

# Underprivileged Women still have higher rates of pap smear abnormality



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## Introduction:

Regular cervical screening has become routine for most Hong Kong women. The incidence of cervical cancer has reduced over that past 20 years. However, there are still some groups who are relatively underscreened and at higher risk for cervical cancer.

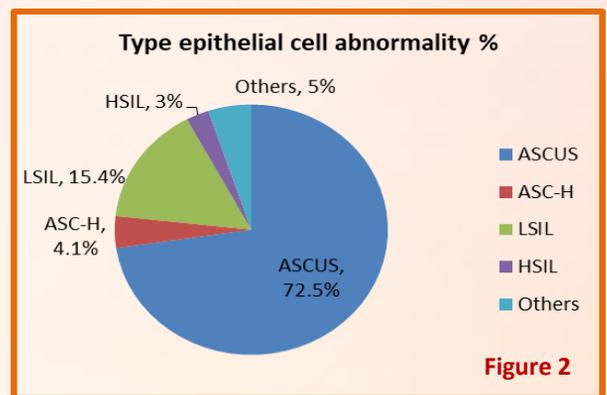
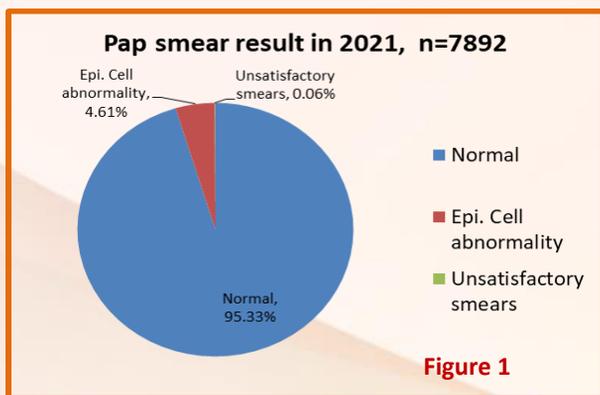
## Methods:

This is a descriptive analysis of cervical screening done in the medical service of the United Christian Nethersole Community Health Service (UCN). In 2021, 7892 women received cervical screening by pap smear in 5 UCN clinics with 61.4% of cases from routine health check service. Most of the cases were middle aged or older, with 50.4% of clients aged 40-59 years. More than one third of cases, 38.1% had a 12-35 months interval from the previous PAP. Of the 7892 women, 833 (10.55%) were either domestic helpers or South Asian ethnic minorities who received subsidized service. There were more cases having their first ever Pap smear under two subsidised service categories, where 56.15% of the domestic helper group and 27.04% of the South Asian group were first-time up takers of PAP, compared to 8.8% to 9.8% of non-subsidised group.

## Results:

The epithelial cell abnormality rate overall was 4.61%. This is lower than the 5.6% in Hong Kong territory-wide prevalence<sup>1</sup>. But, subsidised service clients showed a significantly higher in epithelial abnormality rate, with 8.82% of domestic helpers and 9.06% of South Asian ethnic minorities screening positive. ASCUS accounted for about 72.5% of all types of abnormality in 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Cervical Screening Programme Annual Statistics Report 2021. Non-communicable Disease Branch, Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health.



## Conclusions:

Clients who belonged to subsidized service group had a higher prevalence of abnormality. It is easy to understand that considering they were from under-privileged/ethnic minority groups in the community. Active education of importance of PAP smear to ethnic minority groups is needed. For the 18-39 age group, health promotion for regular PAP is needed considering most of them may only attend the PAP if signs and symptoms already present. The active opportunistic promotion of Pap smear by doctors during consultations is encouraged. Systematic and subsidised cervical screening should be promoted and made accessible to all women including ethnic minorities and underprivileged group.

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