

National Ovarian Cancer Audit State of the Nation Patient and Public Report 2024

An audit of care received by women diagnosed with ovarian cancer
in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022
(Published October 2024)



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This document was prepared by members of the NOCA project team:

- Sudha Sundar, NOCA Clinical Lead (surgery)
- Agnieszka Michael, NOCA Clinical Lead (oncology)
- Jan Van Der Meulen, NOCA Lead Methodologist
- Ipek Gurol-Urganci, NOCA Senior Methodologist
- Andrew Hutchings, NOCA Methodologist
- Georgia Zachou, NOCA Clinical Fellow
- Joanne Boudour, NOCA Senior Project Manager

With review and input from:

[Target Ovarian Cancer
Ovarian Cancer Action](#)

Sbba Siddique, Chair of the NOCA PPI Forum



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The National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre (NATCAN) is commissioned by the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP) as part of the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme (NCAPOP). NATCAN delivers national cancer audits in non-Hodgkin lymphoma, bowel, breast (primary and metastatic), oesophago-gastric, ovarian, kidney, lung, pancreatic and prostate cancers. HQIP is led by a consortium of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Royal College of Nursing. Its aim is to promote quality improvement in patient outcomes, and in particular, to increase the impact that clinical audit, outcome review programmes and registries have on healthcare quality in England and Wales. HQIP holds the contract to commission, manage and develop the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme (NCAPOP), comprising around 40 projects covering care provided to people with a wide range of medical, surgical, and mental health conditions. The programme is funded by NHS England, the Welsh Government and, with some individual projects, other devolved administrations and crown dependencies.
<https://www.hqip.org.uk/national-programmes>



The British Gynaecological Cancer Society (BGCS) is the professional home of health providers working and researching the area of gynaecological cancers. The BGCS members consist of medical practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and other allied professionals, including scientists who have an interest in gynaecological cancers. Registered Charity no: 290959.



This work uses data that has been provided by patients and collected by the NHS as part of their care and support. For patients diagnosed in England, the data is collated, maintained and quality assured by the National Disease Registration Service (NDRS), which is part of NHS England. Access to the data was facilitated by the NHS England Data Access Request Service.



NHS Wales is implementing a new cancer informatics system. As a result, the quality and completeness of data from Wales is likely to have been impacted due to implementation of this new system across multiple NHS organisations (Health Boards), which has resulted in data being supplied by both old and new systems. Additionally, and reflecting the uncertainty of data quality, the data submitted to the audit may not have undergone routine clinical validation prior to submission to the Wales Cancer Network (WCN), Public Health Wales.

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1. Infographic

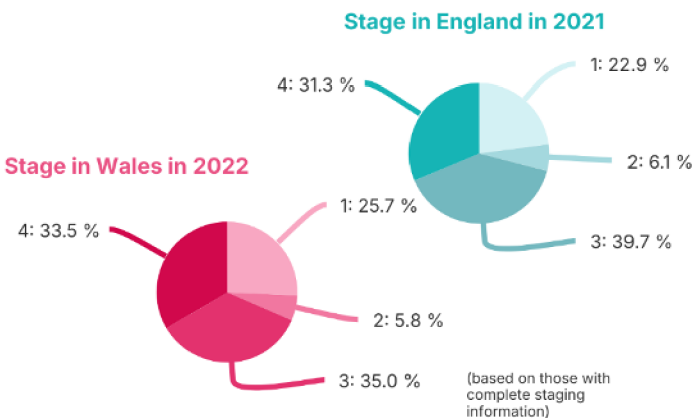


State of the Nation Report 2024

Diagnosis & staging

5,735 diagnoses of ovarian cancer in England in 2021

293 diagnoses of ovarian cancer in Wales in 2022
(excluding borderline ovarian tumours)



Mean age at diagnosis

England in 2021

66.6
years

Wales in 2022

65.8
years

Emergency admissions



Approximately four out of ten women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022 had an emergency admission 28 days prior to diagnosis.

Receipt of any treatment (surgery and/or chemotherapy)

Approximately one out of four women diagnosed with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022 did not have any treatment recorded.



Platinum-based chemotherapy

Approximately one out of three women diagnosed in England in 2021 with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged epithelial ovarian cancer did not have any platinum-based chemotherapy recorded.



One-year survival

England in 2021



Approximately seven out of ten women diagnosed with ovarian cancer survived at least one year after diagnosis.

Wales in 2022



Approximately three out of four women diagnosed with ovarian cancer survived at least one year after diagnosis.

(based on crude estimates and it does not account for differences in case-mix)

2. What is the National Ovarian Cancer Audit (NOCA)?

Welcome to the National Ovarian Cancer Audit (NOCA) Patient and Public report 2024. NOCA is one of the ten audits within the [National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre \(NATCAN\)](#). NOCA is delivered by the Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) within the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

The overall aim of the NOCA is to improve the quality of care for women with ovarian cancer in England and Wales. This includes the experience of being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, having treatments including surgery and chemotherapy for ovarian cancer and surviving ovarian cancer.

Individual ovarian cancer centres send information about their service to the national cancer registration databases, and we use these data to build a picture of what is happening in NHS ovarian cancer services in England and Wales. NOCA builds on the work previously conducted by the [Ovarian Cancer Audit Feasibility Pilot](#). More information about the NOCA can be found on our website.

We use national and international guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of ovarian cancer when we look at what ovarian cancer services are providing for patients. This the first annual State of the Nation report produced by the NOCA, and it aims to assess the delivery of ovarian cancer care by NHS services, share good practice and highlight where care can be improved.

A version of this document exists for doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals with more details, and this can be found on our [website](#). In this report we also include information about the completeness and the quality of the data.

3. What is ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer is a term used to describe an abnormal growth of cells in the ovaries and fallopian tubes, which are part of the female reproductive system. These abnormal cells don't work like the other ovarian cells and can grow and spread to other tissues. Ovarian cancer has many different types depending on which ovarian cells are abnormal.

In the audit when we talk about ovarian cancer, we talk about cancer of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, which are also part of the female reproductive system, and the peritoneum, which is a thin layer of tissue lining the inside of the abdomen. Ovarian, fallopian tube and primary peritoneal cancer are treated in the same way. Borderline ovarian tumours are excluded from the NOCA report.

4. What are the types of ovarian cancer?

There are many different types of ovarian cancer. The type of cancer depends on the type of cell and tissue the cancer starts in.

Ovarian cancer:

There are three types of ovarian cancer: epithelial, germ cell and sex-cord stromal. Each of these has several subtypes. Some types of ovarian cancer are more common than others and affect women at different ages. In this report, we include women with non-borderline ovarian cancers.

Borderline Ovarian Tumours:

Borderline malignant ("borderline") ovarian tumours have historically been recorded as ovarian cancers, though their ability to spread to other organs is now understood to be lower than the rest of the group. This type of tumour is excluded from the NOCA report.

5. Who gets ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer mostly affects women, but it can affect anyone who has ovaries. Women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer are often over 50 years old. Sometimes ovarian cancer runs in families, but it can also be found in women who have no family history of ovarian cancer.

Diagnosis & staging

5,735 diagnoses of ovarian cancer in England in 2021

293 diagnoses of ovarian cancer in Wales in 2022
(excluding borderline ovarian tumours)

Mean age at diagnosis

England in 2021

66.6 years

Wales in 2022

65.8 years

There were 5,735 women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and 293 in Wales in 2022. The average age of women diagnosed was 66.6 years old in England in 2021 and 65.8 years old in Wales in 2022.



6. What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer?

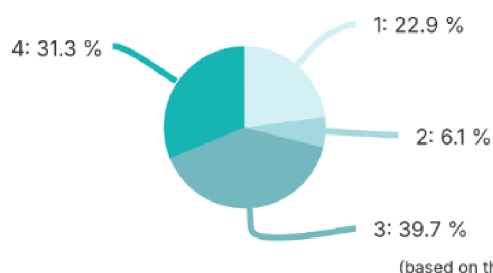
Symptoms of ovarian cancer can include having a swollen tummy or feeling bloated, pain or tenderness in your tummy or the area between the hips (pelvis), no appetite or feeling full quickly after eating and an urgent need to pee or needing to pee more often. However, there can be other symptoms of ovarian cancer which can include: indigestion, constipation or diarrhoea, back pain, feeling tired all the time, losing weight without trying, and bleeding from the vagina after the menopause.

7. Stages of ovarian cancer

Doctors and nurses will talk about the stage of ovarian cancer, and this describes the size and any spread of the disease. Knowing the stage is important for deciding which treatment an individual can receive. For the ovarian cancer stages a simple 1 to 4 staging system is used. It is called the FIGO system after its authors - the International Federation of Gynaecological Oncologists.

The Ovarian Cancer Audit Feasibility Pilot showed that most women with stage 1 disease received treatment. However, that was not the case for women with stage 2-4 or unknown stage disease. This is why we focus on women with stage 2-4 or unknown stage disease when we look at the treatment rates.

Stage in England in 2021



Stage in Wales in 2022



Approximately three out of four women were diagnosed with stage 2 to 4 ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022.



Insights from NOCA 2024

8. How is ovarian cancer diagnosed?

Ovarian cancer may be diagnosed following:

- Referral for more tests, usually after an ultrasound scan and a blood test if someone has been to their GP with symptoms which can be related to ovarian cancer.
- Attending Accident & Emergency (A&E) or Emergency Department (ED) because someone has symptoms that require emergency care.
- Investigation for another illness or following an ultrasound, CT or MRI scan. This is sometimes called incidental or accidental finding.

Doctors may use different tests and scans depending on symptoms, but a blood test and a scan are usually done first.

Sometimes, further tests are needed to diagnose ovarian cancer. These tests can include a CT or MRI scan, removing a small sample of cells or fluid from your ovaries to test them (needle biopsy), looking at your ovaries using a camera on the end of a tube through a small cut in your tummy (laparoscopy) or surgery to remove tissue or possibly your ovaries (laparotomy).

An emergency admission of ovarian cancer is when a woman is first diagnosed with ovarian cancer after going to Accident & Emergency (A&E) or Emergency Department (ED) with symptoms that require emergency care. Women diagnosed with ovarian cancer within 28 days after an emergency admission tend to be diagnosed late with more advanced disease. This can be due to delays in presenting for medical care, difficulties in access to care, delays in primary care, or delays in secondary care. Sometimes emergency presentations are unavoidable, but women have better outcomes on average if they can be seen by their GP first and then referred to the rapid access ovarian cancer diagnosis pathway.

Emergency admissions



Approximately four out of ten women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022 had an emergency admission 28 days prior to diagnosis.

Approximately four out of ten women in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022 had an emergency admission 28 days prior to diagnosis.



Insights from NOCA 2024

9. How is ovarian cancer treated?

Ovarian cancer is treated in different ways depending on its size, type, stage, and the woman's overall health. Some treatments are intended to cure the ovarian cancer whilst others intend to reduce the risk of cancer returning, prolong life and reduce the impact of its symptoms.

Ovarian cancer treatment normally involves a combination of surgery and chemotherapy.

Surgery

The type of surgery depends on how far the ovarian cancer has spread. It normally involves the removal of the womb, ovaries, fallopian tubes and the omentum, which is a fold of fatty tissue hanging within the tummy.

The aim of surgery is to remove as much cancer as possible so other parts of the body might need to be removed during ovarian cancer surgery.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy for ovarian cancer can be given either before or after surgery and works by using medicines to kill cancer cells in the body. This treatment usually involves receiving the drug through a drip into a vein. If the cancer is caught at a very early stage, some women may not need chemotherapy at all. For those diagnosed with a common type of ovarian cancer called epithelial ovarian cancer, the treatment usually involves six cycles of chemotherapy using a drug called platinum-based chemotherapy, alone or in combination with other drugs. Some women might also be offered maintenance treatment which aims to keep the ovarian cancer under control for as long as possible.

Receipt of any treatment (surgery and/or chemotherapy)

Approximately one out of four women diagnosed with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and in Wales in 2022 did not have any treatment recorded.



Platinum-based chemotherapy

Approximately one out of three women diagnosed in England in 2021 with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged epithelial ovarian cancer did not have any platinum-based chemotherapy recorded.



Approximately one out of four women newly diagnosed in England in 2021 or in Wales in 2022 with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged ovarian cancer did not have any treatment recorded.



Insights from NOCA 2024

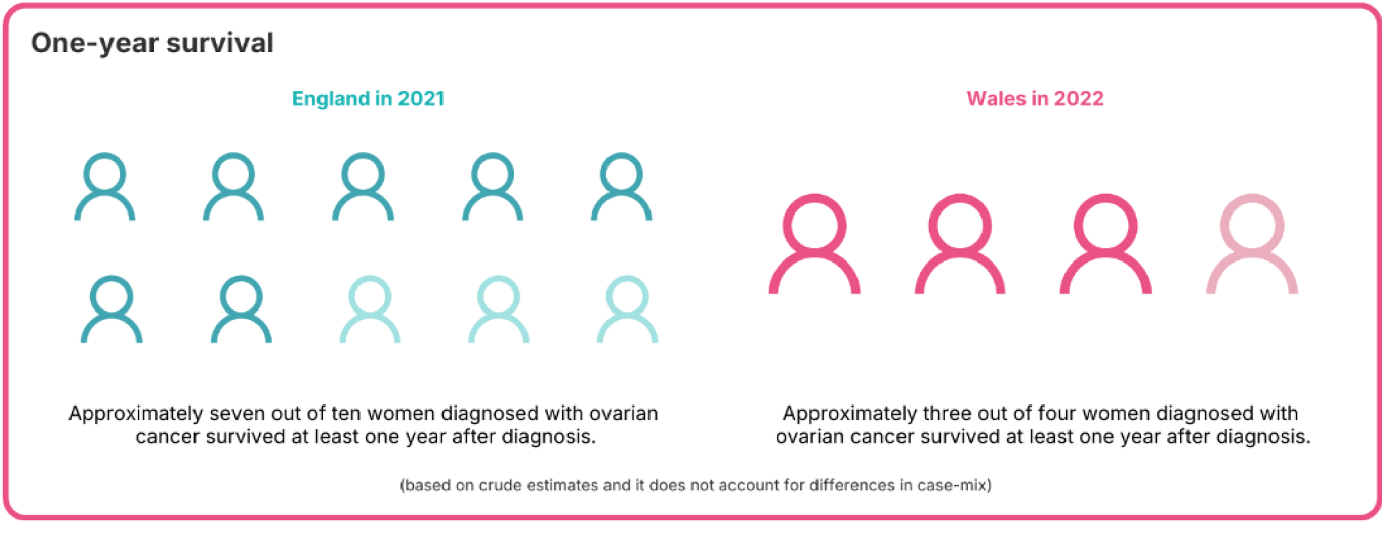
Approximately one out of three women newly diagnosed in England in 2021 with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged epithelial ovarian cancer did not receive platinum-based chemotherapy.



Insights from NOCA 2024

10. What are the survival outcomes for women with ovarian cancer?

One of the most important outcomes to measure for cancer care is survival after diagnosis which means how long women live after their ovarian cancer diagnosis.



11. What are the Key Findings from the NOCA State of the Nation Report 2024?

- 5,735 women were diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England in 2021 and 293 in Wales in 2022. The average age of women diagnosed was 66.6 years old in England in 2021 and 65.8 years old in Wales in 2022.
- Approximately three out of four women were diagnosed with stage 2 to 4 ovarian cancer in England and in Wales.
- Approximately four out of ten women in England and in Wales had an emergency admission 28 days prior to diagnosis.
- Approximately one out of four women newly diagnosed in England or in Wales with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged ovarian cancer did not have any treatment recorded.
- Approximately one out of three women newly diagnosed in England with stage 2 to 4 or unstaged epithelial ovarian cancer did not receive platinum-based chemotherapy.
- Approximately seven out of ten women diagnosed with ovarian cancer survived at least one year after diagnosis in England and three out of four in Wales.

12. What happens next?

- From October 2024, NOCA has started publishing quarterly reports on performance indicators using more recent data. This will help healthcare providers track progress and compare performance more easily over time.
- NOCA will continue to present audit results from our reports at national conferences, disseminate findings through different channels and publish articles in medical journals and other media.
- NOCA will continue its research in understanding the variations in ovarian cancer care.
- In terms of quality improvement, NOCA will collaborate with key partners and align their efforts with other ovarian cancer care initiatives. They will offer guidance to support improvements at a national, regional, and local level.
- NOCA will launch a national Quality Improvement (QI) project in 2025 to ensure continuous improvements in care.
- NOCA will host webinars in partnership with the British Gynaecological Cancer Society to explain the findings from our reports and encourage greater engagement from the clinical community.

13. Glossary

Average	An average is a single number taken as a representative of a list of numbers.
Cancer	Cancer is a disease in which some abnormal cells grow without normal control and spread to other parts of the body.
Chemotherapy	Chemotherapy is a medical treatment designed to kill fast-growing cells. It is effective against cancer cells because they grow and multiply much more quickly than most cells in the body.
National Ovarian Cancer Audit (NOCA)	The NOCA evaluates the quality of services and care provided to women with ovarian cancer in England and Wales. This is achieved by collecting clinical information about the treatment of all women newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England and Wales and information about their outcomes.
Omentum	Omentum is a fold of fatty tissue hanging within the tummy.
Outcomes	These are the results or consequences of ovarian cancer care that we measure, for example, survival after ovarian cancer.
Ovarian Cancer	An abnormal growth of abnormal cells in the ovaries, fallopian tubes or peritoneum.
Ovarian Cancer Surgery	A range of operations to remove cancer from patients' ovaries, fallopian tubes, peritoneum or any part of the body where the cancer has spread to.
Peritoneum	Peritoneum is a thin layer of tissue lining the inside of the abdomen.
Stage of Cancer	This is a way of describing the size and any spread of cancer. The stages are from 1 to 4 with 1 being early stage and 4 being late stage. Cancer at earlier stages is usually more treatable.
Systemic Therapy	A medicine given to treat cancer. This normally involves chemotherapy for ovarian cancer but can include targeted therapies.
Tumour	A cluster of abnormal cells.