

MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri

Time to screen  
National Bowel Screening Programme

FREEPHONE 0800 924 432  
www.timetoscreen.nz



## Bowel screening programme - Wairarapa update

# Wairarapa participation exceeds national target

Wairarapa participation rate:

68%

MoH target participation rate:

62%

The success of screening programmes relies on high rates of participation. Wairarapa's participation rates are above national targets and are higher than many urban and rural centres overseas, but there is room for improvement!

We are aiming for no significant variation in participation between priority groups and the rest of the eligible population - and have developed an Equity Plan to focus on improving the uptake across our Māori, Pasifika and high deprivation communities.

We'd also like to see the uptake rates rise in the 60-65 year old age group, where participation is a little lower than the rest of the eligible population.

“Bowel screening is the best way we can prevent our people dying from bowel cancer. We are lucky to have the screening programme in Wairarapa, and now we need our family/whānau to embrace this opportunity. It will save lives.”

Jason Kerehi, Māori Health Directorate

Bowel screening  
for 60 to 74 year olds

Time to screen  
National Bowel Screening Programme

51% (4,191) of eligible population invited to screen

7.3% spoilt kits (195/2664)

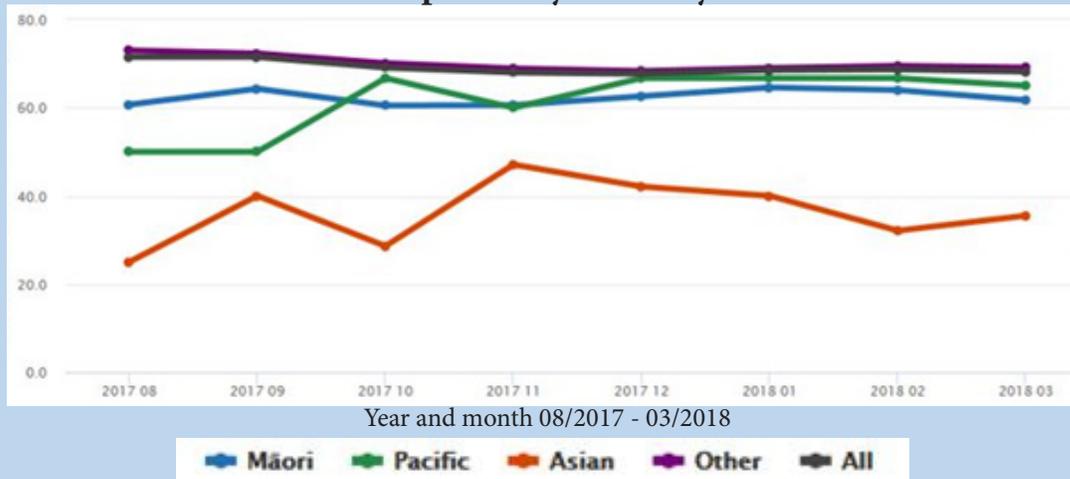
118 positive results  
96 colonoscopies (and others booked)

4.8% positivity

9.7% cancer detection  
7 cancers detected  
August 2017-April 2018

Percentage of invitees who have participated

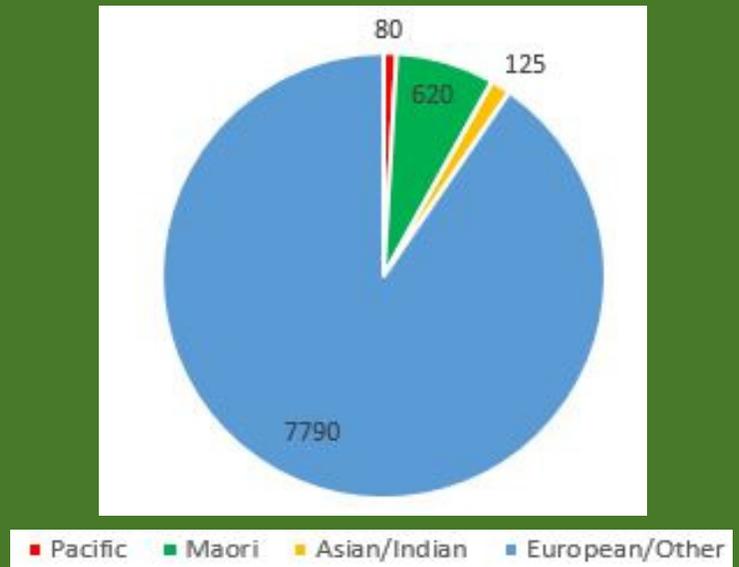
Participation by ethnicity



Approx 780,000 people aged 60-74 eligible in New Zealand



Total eligible Wairarapa population by ethnicity



Based on StatsNZ population projections 2013

For every 1000 people who complete a bowel screening test, about 50 will be positive. Of those, about 35 will have polyps and, on average, 3 or 4 will have bowel cancer found.

## When a gentle reminder is needed....

Janeen Cross knows that, sometimes, people just need a wee push. Passionate about the bowel screening programme, particularly when it comes to her whānau, Janeen doesn't like to see eligible but non-participating people go without a chat about how doing the test could be the best thing they've ever done. So that's what she does - she picks up the phone and she chats. And what she has to say makes so much sense that, most often, they do a test. And sometimes, go on to become strong advocates for the programme. Marina was one such non-participant. Janeen's call encouraged her to do the test and she is now telling her mates in the 60-74 age bracket to do the same. Marina is in the 'get on and just do it' camp, and was surprised she didn't do the test as soon as it arrived. Perhaps it got caught in that 'I'll get around to it' trap, and it just slipped from top of mind.

"I am a believer in bowel health and have in the past done colonic cleansing. I'm well known for telling truckies and friends that sit and eat

without exercising that they need to take care of themselves. I think health is important," Marina says. "I'm not sure why I didn't do the test straight away." Janeen's call was just the prompt Marina needed. Her test came back clear, and she was pleased to know her bowel is in good order. "What do I say to other people? I say open the test, and do it. There's nothing like getting on the job straight away!" "Do it, and don't wait. Bowel cancer kills people, so don't hang around and let it - that's not smart. But doing the test is."



Janeen Cross and her colleagues in the Wairarapa DHB Māori Health Directorate are reducing disparity by making sure eligible people have the best chance of engaging with the bowel screening programme.

## I tell my patients, “I’ve been through this. It’s a good thing.”

Dr Craig Cherry is a keen supporter of bowel screening, for good reason. Invited to the programme and receiving his FIT test in the mail, Dr Cherry found the testing process very easy and, with no symptoms or reasons for concern, he was not anxious about the results. When the test came back positive, he admits there was a degree of alarm.

“I’d never had a colonoscopy and didn’t know what to expect really. But it wasn’t a bad or difficult experience. The preparation is simple and the process is quick. I felt cared for the whole way through, and I was reassured that

there was no evidence of cancer. I can now reflect on my positive experience and use it to encourage and reassure my patients about the value of the screening programme.”

Dr Cherry discusses bowel health with his patients regularly and says some people do get worried about doing the test in case of a positive outcome. He assures them that knowing if something is wrong is fixable - but leaving it too long and knowing too late, might not be.

“It is disconcerting to get a positive result, and to know you need one (*colonoscopy*) but then you can walk away and think ‘well, I’ve not got cancer’ and that’s a great thing to know!” Dr Cherry says.

Having no symptoms is not a reason not to do the test. “Quite the opposite,” he says. “I had no symptoms and I tested positive. I have had patients with no symptoms that had the test and went on to have cancers found - which could be treated early, with a great outcome.”

“Anyone with symptoms should be seeing their doctor immediately and not wait for the screening programme, and anyone in the age range should take up the invitation to screen. It’s that simple,” he said.



“The FIT test is a simple test that is quickly done, very privately at home, and literally can save lives.”

Dr Annie Lincoln

Wairarapa’s GP Lead for the National Bowel Screening

If you are between 60 - 74 and receive publicly funded health care you will be invited to join the bowel screening programme sometime over the next year, if you haven’t already. You can expect your invitation sometime around your birthday.

## Waitemata bowel screening pilot missed invitations

In the past few months there has been significant media coverage about Waitemata residents missing out on an invitation to participate in the bowel screening pilot. This has caused confusion and concern for some people.

Since this came to light in November last year, the National Screening Unit has continued to correct anomalies and put systems and processes in place to provide assurance around the invitation process.

## 7.3% of test kits are spoiled

To date, 195 / 2,664 test kits have been spoilt. Kits can be spoilt in a number of ways, including being delayed in transit, or not having a barcode or collection date written on them. All people participating in the screening programme should be encouraged to follow the instructions carefully, making sure all the information required is included and posting the kits as recommended - i.e not on a Friday or over the weekend. Test kits expire after six months. Participants should be reminded to complete & dispatch their test soon after it is received.

We have one of the highest bowel cancer mortality rates in the OECD.



Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in NZ.



The earlier bowel cancer is diagnosed, the higher the chance of survival.



A person's risk of developing bowel cancer rises each year.



## Promotional activity

The Wairarapa DHB Bowel Screening Programme hits the airwaves from this month, with targeted radio advertising to inform the community of the screening opportunity and what it means for them. Regular newspaper advertising will continue, and information/promotional opportunities will be utilised wherever possible.

Workplaces and community/sports groups can contact us to book a bowel screening presentation.

For more information about Wairarapa's Bowel Screening Programme, contact:

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## Primary care excited by bowel screening

Bowel cancer kills - and yet if found early it is easily treatable, with excellent outcomes for most.

Dr Annie Lincoln, Wairarapa's GP Lead for the National Bowel Screening Programme, encourages all eligible people to participate in the programme. "It is a simple test that is quickly done, very privately at home, and literally can save lives," she says. "Bringing the bowel screening programme to Wairarapa has also spiked referrals for people presenting to their doctors with bowel symptoms, which is excellent. We want everyone to be aware of their bowel health - not just the screening population. If you notice anything of concern - see your doctor. Don't wait for the screening. Early action means early treatment which can keep you alive - it really is that simple."

## New brand for bowel screening

The bowel screening website has a new home under the timetoscreen umbrella: <https://www.timetoscreen.nz/> Resources are available on HealthEd: <https://www.healthed.govt.nz/> There are posters, flyers, and a quick reference guide. Many of the new resources are translated into different languages.

