

Women Attending Cervical Cancer Screening Programs by The Public Health Sector: **Who Are They?**

Nur Zahirah Balqis-Ali, Anis-Syakira Jailani, Nurul Aiman Farhana NAH, Weng Hong Fun, Sondi Sararaks,
Shazimah Abdul Samad, Zakiah Mohd Said



KEMENTERIAN KESIHATAN MALAYSIA
INSTITUT PENYELIDIKAN SISTEM KESIHATAN



OBJECTIVE

This paper aims to outline and compare the characteristics of women participating in the HPV-based screening program at public healthcare facilities to the national population distribution, providing insights into the program's reach.

INTRODUCTION

- Early detection of cervical cancer via screening programmes is crucial for effective treatment and greater survival probability (1).
- HPV-based testing has been available at public healthcare facilities through the national cervical cancer screening programme since 2019 (2).
- Although the program constitutes more than 80% of the total screening, more is needed to know about the characteristics of the women participating in it.
- Understanding the demographic characteristics of women attending the program provides insight into who is reached and those missing out.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- WP Kuala Lumpur & Putrajaya had the highest attendance as it was the first state with an HPV screening program implemented and has been running for the longest.
- The findings indicate that more Chinese women may attend the screening at private healthcare or miss out on the screening program.
- Women aged 30 – 39 were the most screened group, reflecting the current approach focusing the screening among women attending post-natal care (5). Efforts to screen older groups are required since the prevalence of cervical cancer increases with age (1).
- Majority screened were from lower income groups, reassuring program reach among those from lower economic status, but may indicate those from higher income either screened at private healthcare or missing out.

The database served as a promising platform to provide valuable information in facilitating monitoring and evaluation of the HPV screening progress. It should be expanded to include screening done in the private sector for more comprehensive tracking. Moving forward, empanelment to dedicated health teams will ensure proper invitation and follow-up for screening among all women.

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METHODOLOGY

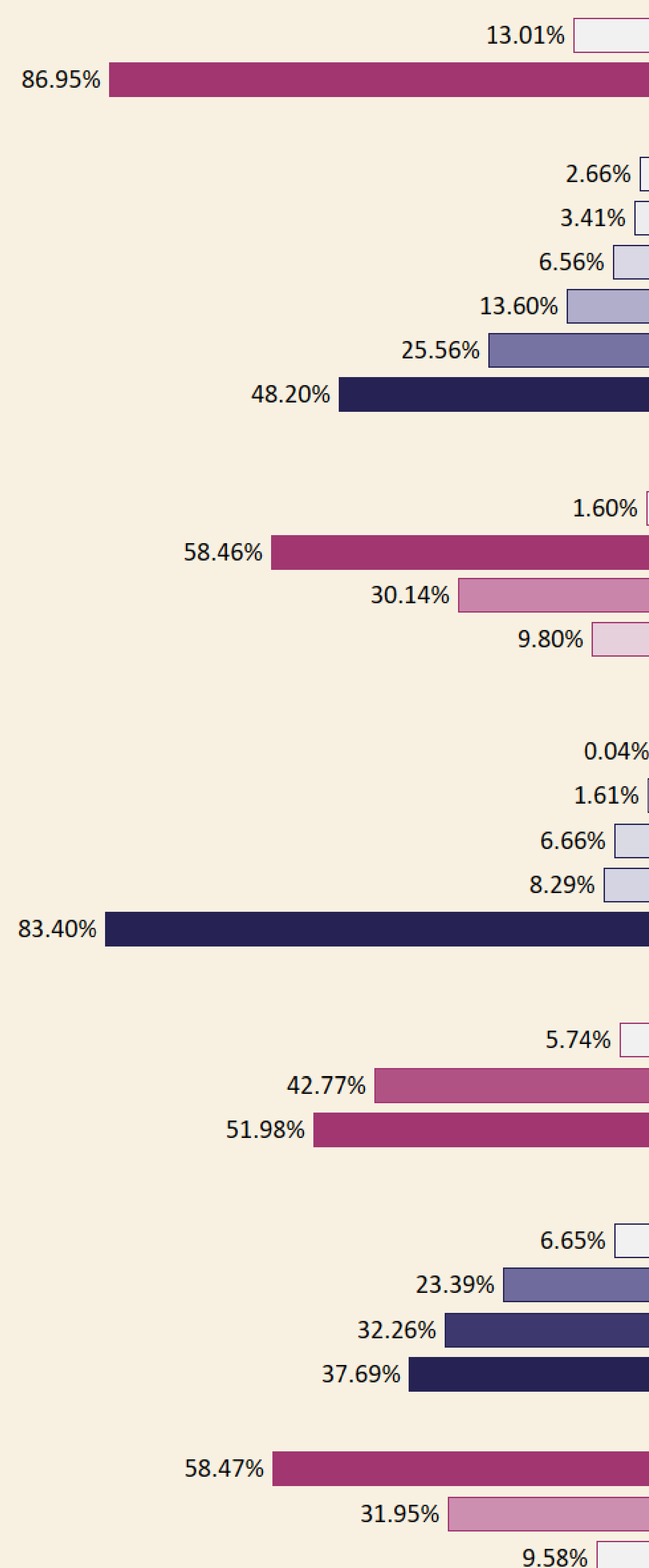
- The socio-demographic and economic conditions from the Malaysian public cervical cancer screening database by the Family Health Development Division, Ministry of Health (MOH), cumulatively between 2019 – 2021, were analysed to highlight the characteristics of those who accessed the HPV-based public screening program.
- The differences in characteristics from the general population were generated by comparing with the distribution data by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (3).
- Women attending screening by the state were compared to the six states' population distributions, whereas all other socio-demographics and economics were compared to the general Malaysian female population. All data were analysed using Stata version 14.

RESULTS

- 36,378 women were screened through the HPV-based program between 2019 – 2021.
- Analysis revealed that urban localities, particularly WP Kuala Lumpur & Putrajaya, had the highest attendance at the HPV-based screening program (48.20%).
- The majority of attendees were Malay (83.40%), followed by Chinese (8.29%), Indians (6.66%), and others (1.61%). In contrast, 22.4% of the Malaysian female population is Chinese.
- The most common age group among attendees was 30-39 years old (58.46%).
- The distribution by education level was similar between attendees and the general population.
- More than half of attendees had an income below RM4000 (58.47%).

KEY FINDINGS

Women demographics
data from MOH cervical cancer screening database



Women population distribution
data from DOSM

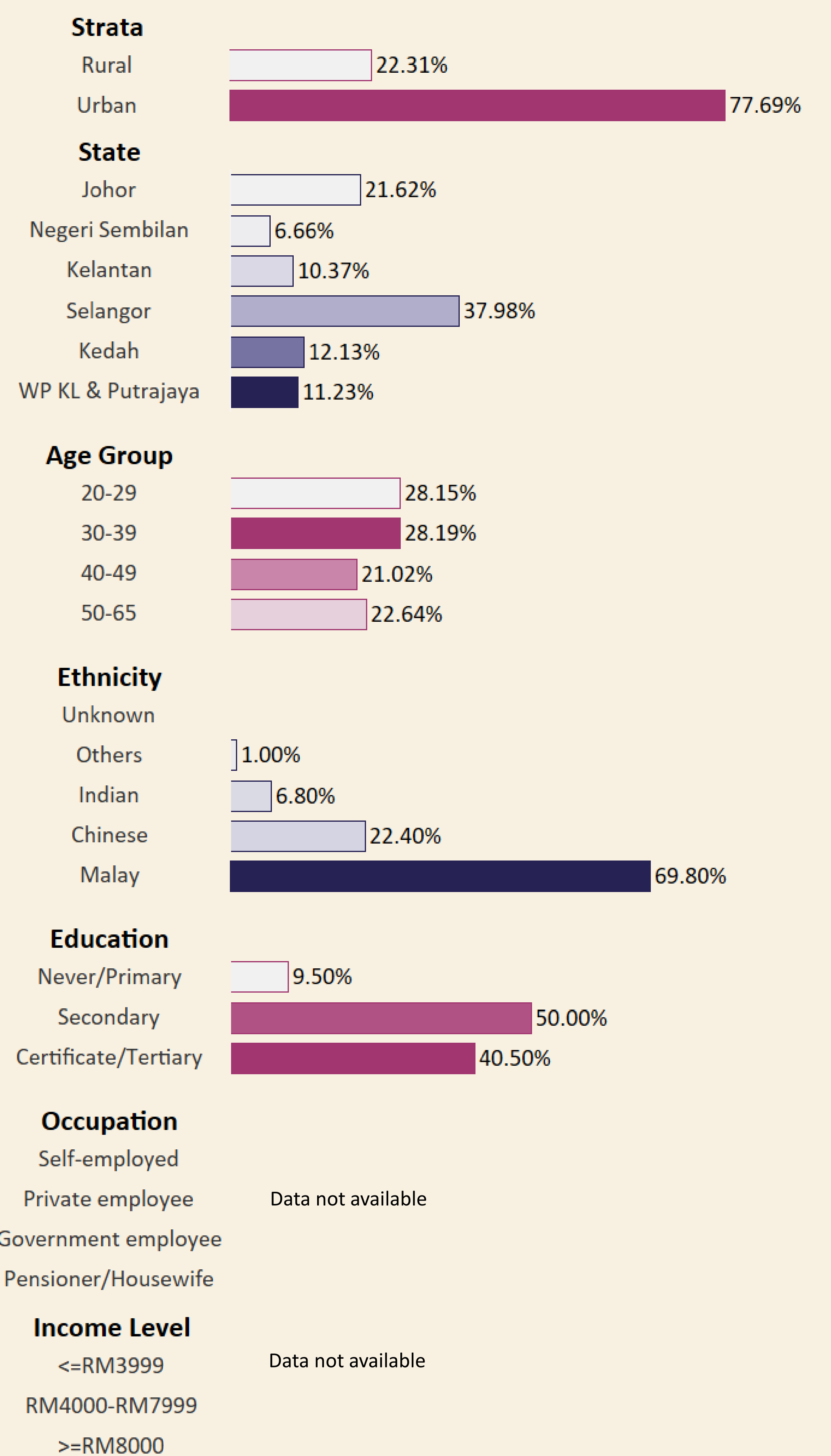


Figure 1: Characteristics and distribution of women attending cervical cancer screening via HPV DNA testing between 2019-2021

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