

National Drug Treatment Reporting System

2012 – 2018 Drug Data

Introduction

In this bulletin, trends in **treated problem drug use** (excluding alcohol) are described for the seven-year period from 2012 to 2018. The data are drawn from the **National Drug Treatment Reporting System** (NDTRS), the national surveillance system that records and reports on cases of drug and alcohol treatment in Ireland.

Overview

In the seven-year period, 65,216 cases treated for problem drug use were reported to the NDTRS. The number of treated cases recorded increased from 8,005 in 2012 to 10,274 in 2018.

- The proportion of *new* cases decreased from 40.9% in 2012 to 36.5% in 2017, then increased to 38.6% in 2018.
- In 2018, the majority of cases were treated in outpatient facilities (65.4%), as in previous years.

Main problem drug (excluding alcohol)

- **Opioids** (mainly heroin) were the most commonly reported main problem drug. The proportion of cases treated decreased from 52.0% in 2012 to 42.3% in 2018.
- **Cannabis** was the second most common main drug reported. The proportion of cases treated decreased from 28.6% in 2012 to 23.0% in 2018. Cannabis was the most common main drug among new cases in 2018. However, the proportion of new cases reporting cannabis as a main problem decreased from 45.8% in 2012 to 38.0% in 2018.
- **Cocaine** remains the third most common main drug reported. The proportion of cocaine cases increased from 8.3% in 2012 to 21.9% in 2018. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of cocaine cases increased by 50.3%.

- **Benzodiazepines** were the main problem drug for 9.7% of cases in 2018. Since 2013, the proportion of cases treated for benzodiazepines has been relatively stable.
- In 2018, 0.5% of cases reported **Z-drugs** as a main problem, as in 2012.

Polydrug use

- Over the period, the majority of cases reported **polydrug** use (59.5%).
- The proportion of cases with polydrug use decreased from 61.5% in 2012 to 53.4% in 2018.
- Alcohol (37.4%), benzodiazepines (36.2%), cannabis (35.3%), and cocaine (29.5%) were the most commonly reported **additional drugs** in 2018.

Risk Behaviour

- The proportion of all cases that had **ever injected** decreased from 36.0% in 2012 to 26.7% in 2018.

Socio-demographic characteristics

- The **median age** of cases increased from 28 years in 2012 to 31 years in 2018.
- Seven in every ten cases reported over the period were **male**.
- The proportion of cases recorded as **homeless** was 5.8% in 2012 and 9.5% in 2018.
- Cases with an **Irish Traveller** ethnicity increased in proportion from 2.8% in 2012 to 3.3% in 2018.
- A large proportion of cases were **unemployed** in 2018 (61.9%), as in previous years.
- The proportion of cases **in paid employment** increased from 7.2% in 2012 to 16.9% in 2018.

NDTRS cases 2012 to 2018

This bulletin presents NDTRS drug treatment data for the seven-year period from 2012 to 2018. Included are cases treated in all types of services: outpatient, inpatient, low threshold, general practitioners, and those treated in prison.^{1,2}

Data in this bulletin supersede all data previously published by the NDTRS.

Between 2012 and 2018, a total of 65,216 cases

treated for problem drug use (excluding alcohol) were reported to the NDTRS.³

In 2018, 10,274 treated cases were recorded, an increase from 8,005 in 2012 (Table 1).⁴

The proportion of new cases decreased from 40.9% in 2012 to 36.5% in 2017, then increased to 38.6% in 2018. The proportion of previously treated cases increased from 56.4% in 2012 to 58.8% in 2017, then decreased to 57.2% in 2018.

Table 1: Number of cases treated for problem drug use, by treatment status, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
New cases	3272	(40.9)	3475	(38.6)	3776	(38.2)	3742	(37.8)	3526	(38.2)	3257	(36.5)	3962	(38.6)
Previously treated cases	4518	(56.4)	5239	(58.2)	5643	(57.1)	5855	(59.2)	5335	(57.8)	5242	(58.8)	5872	(57.2)
Treatment status unknown	215	(2.7)	292	(3.2)	471	(4.8)	295	(3.0)	366	(4.0)	423	(4.7)	440	(4.3)

Type of service provider

Outpatient facilities accounted for the majority of cases treated over the period (63.1%) (Table 2). In 2018, 65.4% of cases were treated in outpatient facilities, a decrease from 66.2% in 2012.

The proportion of treated cases reported by residential (inpatient) settings increased from 14.0% in 2012 to 19.7% in 2017, then decreased to 13.5% in 2018.⁵

The proportion of cases treated in low threshold settings was similar in 2012 and 2018, at 8.9% and 8.6% respectively.

The proportion of cases treated in prison increased from 8.0% in 2012 to 10.5% in 2018.

The proportion of cases treated by general practitioners decreased from 2.9% in 2012 to 1.3% in 2017, then increased slightly to 2.0% in 2018.

Table 2: Number of cases treated for problem drug use, by type of service provider, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
Outpatient	5299	(66.2)	5998	(66.6)	6251	(63.2)	5818	(58.8)	5481	(59.4)	5610	(62.9)	6715	(65.4)
Inpatient*	1124	(14.0)	1233	(13.7)	1348	(13.6)	1779	(18.0)	1885	(20.4)	1757	(19.7)	1384	(13.5)
Low threshold	711	(8.9)	812	(9.0)	1190	(12.0)	1197	(12.1)	886	(9.6)	792	(8.9)	887	(8.6)
Prison	642	(8.0)	747	(8.3)	844	(8.5)	827	(8.4)	737	(8.0)	651	(7.3)	1082	(10.5)
General practitioner	229	(2.9)	216	(2.4)	257	(2.6)	271	(2.7)	238	(2.6)	112	(1.3)	206	(2.0)

* Includes any service where the client stays overnight, e.g., in-patient detoxification, therapeutic communities, respite and step down

Main problem drug

All cases

Opioids (mainly heroin) remain the main problem drug reported over the period. As a proportion of all cases treated, opioids decreased year-on-year from 52.0% in 2012 to 42.3% in 2018 (Table 3).

Cannabis remains the second most common main problem drug reported. The proportion of cases treated for cannabis as a main problem decreased from 28.6% in 2012 to 23.0% in 2018.

Cocaine remains the third most common main problem drug reported. The proportion of cocaine cases increased from 8.3% in 2012 to 21.9% in 2018. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of cocaine cases increased by 50.3%.

Benzodiazepines were the main problem for 9.7% of cases in 2018. The proportion of cases with benzodiazepines as a main problem increased from 7.9% in 2012 to 9.6% in 2013. Since then, the proportion has remained relatively stable.

The proportion of cases with **Z-drugs** as a main problem increased from 0.5% in 2012 to 1.6% in 2015, then decreased to 0.5% in 2018.

MDMA (ecstasy), amphetamines, and volatile inhalants each continued to account for a small proportion of all treated cases in 2018.

In 2018, 21 (0.2%) cases reported pregabalin (Lyrica) as a main problem. A further 57 cases reported pregabalin as a secondary problem.

Table 3: Main problem drug (excluding alcohol) reported in 30 days prior to treatment, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
Opioids	4164	(52.0)	4625	(51.4)	4948	(50.0)	4732	(47.8)	4341	(47.0)	4016	(45.0)	4349	(42.3)
Cannabis	2290	(28.6)	2583	(28.7)	2730	(27.6)	2786	(28.2)	2439	(26.4)	2200	(24.7)	2358	(23.0)
Cocaine	666	(8.3)	708	(7.9)	853	(8.6)	1026	(10.4)	1138	(12.3)	1500	(16.8)	2254	(21.9)
Benzodiazepines	636	(7.9)	810	(9.6)	953	(9.6)	873	(8.8)	897	(9.7)	868	(9.7)	999	(9.7)
Z-Drugs*	43	(0.5)	73	(0.8)	155	(1.6)	154	(1.6)	103	(1.1)	82	(0.9)	48	(0.5)
NPS	34	(0.4)	46	(0.5)	71	(0.7)	85	(0.9)	72	(0.8)	51	(0.6)	48	(0.5)
MDMA (ecstasy)	47	(0.6)	44	(0.5)	56	(0.6)	51	(0.5)	53	(0.6)	44	(0.5)	34	(0.3)
Amphetamines	50	(0.6)	54	(0.6)	58	(0.6)	63	(0.6)	55	(0.6)	40	(0.4)	57	(0.6)
Volatile Inhalants	21	(0.3)	13	(0.1)	15	(0.2)	15	(0.2)	11	(0.1)	6	(0.1)	10	(0.1)
Other	54	(0.7)	50	(0.6)	51	(0.5)	107	(1.1)	118	(1.3)	115	(1.3)	117	(1.1)
New cases	3272		3475		3776		3742		3526		3257		3962	
Cannabis	1499	(45.8)	1633	(47.0)	1696	(44.9)	1693	(45.2)	1452	(41.2)	1272	(39.1)	1505	(38.0)
Cocaine	297	(9.1)	320	(9.2)	425	(11.3)	513	(13.7)	568	(16.1)	748	(23.0)	1232	(31.1)
Opiates	1059	(32.4)	1034	(29.8)	1036	(27.4)	971	(25.9)	950	(26.9)	809	(24.8)	719	(18.1)
Benzodiazepines	279	(8.5)	345	(9.9)	419	(11.1)	340	(9.1)	353	(10.0)	290	(8.9)	345	(8.7)
Other	24	(0.7)	28	(0.8)	26	(0.7)	56	(1.5)	55	(1.6)	42	(1.3)	59	(1.5)
MDMA (ecstasy)	32	(1.0)	27	(0.8)	37	(1.0)	31	(0.8)	39	(1.1)	29	(0.9)	18	(0.5)
Z-Drugs	19	(0.6)	22	(0.6)	58	(1.5)	46	(1.2)	41	(1.2)	22	(0.7)	17	(0.4)
NPS	20	(0.6)	25	(0.7)	43	(1.1)	53	(1.4)	36	(1.0)	21	(0.6)	25	(0.6)
Amphetamines	27	(0.8)	32	(0.9)	30	(0.8)	33	(0.9)	24	(0.7)	19	(0.6)	34	(0.9)
Volatile Inhalants	16	(0.5)	9	(0.3)	6	(0.2)	6	(0.2)	8	(0.2)	~	(0.2)	8	(0.2)
Previously treated	4518		5239		5643		5855		5335		5242		5872	
Opioids	3012	(66.7)	3463	(66.1)	3658	(64.8)	3619	(61.8)	3204	(60.1)	3037	(57.9)	3478	(59.2)
Cocaine	349	(7.7)	352	(6.7)	381	(6.8)	487	(8.3)	541	(10.1)	692	(13.2)	944	(16.1)
Cannabis	723	(16.0)	859	(16.4)	932	(16.5)	1023	(17.5)	908	(17.0)	807	(15.4)	717	(12.2)
Benzodiazepines	337	(7.5)	437	(8.3)	487	(8.6)	504	(8.6)	500	(9.4)	534	(10.2)	596	(10.1)
Z-Drugs*	22	(0.5)	48	(0.9)	86	(1.5)	99	(1.7)	58	(1.1)	56	(1.1)	31	(0.5)
Other	24	(0.5)	20	(0.4)	19	(0.3)	38	(0.6)	45	(0.8)	54	(1.1)	52	(0.9)
NPS	12	(0.3)	19	(0.4)	26	(0.5)	29	(0.5)	34	(0.6)	27	(0.5)	19	(0.3)
Amphetamines	23	(0.5)	20	(0.4)	27	(0.5)	28	(0.5)	29	(0.5)	19	(0.4)	19	(0.3)
MDMA (ecstasy)	13	(0.3)	17	(0.3)	18	(0.3)	19	(0.3)	13	(0.2)	15	(0.3)	14	(0.2)
Volatile Inhalants	~	~	~	~	9	(0.2)	9	(0.2)	~	~	~	~	~	(0.0)
Treatment status unknown	215		292		471		295		366		423		440	

* Z-Drugs are non-benzodiazepine hypnotic sedative drugs, e.g., zolpidem, zopiclone

~ Cells with five cases or fewer

New cases

In 2018, cannabis (38.0%) was the most common main problem drug reported by new cases, followed by cocaine (31.1%) and opioids (18.1%) (Table 3).

The proportion of new cases reporting cannabis as a main problem decreased from 45.8% in 2012 to 38.0% in 2018.

In 2018, cocaine became the second most common main problem drug among new cases, having ranked third (behind cannabis and opioids) from 2012 to 2017. Cocaine accounted for 9.1% of new cases in 2012, as compared to 31.1% in 2018. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of new cases with cocaine as a main problem increased by 64.7%.

The proportion of new cases reporting opioids as a main problem drug decreased from 32.4% in 2012 to 18.1% in 2018.

Previously treated cases

In 2018, opioids (59.2%) were the most common main problem drug reported by previously treated cases, followed by cocaine (16.1%), cannabis (12.2%), and benzodiazepines (10.1%).

In 2018, cocaine became the second most commonly reported main drug among previously treated cases, having ranked third (behind opioids and cannabis) from 2012 to 2017. The proportion of previously treated cases reporting cocaine as a main problem increased from 7.7% in 2012 to 16.1% in 2018.

Polydrug use

Over the period 2012 to 2018, the majority of cases (59.5%) reported polydrug use (problem use of more than one drug) (Table 4).

The proportion of cases that reported polydrug use decreased from 61.5% in 2012 to 53.4% in 2018.

Table 4: Polydrug use in cases treated for problem drug use, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
One drug only	3083	(38.5)	3340	(37.1)	3993	(40.4)	3872	(39.1)	3524	(38.2)	3816	(42.8)	4787	(46.6)
Two or more drugs	4922	(61.5)	5666	(62.9)	5897	(59.6)	6020	(60.9)	5703	(61.8)	5106	(57.2)	5487	(53.4)

In 2018, alcohol (37.4%) was the most common additional substance reported by cases with polydrug use, followed by benzodiazepines (36.2%), cannabis (35.3%), and cocaine (29.5%) (Table 5).

drug decreased from 10.2% in 2012 to 7.9% in 2018.

More cases reported a Z-drug as an additional problem drug (278 cases) (Table 5) than as a main problem drug (48 cases) in 2018 (Table 3).

Opioids were reported as an additional substance by 17.7% of cases with polydrug use in 2018. This compares to 18.8% of cases in 2012, and a peak of 21.4% in 2016.

The proportion of cases with a Z-drug as an additional problem increased year-on-year from 4.3% in 2012 to 7.7% in 2016, before decreasing to 5.1% in 2018 (Table 5).

In 2018, more cases reported MDMA (ecstasy) as an additional problem drug (432 cases) (Table 5) than as a main problem drug (34 cases) (Table 3). However, the proportion of cases with MDMA as an additional

Among new cases with polydrug use, alcohol (49.0%) was the most common additional substance, followed by cannabis (34.9%), cocaine (27.3%), and benzodiazepines (25.3%) (Table 5).

Table 5: Polydrug use - additional problem drugs for all cases and new cases, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All polydrug	4922		5666		5897		6020		5703		5106		5487	
Alcohol	2080	(42.3)	2336	(41.2)	2078	(35.2)	2051	(34.1)	1943	(34.1)	1914	(37.5)	2053	(37.4)
Benzodiazepines	1819	(37.0)	2103	(37.1)	2294	(38.9)	2316	(38.5)	2105	(36.9)	1846	(36.2)	1987	(36.2)
Cannabis	1515	(30.8)	1836	(32.4)	2012	(34.1)	1953	(32.4)	1878	(32.9)	1690	(33.1)	1937	(35.3)
Cocaine	1274	(25.9)	1335	(23.6)	1289	(21.9)	1360	(22.6)	1475	(25.9)	1435	(28.1)	1619	(29.5)
Opioids	927	(18.8)	1073	(18.9)	1082	(18.3)	1060	(17.6)	1222	(21.4)	1078	(21.1)	969	(17.7)
MDMA (ecstasy)	500	(10.2)	481	(8.5)	431	(7.3)	519	(8.6)	465	(8.2)	384	(7.5)	432	(7.9)
Z-Drugs	210	(4.3)	307	(5.4)	355	(6.0)	436	(7.2)	438	(7.7)	334	(6.5)	278	(5.1)
Other	194	(3.9)	162	(2.9)	156	(2.6)	222	(3.7)	224	(3.9)	261	(5.1)	268	(4.9)
Amphetamines	153	(3.1)	178	(3.1)	162	(2.7)	138	(2.3)	128	(2.2)	129	(2.5)	128	(2.3)
NPS	135	(2.7)	142	(2.5)	98	(1.7)	108	(1.8)	115	(2.0)	52	(1.0)	52	(0.9)
Volatile inhalants	16	(0.3)	18	(0.3)	21	(0.4)	14	(0.2)	13	(0.2)	18	(0.4)	20	(0.4)
New cases	1832		2062		2115		2077		2016		1693		1896	
Alcohol	939	(51.3)	1030	(50.0)	925	(43.7)	910	(43.8)	861	(42.7)	805	(47.5)	929	(49.0)
Cannabis	529	(28.9)	623	(30.2)	661	(31.3)	632	(30.4)	603	(29.9)	561	(33.1)	662	(34.9)
Cocaine	437	(23.9)	465	(22.6)	478	(22.6)	465	(22.4)	585	(29.0)	465	(27.5)	517	(27.3)
Benzodiazepines	538	(29.4)	614	(29.8)	646	(30.5)	644	(31.0)	636	(31.5)	464	(27.4)	480	(25.3)
Opioids	204	(11.1)	234	(11.3)	220	(10.4)	213	(10.3)	297	(14.7)	214	(12.6)	179	(9.4)
MDMA (ecstasy)	232	(12.7)	260	(12.6)	237	(11.2)	253	(12.2)	237	(11.8)	195	(11.5)	219	(11.6)
Other	84	(4.6)	74	(3.6)	61	(2.9)	83	(4.0)	85	(4.2)	103	(6.1)	128	(6.8)
Z-Drugs	59	(3.2)	96	(4.7)	78	(3.7)	102	(4.9)	111	(5.5)	79	(4.7)	51	(2.7)
Amphetamines	79	(4.3)	83	(4.0)	70	(3.3)	58	(2.8)	53	(2.6)	58	(3.4)	50	(2.6)
NPS	57	(3.1)	47	(2.3)	36	(1.7)	42	(2.0)	50	(2.5)	18	(1.1)	16	(0.8)
Volatile inhalants	9	(0.5)	9	(0.4)	8	(0.4)	10	(0.5)	~	~	6	(0.4)	6	(0.3)

~ Cells with five cases or fewer

Risk factors

Risk factors of interest to the NDTRS include injecting behaviour, sharing of needles and syringes, and sharing of other drug paraphernalia (such as pipes and foils).

The proportion of all cases that had ever injected decreased from 36.0% in 2012 to 26.7% in 2018 (Table 6). This equates to a decrease of 142 cases over the period.

Among new cases, the proportion that reported ever injecting decreased over the period from 18.0% in 2012 to 7.9% in 2018.

The proportion of previously treated cases that reported ever injecting decreased from 49.4% in 2012 to 40.3% in 2018.

The proportion of all cases currently injecting (i.e., in the 30 days prior to treatment) decreased from 35.6% in 2012 to 29.7% in 2018.

Table 6: Injecting history in cases treated for problem drug use, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
Ever injected	2882	(36.0)	3254	(36.1)	3528	(35.7)	3330	(33.7)	2960	(32.1)	2651	(29.7)	2740	(26.7)
Total new cases	3272		3475		3776		3742		3526		3257		3962	
Ever injected	590	(18.0)	591	(17.0)	642	(17.0)	541	(14.5)	476	(13.5)	359	(11.0)	314	(7.9)
Total previously treated	4518		5239		5643		5855		5335		5242		5872	
Ever injected	2232	(49.4)	2575	(49.2)	2730	(48.4)	2701	(46.1)	2379	(44.6)	2165	(41.3)	2367	(40.3)
Current risk														
All cases	2882		3254		3528		3330		2960		2651		2740	
Currently injecting*	1026	(35.6)	1182	(36.3)	1304	(37.0)	1223	(36.7)	984	(33.2)	862	(32.5)	815	(29.7)
Ever shared	1422	(49.3)	1583	(48.6)	1744	(49.4)	1519	(45.6)	N/A**		N/A**		N/A**	
New cases	590		591		642		541		476		359		314	
Currently injecting*	261	(44.2)	275	(46.5)	298	(46.4)	228	(42.1)	186	(39.1)	136	(37.9)	131	(41.7)
Ever shared	203	(34.4)	209	(35.4)	255	(39.7)	192	(35.5)	N/A**		N/A**		N/A**	
Previously treated cases	2232		2575		2730		2701		2379		2165		2367	
Currently injecting*	745	(33.4)	873	(33.9)	920	(33.7)	937	(34.7)	760	(31.9)	691	(31.9)	660	(27.9)
Ever shared	1191	(53.4)	1345	(52.2)	1431	(52.4)	1309	(48.5)	N/A**		N/A**		N/A**	

* In the 30 days prior to treatment

** Not available, see description below

Prior to 2016, information on sharing of any drug paraphernalia was collected in a single question. In order to comply with reporting requirements of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), this question was changed in 2016 so that sharing of 'needles and syringes' could be recorded separately from sharing of 'other drug paraphernalia'.

The transition to the new questions has resulted in a large number of unknown values. For example, in 2018, the proportion of unknown values was 38.3% for sharing needles and syringes, and 50.1% for sharing other drug paraphernalia. As a result,

sharing of *any* drug paraphernalia is not reported for 2016 to 2018. Data for subsequent years will be reported as the completeness of these data increases.⁶

Available data show the proportion of all cases (including new and previously treated) that reported ever sharing any injecting equipment decreased from 49.3% in 2012 to 45.6% in 2015. These figures should be interpreted cautiously due to the number of unknown responses (10.8% in 2012 and 16.2% in 2015).

Socio-demographic characteristics

The median age of cases increased over time from 28 years in 2012 to 31 years in 2018 (Table 7). For new cases, the median age increased from 25 years in 2012 to 26 years in 2018.

In 2018, 7.1% of all cases were aged 17 years or younger, a decrease from 8.4% in 2012. The under 18s accounted for 13.6% of new cases in 2018, as compared to 15.6% of new cases in 2012.

Over the period, the majority of cases were male (72.8%), while females accounted for 26.8% of cases (gender was unknown for 0.4% of cases).

The proportion of cases recorded as homeless increased from 5.8% in 2012 to 9.6% in 2016 and has remained relatively stable since then.

Cases with an Irish Traveller ethnicity increased in proportion from 2.8% in 2012 to 3.5% in 2017, then decreased marginally to 3.3% in 2018.⁷

The proportion of cases recorded as having ceased education (for the first time) before the age of 16 years decreased from 38.1% in 2012 to 34.6% in 2018. However, the highest number of such cases occurred in 2018 (3,551 cases).

Over the reporting period, 64.7% of all cases were unemployed. The lowest proportion unemployed was 61.9% in 2018. In each year, unemployment rates were higher among previously treated cases than among new cases.

The proportion of cases in paid employment increased from 7.2% in 2012 to 16.9% in 2018.

Table 7: Socio-demographic characteristics of cases treated for problem drug use, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cases	8005		9006		9890		9892		9227		8922		10274	
Median age (range ⁸)	28	16-44	29	17-45	29	17-45	30	17-46	30	17-47	30	17-47	31	17-48
Under 18	673	(8.4)	669	(7.4)	747	(7.6)	685	(6.9)	629	(6.8)	591	(6.6)	732	(7.1)
Male	5826	(72.8)	6554	(72.8)	7202	(72.8)	7146	(72.2)	6676	(72.4)	6449	(72.3)	7626	(74.2)
Homeless	464	(5.8)	581	(6.5)	840	(8.5)	910	(9.2)	886	(9.6)	858	(9.6)	980	(9.5)
Traveller	227	(2.8)	231	(2.6)	313	(3.2)	282	(2.9)	296	(3.2)	310	(3.5)	343	(3.3)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	3047	(38.1)	3244	(36.0)	3486	(35.2)	3511	(35.5)	3236	(35.1)	3118	(34.9)	3551	(34.6)
In paid employment	578	(7.2)	706	(7.8)	816	(8.3)	880	(8.9)	1028	(11.1)	1280	(14.3)	1735	(16.9)
Unemployed	5362	(67.0)	5910	(65.6)	6368	(64.4)	6368	(64.4)	6107	(66.2)	5702	(63.9)	6356	(61.9)
Retired/unable to work including disability	854	(10.7)	1009	(11.2)	1135	(11.5)	1136	(11.5)	805	(8.7)	712	(8.0)	823	(8.0)
New cases	3272		3475		3776		3742		3526		3257		3962	
Median age (range ⁸)	25	15-42	25	15-43	25	15-44	25	16-45	25	16-46	26	16-46	26	16-45
Under 18	510	(15.6)	523	(15.1)	566	(15.0)	498	(13.3)	469	(13.3)	413	(12.7)	537	(13.6)
Male	2456	(75.1)	2656	(76.4)	2842	(75.3)	2814	(75.2)	2628	(74.5)	2446	(75.1)	3000	(75.7)
Homeless	128	(3.9)	152	(4.4)	248	(6.6)	212	(5.7)	223	(6.3)	199	(6.1)	248	(6.3)
Traveller	101	(3.1)	92	(2.6)	135	(3.6)	107	(2.9)	102	(2.9)	97	(3.0)	109	(2.8)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	1001	(30.6)	1004	(28.9)	1046	(27.7)	1011	(27.0)	969	(27.5)	834	(25.6)	946	(23.9)
In paid employment	297	(9.1)	356	(10.2)	424	(11.2)	507	(13.5)	537	(15.2)	652	(20.0)	943	(23.8)
Unemployed	1916	(58.6)	1989	(57.2)	2091	(55.4)	2099	(56.1)	1990	(56.4)	1757	(53.9)	2029	(51.2)
Retired/unable to work including disability	334	(10.2)	348	(10.0)	364	(9.6)	322	(8.6)	242	(6.9)	183	(5.6)	222	(5.6)
Previously treated	4518		5239		5643		5855		5335		5242		5872	
Median age (range ⁸)	30	19-44	31	19-46	31	19-45	32	19-46	32	19-47	33	19-47	34	19-49
Under 18	138	(3.1)	138	(2.6)	168	(3.0)	171	(2.9)	141	(2.6)	154	(2.9)	170	(2.9)
Male	3204	(70.9)	3695	(70.5)	4041	(71.6)	4117	(70.3)	3782	(70.9)	3686	(70.3)	4328	(73.7)
Homeless	327	(7.2)	417	(8.0)	526	(9.3)	660	(11.3)	617	(11.6)	620	(11.8)	679	(11.6)
Traveller	113	(2.5)	135	(2.6)	159	(2.8)	172	(2.9)	183	(3.4)	194	(3.7)	211	(3.6)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	1964	(43.5)	2180	(41.6)	2328	(41.3)	2440	(41.7)	2162	(40.5)	2183	(41.6)	2460	(41.9)
In paid employment	263	(5.8)	326	(6.2)	375	(6.6)	354	(6.0)	464	(8.7)	562	(10.7)	738	(12.6)
Unemployed	3348	(74.1)	3751	(71.6)	3955	(70.1)	4080	(69.7)	3872	(72.6)	3717	(70.9)	4056	(69.1)
Retired/unable to work including disability	465	(10.3)	630	(12.0)	714	(12.7)	790	(13.5)	533	(10.0)	495	(9.4)	563	(9.6)
Treatment status unknown	215		292		471		295		366		423		440	

Cocaine

This section focuses on the socio-demographic characteristics of cases with cocaine as a main problem drug (Table 8). In 2018, 2,254 cases were recorded with cocaine as a main problem, an increase from 666 cases in 2012.

The median age when entering treatment increased from 29 in 2012 to 30 in 2018.

The proportion of cases aged under 18 years was 1.4% in 2012 and 1.7% in 2018.

Over the period, the majority of cases were male (80.1%).

The proportion of female cases increased from 18.0% in 2012 to 20.1% in 2018.

The proportion of cases in paid employment increased from 15.8% in 2012 to 35.0% in 2018.

The proportion of cases with polydrug use decreased from 76.6% in 2012 to 56.1% in 2018. In 2018, the most common additional drugs were alcohol (56.0%), cannabis (47.8%), and benzodiazepines (23.8%).

In 2018, crack cocaine was reported as the main drug for 11.3% of cases with cocaine as a main problem. This figure may be an underestimation of the proportion of cases using crack, due to the non-specific recording of cocaine instead of 'cocaine powder' or 'crack cocaine'.⁹

Table 8: Socio-demographic characteristics of cases treated for cocaine as a main problem, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
All cocaine	666		708		853		1026		1138		1500		2254	
Median age (range ⁸)	29	19-43	29	19-44	30	19-44	30	19-44	29	18-44	30	19-45	30	19-44
Under 18	9	(1.4)	11	(1.6)	17	(2.0)	20	(1.9)	27	(2.4)	26	(1.7)	39	(1.7)
Female	120	(18.0)	124	(17.5)	147	(17.2)	197	(19.2)	259	(22.8)	284	(18.9)	453	(20.1)
Homeless	12	(1.8)	12	(1.7)	26	(3.0)	40	(3.9)	38	(3.3)	56	(3.7)	107	(4.7)
Traveller	11	(1.7)	16	(2.3)	16	(1.9)	21	(2.0)	30	(2.6)	42	(2.8)	41	(1.8)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	244	(36.6)	247	(34.9)	278	(32.6)	306	(29.8)	309	(27.2)	390	(26.0)	598	(26.5)
In paid employment	105	(15.8)	129	(18.2)	167	(19.9)	249	(24.3)	322	(28.3)	502	(33.5)	790	(35.0)
Unemployed	368	(55.3)	422	(59.6)	465	(54.5)	536	(52.2)	611	(53.7)	773	(51.5)	1144	(50.8)
Retired/unable to work including disability	123	(18.5)	91	(12.9)	133	(15.6)	144	(14.0)	104	(9.1)	90	(6.0)	136	(6.0)
New cases	297		320		425		513		568		748		1232	
Median age (range ⁸)	26	19-42	28	18-43	28	18-44	28	18-43	27	18-43	28	18-44	29	19-43
Under 18	6	(2.0)	8	(2.5)	16	(3.8)	16	(3.1)	20	(3.5)	15	(2.0)	28	(2.3%)
Female	45	(15.2)	54	(16.9)	59	(13.9)	91	(17.7)	107	(18.8)	123	(16.4)	216	(17.5)
Homeless	5	(1.7)	~	~	11	(2.6)	11	(2.1)	17	(3.0)	27	(3.6)	50	(4.1)
Traveller	7	(2.4)	10	(3.1)	12	(2.8)	12	(2.3)	15	(2.6)	19	(2.5)	19	(1.5)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	99	(33.3)	103	(32.2)	135	(31.8)	135	(26.3)	124	(21.8)	161	(21.5)	284	(23.1)
In paid employment	51	(17.2)	64	(20.0)	103	(24.2)	155	(30.2)	190	(33.5)	286	(38.2)	497	(40.3)
Unemployed	160	(53.9)	187	(58.4)	218	(51.3)	240	(46.8)	273	(48.1)	357	(47.7)	570	(46.3)
Retired/unable to work including disability	54	(18.2)	46	(14.4)	64	(15.1)	63	(12.3)	46	(8.1)	37	(4.9)	65	(5.3)
Previously treated	349		352		381		487		541		692		944	
Median age (range ⁸)	31	20-44	31	20-44	31	21-43	31	20-47	31	20-46	32	19-46	32	19-46
Under 18	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	7	(1.3)	9	(1.3)	10	(1.1)
Female	73	(20.9)	64	(18.2)	77	(20.2)	102	(20.9)	144	(26.6)	151	(21.8)	216	(22.9)
Homeless	7	(2.0)	9	(2.6)	14	(3.7)	27	(5.5)	20	(3.7)	28	(4.0)	46	(4.9)
Traveller	~	~	6	(1.7)	~	~	9	(1.8)	15	(2.8)	20	(2.9)	20	(2.1)
Education ceased before 16 yrs	139	(39.8)	136	(38.6)	133	(34.9)	168	(34.9)	180	(33.3)	219	(31.6)	298	(31.6)
In paid employment	49	(14.0)	56	(15.9)	57	(15.0)	88	(18.1)	129	(23.8)	193	(27.9)	272	(28.8)
Unemployed	200	(57.3)	219	(62.2)	223	(58.5)	283	(58.1)	317	(58.6)	394	(56.9)	538	(57.0)
Retired/unable to work including disability	63	(18.1)	42	(11.9)	61	(16.0)	78	(16.0)	56	(10.4)	46	(6.6)	62	(6.6)
Treatment status unknown	20		36		47		26		29		60		78	

~ Cells with five cases or fewer

Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) area of residence

In 2018, the highest number of reported cases resided in CHO 9 (Table 9) (see below for reference to areas included in each CHO).

As participation in the NDTRS is not uniform across the country, conclusions based on geographic analyses are limited.

Table 9: Number of cases treated, by Community Healthcare Organisation area of residence, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All cases	8005	9006	9890	9892	9227	8922	10274
CHO 1	305	265	297	284	367	382	312
CHO 2	402	416	356	411	402	375	329
CHO 3	392	571	809	748	779	749	843
CHO 4	1178	1367	1390	1429	1206	1055	1169
CHO 5	1349	1454	1366	1394	1261	1170	1277
CHO 6	343	458	470	470	366	401	448
CHO 7	1538	1646	1738	1750	1640	1531	2043
CHO 8	890	807	1075	1020	921	926	1007
CHO 9	1379	1748	2068	2007	1845	1876	2474
Other/unknown	229	274	321	379	440	457	372
New cases	3272	3475	3776	3742	3526	3257	3962
CHO 1	178	166	149	147	159	182	147
CHO 2	173	160	126	162	185	173	132
CHO 3	203	252	381	322	361	310	417
CHO 4	526	595	589	575	513	467	530
CHO 5	601	692	611	613	537	498	554
CHO 6	143	168	200	199	149	179	213
CHO 7	544	525	572	593	543	509	664
CHO 8	452	348	479	471	434	367	460
CHO 9	404	507	587	581	530	460	765
Other/unknown	48	62	82	79	115	112	80
Previously treated	4518	5239	5643	5855	5335	5242	5872
CHO 1	114	91	135	121	180	172	150
CHO 2	227	246	227	247	212	198	163
CHO 3	181	294	362	357	381	409	396
CHO 4	636	730	773	841	667	567	627
CHO 5	730	747	746	776	711	640	671
CHO 6	180	264	247	259	200	206	227
CHO 7	951	1055	1025	1095	997	933	1315
CHO 8	409	409	540	514	463	457	493
CHO 9	923	1202	1376	1370	1224	1336	1568
Other/unknown	167	201	212	275	300	324	262
Treatment status unknown	215	292	471	295	366	423	440

LHO areas in each Community Healthcare Organisation area

CHO 1 – Donegal LHO, Sligo/Leitrim/West Clare LHO and Cavan/Monaghan LHO

CHO 2 – Galway LHO, Roscommon and Mayo LHO

CHO 3 – Clare LHO, Limerick LHO, North Tipperary/East Limerick LHO

CHO 4 – Kerry LHO, North Cork LHO, North Lee LHO, South Lee LHO and West Cork LHO

CHO 5 – South Tipperary LHO, Carlow/Kilkenny LHO, Waterford LHO and Wexford LHO

CHO 6 – Wicklow LHO, Dun Laoghaire LHO and Dublin South East LHO

CHO 7 – Kildare/West Wicklow LHO, Dublin West LHO, Dublin South City LHO and Dublin South West LHO

CHO 8 – Laois/Offaly LHO, Longford/Westmeath LHO, Louth LHO and Meath LHO

CHO 9 – Dublin North LHO, Dublin North Central LHO and Dublin North West LHO

Incidence and prevalence of treatment

Annual rates for the incidence (new cases) and prevalence (all cases) of treated problem drug use were calculated per 100,000 of the population aged 15 to 64 years based on census figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) ¹⁰ (Figure 1).

Incidence increased from 104.4 per 100,000 in 2012 to 121.6 per 100,000 in 2018.

Prevalence, which includes new cases and those cases returning to treatment, increased from 258.6 per 100,000 in 2012 to 316.2 per 100,000 in 2014. The rate then decreased year-on-year to 279.8 per 100,000 in 2017, before increasing to 318.5 per 100,000 in 2018.

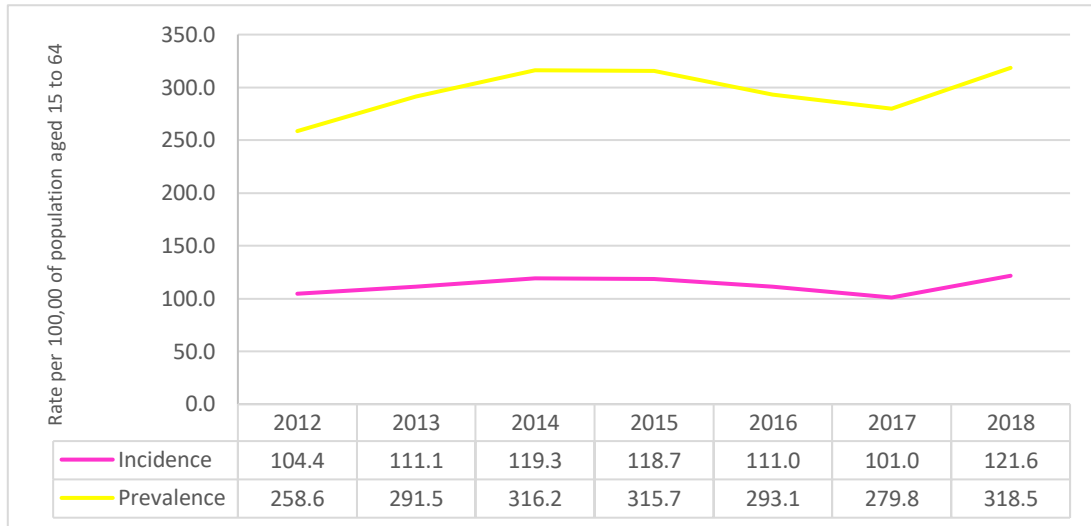


Figure 1: Incidence and prevalence of treated problem drug use per 100,000 of the 15 to 64 year-old population, NDTRS 2012 to 2018

Notes

This document may be cited as: Health Research Board (2019) *Drug Treatment in Ireland 2012 to 2018*. Available at: www.drugsandalcohol.ie/30969 and at www.hrb.ie/publications.

1. More detailed information on the NDTRS methodology can be found in previously published HRB Trends Series papers at:
www.hrb.ie/fileadmin/publications_files/HRB_Trend_Series_12_Trends_in_treated_problem_drug_use_in_Ireland_2005_to_2010_02.pdf
2. NDTRS data are case-based which means there is a possibility that individuals appear more than once in the database; for example, where a person receives treatment at more than one centre, or at the same centre more than once in a calendar year.
3. The NDTRS interactive tables (2004 to 2016) will be updated to reflect the changes at:
www.drugsandalcohol.ie/tables/
4. The number of services participating in the NDTRS varies annually, making small fluctuations in the numbers of cases difficult to interpret. Coverage of services was 69.5% for 2018.
5. The decrease is related to the reduced participation of one inpatient (residential) treatment centre in 2018.
6. The NDTRS has undertaken initiatives to improve data quality and completeness.
7. Based on the 2016 Census, the proportion of Irish Travellers in the general population is 0.7% (Central Statistics Office, 2019) www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8e/
8. Age range presented is 5th percentile to 95th percentile (90% of cases are included within this range).
9. In November 2018, the NDTRS issued a communique regarding the accurate recording of cases with cocaine as a main or other problem, in order to improve the reporting of the data.
10. Population data are taken from the CSO at:
www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2018/

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