

Northern Ireland Cancer Screening campaign evaluation

February-March 2025

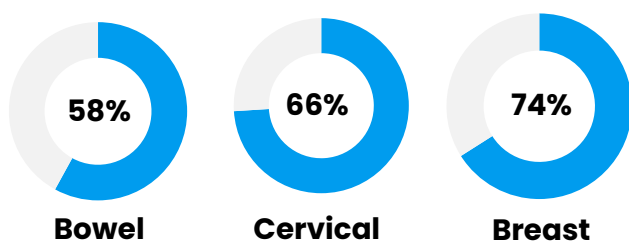
Campaign overview

In February 2025, Cancer Research UK, supported by the Public Health Agency launched a multi-channel advertising campaign for six weeks across Northern Ireland.

The campaign aimed to:

- Increase public awareness of cancer screening
- Increase informed participation among those eligible by addressing key barriers, such as fear and confusion around the purpose of screening [1]

Cancer screening is a key route to earlier diagnosis when treatment is more likely to be successful. In some cases, screening can even help prevent cancers from developing. We know uptake could be improved in Northern Ireland, particularly for bowel and cervical screening. Uptake rates based on 2022/23 data are as follows [2].



You can find out more about the rationale behind this campaign on our [campaign webpage](#).

The campaign ran from 17 February to 30 March 2025. It featured advertising on TV, radio, cinema, outdoor posters, digital display, social media and owned channels.

It targeted all adults aged 18+ across Northern Ireland with the aim to reach those eligible for screening and those approaching eligibility in the next few years.

Screening can help beat cancer.



Evaluation method

The impact of the campaign was measured using mixed methods.

- Pre (n=1048) and post (n=1082) campaign face to face surveys with a representative sample of adults in Northern Ireland. The sample was boosted to evaluate the impact on adults who would soon be eligible for screening.
- Qualitative interviews and focus groups (n=30) plus on-street observations and intercepts with passers-by at locations where posters and billboards were displayed (n=72). The sample comprised of people who hadn't responded to their screening invitations.



Evaluation results

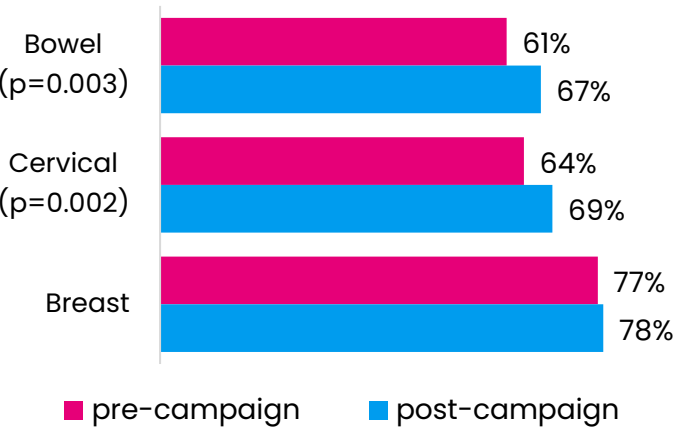
Campaign recognition

73% of adults had seen at least one element of the campaign. Recognition was significantly higher in those eligible for screening than others (bowel 85%, breast 84%, cervical 80%, $p<0.001$ for all).

The posters and digital displays had the highest recognition (51%) followed by TV and radio (both 44%) and social media (40%).

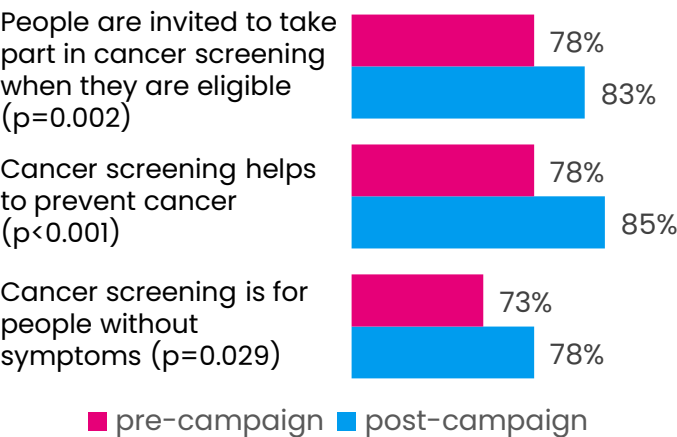
Screening programme awareness

There were significant increases in prompted awareness of bowel and cervical screening following the campaign.



Screening programme understanding

Understanding of the reasons for screening significantly increased after the campaign.



"I think the overall messaging was very much like, we're all in this together. This is a team effort. Everyone's doing their part; just go get your screening. It can be positive. It can be empowering, and it doesn't have to be a big deal." Anon feedback

Intentions and actions

Of those who recognised the campaign...

51% intended to do something as a result.

41% reported they did something.



Top intended actions:

- Pay more attention to/prioritise my body/health (26%)
- Complete the bowel cancer test kit when invited (those eligible) (17%)
- Pay attention to my screening invitation when it arrives (16%)

Top reported actions:

- Paid more attention to/prioritised my body/health (15%)
- Encouraged someone I know to take part in cancer screening (14%)
- Spoke to someone I know about cancer screening (10%)

"The ad came on at teatime and it reignited a conversation. He is on the brink now so hoping he will do it soon." Anon feedback

Campaign sentiment

Most expressed positive sentiment towards the campaign.

88% believed the campaign has an important message and 86% believed it's important to run health campaigns such as this in NI.



People found the TV advert arresting and memorable and it initiated a feeling of togetherness. Although images used in the campaign could be challenging and provoking.

In the survey, 39% agreed the campaign made them feel uncomfortable, although 95% of these people also believed it's important to run health campaigns like this in Northern Ireland.

Supporting healthcare professionals

In February 2025, primary care professionals in Northern Ireland were informed about the campaign before it launched through tailored briefings sent to over 2,000 GPs and community pharmacists.

The healthcare professional campaign helped to raise awareness of the public-facing screening campaign among primary care and community pharmacy teams, while supporting best practice in patient recognition and referral.

The briefing guide and key resources to support healthcare professionals were also promoted via email, social media, print and digital display formats.

We also reached over 80 GPs via our webinar hosted with GPNI and PHA to raise awareness of the campaign and signpost to key resources to support them in conversations about screening.



Healthcare professional evaluation

The healthcare professional activity was evaluated via a survey of 100 GPs. It focussed on GP's behaviour and awareness of the activity.

Increases were observed in the frequency GPs reported discussing bowel and cervical screening with eligible patients.

39% of GPs reported that they had seen information and support from CRUK ahead of the campaign. Most commonly on the CRUK website (30%), GPNI webinar (30%) and via direct mail activity (20%).

For health professionals
in Northern Ireland
February 2025


Supported by
 Health and
Social Care 

Supporting informed participation in Northern Ireland's cancer screening programmes

Screening can help beat cancer.



When you're invited, don't ignore it.



When you're invited, don't ignore it.



Together we are beating cancer

Cancer Research UK is running a public-facing cancer screening campaign in Northern Ireland from 17 February 2025 for six weeks. The campaign aims to increase awareness of cancer screening and support informed participation amongst eligible adults.

Why is this campaign needed?

Screening is an effective tool for detecting cancers at an earlier stage, or even preventing them. In Northern Ireland, more than 60% of cancers diagnosed through

a screening route were caught at stage 1, when there are more treatment options available and better outcomes for patients are more likely¹.

However, to harness the full potential of cancer screening the public need to be aware of the screening programmes and who's eligible, so they can make an informed choice about taking part.

Our 2023 Cancer Awareness Measure survey collected nationally representative data about the UK public's attitudes towards screening. It showed that (compared to those who did take part in screening) those who didn't participate were more likely to report being put off because they felt they weren't at risk of developing cancer, or they hadn't experienced any symptoms. The survey also identified other key barriers to participation, such as feelings of embarrassment and concerns around pain or messiness².

Our campaign seeks to increase informed participation by addressing these misconceptions and other barriers to taking part.

GPs play a vital role in helping eligible people access cancer screening and providing them with information to understand the benefits and risks. So as part of the campaign, we're providing resources and guidance that help GPs to support access and informed choice.

Key contacts

Please contact us for more information about this campaign and evaluation.

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Research and evaluation manager: Lindsay.macdonald@cancer.org.uk

References

[1] Whitelock V., (2024) Cancer Research UK's 2024 Cancer Awareness Measure 'Plus' (CAM+).
[2] Cancer Research UK, Cancer Intelligence Team. Uptake of Bowel, Breast and Cervical Screening in the UK (2024). Available from: [Early Cancer Diagnosis Data Hub](#)