

Drugs data factsheet: CHO area 8 - Laois/Offaly, Longford/Westmeath, Louth and Meath

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Glossary of terms

Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) – Community Healthcare Services are the broad range of services that are provided outside of the acute hospital system and includes Primary Care, Social Care, Mental Health and Health & Wellbeing Services. These services are delivered through the Health Service Executive and its funded agencies to people in local communities, as close as possible to people's homes. There are nine CHOs responsible for the delivery of primary and community-based services responsive to the needs of local communities.

Confidence interval (CI) – A way of expressing how certain we are about the findings from a study, using statistics. It gives a range of results that is likely to include the 'true' value for the population. A wide confidence interval indicates a lack of certainty about the true effect of the test or treatment - often because a small group of patients has been studied. A narrow CI indicates a more precise estimate (for example, if a large number of patients have been studied). The CI is usually stated as '95% CI', which means that the range of values has a 95 in a 100 chance of including the 'true' value. For example, a study may state that 'based on our sample findings, we are 95% certain that the 'true' population blood pressure is not higher than 150 and not lower than 110'. In such a case the 95% CI would be 110 to 150. (from the [NICE glossary](#))

Prevalence – refers to the proportion of a population that has used a drug over a particular time period.

Last month prevalence – refers to the proportion of the sample that reported using a named drug in the 30-day period prior to the survey. Last month prevalence is often referred to as current use. A proportion of those reporting current use may be occasional (or first-time) users who happen to have used in the period leading up to the survey. It should therefore be noted that current use is not synonymous with regular use.

Last year prevalence – refers to the proportion of the sample that reported using a named drug in the year prior to the survey. Last year prevalence is often referred to as recent use.

Lifetime prevalence – refers to the proportion of the sample that reported ever having used the named drug at the time they were surveyed. A person who records lifetime prevalence may or may not be currently using the drug. Lifetime prevalence should not be interpreted as meaning that people have necessarily used a drug over a long period of time or that they will use the drug again in future.

Introduction

There are nine Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) responsible for the delivery of primary and community-based services responsive to the needs of local communities in Ireland. Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 8 consists of Laois/Offaly, Longford/Westmeath, Louth and Meath, with a population of approximately 592,388.¹

Use of drugs in CHO 8

The National Drug and Alcohol Survey (NDAS)² collects information on alcohol and tobacco consumption and drug use among the general population in Ireland. It also surveys people's attitudes and perceptions relating to tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use and records the impact of drug use on people's communities. The 2019–20 NDAS collected information from 5,762 people aged 15 years and older across Ireland.

Table 1: NDAS 2019-20, number of CHO 8 participants

	All	Male	Female	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 15-64	Age 65+
Total	943	454	489	202	475	677	264

Table 2: NDAS 2019-20, CHO 8: Lifetime drug use, by percentage

	All	Male	Female	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 15-64	Age 65+
Any illegal drug	15.1	20.3	9.8	20.5	15.5	17.7	0.9
Cannabis	13.0	17.2	8.8	16.4	14.3	15.2	0.9
Ecstasy	6.3	9.9	2.7	10.5	5.1	7.4	0.5
Cocaine	3.6	6.2	1.0	5.2	3.6	4.3	0.0
Cocaine (incl. crack)	4.0	6.8	1.0	5.2	4.1	4.6	0.5
LSD	3.1	4.4	1.7	4.4	2.9	3.5	0.5
Magic mushrooms	3.1	4.6	1.5	3.2	3.8	3.5	0.5
Amphetamines	2.3	3.8	0.8	3.8	1.9	2.7	0.5
Poppers	4.4	7.6	1.2	10.2	1.6	5.2	0.0
New psychoactive substances	0.5	0.7	0.3	1.4	0.0	0.6	0.0
Solvents	1.2	2.0	0.4	1.7	1.2	1.4	0.0
Crack	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.5
Heroin	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.0
Opioid pain relievers	57.5	52.1	62.9	54.3	60.8	58.1	54.6
Sedatives or tranquillisers	7.2	4.9	9.6	5.2	8.0	6.8	9.5
Anabolic steroids	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0
Methadone	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.0
Alcohol	80.9	85.0	76.8	80.4	84.7	82.9	70.3
Tobacco	40.5	42.9	38.1	26.3	48.7	39.2	48.1

Table 3: NDAS 2019-20, CHO 8: Last year drug use, by percentage

	All	Male	Female	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 15-64	Age 65+
Any illegal drug	4.6	8.2	1.0	11.4	1.1	5.5	0.6
Cannabis	3.8	6.8	0.8	9.2	1.0	4.5	0.6
Ecstasy	1.9	3.7	0.0	5.2	0.0	2.2	0.0
Cocaine	1.4	2.9	0.0	3.9	0.1	1.7	0.0
Cocaine (incl. crack)	1.4	2.9	0.0	3.9	0.1	1.7	0.0
LSD	0.5	0.9	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0
Magic mushrooms	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0
Amphetamines	0.7	1.3	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.8	0.0
Poppers	1.3	2.5	0.0	3.5	0.0	1.5	0.0
New psychoactive substances	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Solvents	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Crack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Heroin	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Opioid pain relievers	29.6	40.9	35.2	32.8	36.9	35.1	35.7
Sedatives or tranquillisers	2.2	2.8	2.5	1.8	2.1	1.9	5.9
Anabolic steroids	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Methadone	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Alcohol	78.7	70.7	74.7	76.9	77.3	61.4	64.2
Tobacco	21.7	16.1	18.9	22.1	19.7	9.0	18.0

Table 4: NDAS CHO 8: Last month drug use, by percentage

	All	GENDER		AGE			
		Male	Female	15-34	35-64	15-64	65+
Any illegal drug	2.8	5.1	0.5	7.0	0.5	3.3	0.0
Cannabis	2.3	4.1	0.5	5.7	0.5	2.7	0.0
Ecstasy	1.0	1.9	0.0	2.7	0.0	1.1	0.0
Cocaine	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Cocaine (incl. crack)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LSD	0.5	0.9	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0
Magic mushrooms	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Amphetamines	0.5	0.9	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0
Poppers	0.7	1.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
New psychoactive substances	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.0
Solvents	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Crack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Heroin	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Opioid pain relievers	11.8	6.7	16.9	11.2	10.8	11.0	16.4
Sedatives or tranquillisers	2.2	1.8	2.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	5.6
Anabolic steroids	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Methadone	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Alcohol	61.0	67.8	54.0	63.0	65.2	64.2	42.9
Tobacco	16.4	19.3	13.5	18.1	18.0	18.0	7.4

Problematic opioid use in CHO 8

The report, **Problematic opioid use in Ireland, 2015–2019**,³ estimates the prevalence of problematic opioid use in Ireland from 2015 to 2019 using a four-source capture-recapture method. Three of the four data sources used for the analysis were derived from opioid substitution treatment records from the Central Treatment List (CTL) (clinics, general practitioners (GPs) and prisons) and the fourth data source was derived from the Irish Probation Service. In total, it is estimated that there were 19,875 opioid users aged 15–64 years in Ireland in 2019. This corresponds to a prevalence rate of 6.68 per 1,000 population.

Tables 5 – 9 present figures for CHO 8 and the total population in 2019. Table 5 presents the number of problematic opioid users by CHO area along with rates per 1,000 population. Tables 6 and 7 present the estimated number, and rate per 1,000 population, of problematic opioid users in 2019 according to age group (15–24 years, 25–34 years, and 35–64 years). Table 8 presents the estimated percentage of problematic opioid users in 2019 by age group and Table 9 shows the estimated number of female and male problematic opioid users in the CHO area.

Table 5: Estimates of the number of problematic opioid users in CHO 8, and rates per 1,000 population aged 15 to 64 years (2019)

	Known	Estimate	95% CI	Rate	95% CI
CHO 8	1,094	1,979	1,767–2,385	5.00	4.47–6.03
Ireland	12,312	19,875	19,522–21,608	6.68	6.57–7.27

Table 6: Estimates of the number of problematic opioid users by age group in CHO 8, aged 15 to 64 years (2019)

	15–24 years			25–34 years			35–64 years		
	Known	Estimate	95% CI	Known	Estimate	95% CI	Known	Estimate	95% CI
CHO 8	60	94	84–113	378	580	518–699	656	1,305	1,165–1,573
Ireland	414	730	717–794	2,760	4,650	4,567–5,055	9,138	14,495	14,238–15,759

Table 7: Estimates of the rates per 1,000 population of problematic opioid users by age group in CHO 8, aged 15 to 64 years (2019)

	15–24 years		25–34 years		35–64 years	
	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI
CHO 8	1.30	1.16–1.56	7.40	6.61–8.91	5.33	4.76–6.43
Ireland	1.35	1.32–1.46	7.48	7.35–8.13	8.01	7.87–8.71

Table 8: Percentage of problematic opioid users in each age group in CHO 8 (2019)

	Percentage aged 15–24 years	Percentage aged 25–34 years	Percentage aged 35–64 years
CHO 8	4.75	29.31	65.94
Ireland	3.67	23.40	72.93

Table 9: Percentage of problematic opioid users who are female or male in CHO 8 (2019)

	Female				Male			
	Known	Estimate	95% CI	%	Known	Estimate	95% CI	%
CHO 8	276	358	320–431	18.09	818	1,621	1,447–1,954	81.91
Ireland	3,530	5,505	5,407–5,985	27.70	8,782	14,370	14,115–15,623	72.30

Treatment data for those residing in CHO 8

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.⁴ The dataset contains information only on those who started treatment in a particular year (for the first time or returning to treatment). It does not include service users in continuous care. The dataset includes cases treated in all types of services: outpatient, inpatient, GPs, low threshold (providing low-dose methadone or drop-in facilities only), and those treated in prison. In addition, the statistics include cases with no fixed abode, no known address or an address outside Ireland, in all tables.

Table 10: Number of cases treated for drugs as a main problem in area of residence CHO 8, NDTRS 2016 to 2022

CHO 8	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All cases	921	926	1,007	983	902	998	1,054
New cases	434	367	460	472	439	552	546
Previously treated	463	457	493	443	440	431	476

Table 11: Number of cases treated for drugs as a main problem in Ireland, NDTRS 2016 to 2022

All Ireland	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All cases	9,227	8,922	10,274	10,664	9,702	10,769	12,009
New cases	3,526	3,257	3,962	3,979	3,796	4,206	4,456
Previously treated	5,335	5,242	5,872	5,927	5,441	6,090	6,860

For more detailed treatment data for CHO 8 (age, gender, employment status etc.) see HRB National Drugs Library [interactive tables](#).

Psychiatric in-patient data

The **National Psychiatric In-Patient Reporting System (NPIRS)**⁵ gathers data on patient admissions and discharges from psychiatric hospitals and units throughout Ireland.

Table 12: CHO first admissions. Primary admission diagnosis. Ireland 2021 and 2022. Numbers with rates per 100,000 total population.

	Alcoholic Disorders		Other Drug Disorders	
	2021 Number (rates)	2022 Number (rates)	2021 Number (rates)	2022 Number (rates)
CHO 1	43 (10.9)	46 (11.7)	29 (7.4)	23 (5.8)
CHO 2	35 (7.7)	25 (5.5)	29 (6.4)	23 (5.1)
CHO 3	24 (6.2)	28 (7.3)	~ (7.0)	29 (7.5)
CHO 4	26 (3.8)	44 (6.4)	31 (4.5)	29 (4.2)
CHO 5	44 (8.6)	10 (2.0)	40 (7.8)	23 (4.5)
CHO 6	24 (5.7)	17 (4.0)	31 (7.3)	11 (2.6)
CHO 7	40 (6.0)	35 (5.3)	59 (8.9)	57 (8.6)
CHO 8	41 (6.7)	24 (3.9)	65 (10.5)	51 (8.3)
CHO 9	34 (5.5)	31 (5.0)	97 (15.6)	71 (11.4)
Non-resident	0
Total	311 (6.5)	263 (5.5)	410 (8.6)	318 (6.7)

~ Further suppression required to prevent disclosure of fewer than five cases.

.. Denotes cases less than five.

Source: Table 2.22 in Daly et al: Tables - all sections of Activities 2021⁵ and 2022⁶.

Table 13: CHO discharges (including deaths) and primary discharge diagnosis, 2021 and 2022. Numbers with percentages.

	Alcoholic Disorders		Other Drug Disorders	
	2021 Number (%)	2022 Number (%)	2021 Number (%)	2022 Number (%)
CHO 1	151 (10.06)	129 (8.95)	105 (7.00)	118 (8.19)
CHO 2	83 (5.62)	73 (4.96)	68 (4.60)	~ (3.53)
CHO 3	81 (7.01)	89 (7.75)	78 (6.75)	71 (6.18)
CHO 4	~ (3.16)	100 (4.28)	84 (3.68)	87 (3.72)
CHO 5	105 (5.57)	75 (4.62)	123 (6.53)	73 (4.50)
CHO 6	177 (12.66)	224 (15.74)	95 (6.80)	74 (5.20)
CHO 7	130 (6.70)	148 (7.07)	141 (7.27)	131 (6.26)
CHO 8	77 (4.40)	96 (5.57)	161 (9.19)	138 (8.00)
CHO 9	108 (4.83)	152 (6.38)	196 (8.76)	174 (7.30)
Non-resident	.. (3.45)	6 (13.95)	5 (17.24)	.. (2.33)
Total	985 (6.29)	1,092 (6.96)	1,056 (6.75)	919 (5.86)

~ Further suppression required to prevent disclosure of fewer than five cases.
 .. Denotes cases less than five.

Source: Table 2.25 in Daly et al: Tables - all sections of Activities 2021⁵ and 2022⁶.

For data on alcoholic disorders by county for 2022, see Table 2.27a and Table 2.27b <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/39109/>

HSE expenditure for CHO 8

Table 13. Expenditure for 2017 to 2021 and allocation for 2022 attributed to HSE Addiction Services per CHO area.

	Total HSE expenditure					HSE 2022 allocation
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CHO 8 - Laois/Offaly, Longford/Westmeath, Louth/Meath	4,965,882	5,174,569	5,282,474	6,104,692	6,436,844	7,125,623

Source: Dáil Éireann debate. Written answer 185 – Substance misuse [59720/22] (30 Nov 2022) www.drugsandalcohol.ie/37718/

In addition, other areas of the HSE provide services to clients with addiction problems including National Addiction Services, Primary Care Reimbursement Service, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health, Acute Hospitals Services, Emergency Departments and Primary Care that are attributable to drugs programmes and the objectives of the National Drug Strategy.

References

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4. O’Neill D, Lyons S and Carew AM (2023) [National drug treatment reporting system, 2022 drug treatment demand](#). Dublin: Health Research Board.
5. Daly A and Craig S (2022) [Activities of Irish Psychiatric Units and Hospitals 2021](#). Dublin: Health Research Board.

6. Daly A and Lynn E (2023) [National Psychiatric Inpatient Reporting System \(NPIRS\) annual report on the activities of Irish psychiatric units and hospitals, 2022](#). Dublin: Health Research Board.

Further reading: National Self-Harm Registry - Self-harm data CHO areas.

<https://www.nsrh.ie/findings/reports/>

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