otago / Southland. For clarity using the same methodology to identify the 3,900 women in the Northland story (<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northland-age/news/women-wise-toprioritise-monthly-self-exams/NMJXDHYUOU2ARATSODGDOEGXWQ/>)

The data provided by the Ministry to the Northland Age was based on the number of screens required to reach the 70 percent BSA coverage target for the 24-month coverage period ending November 2021.

The estimates are based on 24-month coverage data for women aged 45-69 years (prioritised ethnicity), where coverage is the number of women screened as a percentage of women eligible. The numerator is the number of women screened and the denominator is the population eligible for breast screening (sourced from Stats NZ Census 2018 Population Projections (2020 update), using estimate at midpoint in monitoring period).

The methodology to calculate the additional number of screens to reach the 70 percent coverage target for a 24-month coverage period ending, for example, 31 March 2022, is to calculate the:

1. number needed to be screened in the 24-month coverage period to meet the 70 percent coverage target. This is derived by multiplying the count of eligible population based on Stats NZ population projections at the midpoint of the 24-month coverage period (eg, for the period ending 31 March 2022, the population used would be March 2021) by 70 percent.
2. additional number of screens to reach the coverage target by subtracting the number who have been screened in the specified 24-month coverage period (eg, to the end of 31 March 2022) from the 70 percent coverage number derived in (1).

Note: negative numbers mean the provider reached above the 70 percent coverage target in the 24-month period ending 31 March 2022.

Table 2: Number of BSA screens required to reach 70% coverage target, by BSA lead provider (all ethnicities, ages 45-69 years) for 24-month period ending 31 March 2022

BSA Lead provider	Number of additional screens to reach 70% coverage target
BSWN	13,499
BSAC	17,723
BSCM	7,215
BSM	13,866
BSC2C	279
BSC	-1,281
BSSL	-5,201
BSOS	1,464
Total	47,563

Datasource: BSA Data Warehouse

Data analysis: 15 April 2022

Note - in the 24-month coverage period ending 31 March 2022, there was a change in the Auckland DHB catchment provider. On 1 March 2021, the lead provider for the Auckland DHB changed to BreastScreen Auckland Central (BSAC), from the former provider BreastScreen Auckland Limited (BSAL).

The eight BSA Lead Providers are: Breast Screen Waitemata Northland (BSWN), BreastScreen Auckland Central (BSAC) BreastScreen Counties Manukau (BSCM), BreastScreen Midland (BSM), BreastScreen Coast to Coast (BSC2C), BreastScreen Central (BSC), BreastScreen South Ltd (BSSL), and Breast Screen Otago South (BSOS).

...for the regions identified above, we request data as at 28 April 2022: average wait time by region; median wait time by region; and longest wait time by region

The Ministry consulted with all eight providers listed in your request, and only two advised that they hold this information. Therefore, we have decided to transfer this part of your response to MidCentral District Health Board and Waikato District Health Board under section 14 of the Act. You can expect a response from them in due course.

The remaining six providers have advised the Ministry that they do not hold the information requested. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



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