

Irish Psychiatric Units and Hospitals Census 2010

Preliminary Bulletin

December 2010

Seventeen per cent reduction in resident patient numbers since 2006; 42% were long-stay patients, i.e. in hospital for one year or more; one-third were aged 65 years and over on census night

Dear Reader

As part of our national reporting role in relation to mental health service activity, the Mental Health Information Systems (MHIS) Unit of the Health Research Board (HRB) presents summary data from the national psychiatric in-patient census for 2010. The detailed report is in preparation and will be available in 2011. This report includes international comparisons and a more detailed presentation of data by socio-demographic, diagnostic, legal category and length of stay variables. The MHIS Unit would like to thank services for their cooperation in providing returns for the census. We look forward to your continued support in the future.

Rosalyn Moran
Head of MHIS

Introduction

This bulletin is a synopsis of data from the seventh national census of Irish psychiatric units and hospitals, carried out on 31 March 2010. It is part of a series of censuses first carried out in 1963 and decennially thereafter, in 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001. Due to the accelerated move to the provision of community psychiatric services it was felt that an earlier appreciation of the impact of such changes on in-patient resident numbers was needed and, thus, in 2006 a census was carried out after an interval of just five years. In 2008 the HRB and the Mental Health Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which it was agreed that the HRB would carry out a psychiatric in-patient census every three years, subject to resources, commencing in 2010.

Data on patients resident in Irish psychiatric units and hospitals operating under the provisions of the *Mental Health Act, 2001* (Department of Health and Children, 2001) at midnight on 31 March 2010 are presented in this bulletin. All patients 'on the books' in hospitals and units, including those on leave, were enumerated in the census. The rates reported were calculated using the Census of Population 2006 (Central Statistics Office, 2007) and all rates are per 100,000 total population.

National Findings

The number of patients resident in Irish psychiatric units and hospitals on 31 March 2010 totalled 2,812, representing a hospitalisation rate of 66.3 per 100,000 total population. This is a reduction of 577 in the number resident in units and hospitals since the last psychiatric in-patient census in 2006 (3,389) and also a reduction in the rate of hospitalisation in the 2006 census, at 80.0 per 100,000.

There has been a considerable decline in the number of patients resident in Irish psychiatric units and hospitals over the last 40 years, with numbers falling from 19,801 in 1963 to 2,812 in 2010 (Table 1). This represents a reduction of 86% in in-patient numbers since 1963 and a reduction of 17% since 2006.

Table 1 Irish psychiatric in-patient numbers 1963–2010

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1963	19,801	1975	14,967	1987	10,621	1999	4,469
1964	18,989	1976	14,473	1988	9,500	2000	4,230
1965	18,641	1977	14,352	1989	7,897	2001 ^a	4,321
1966	18,084	1978	13,968	1990	7,334	2002	3,891
1967	17,841	1979	13,838	1991 ^a	8,207	2003	3,658
1968	17,218	1980	13,342	1992	6,130	2004 ^b	3,556
1969	16,802	1981 ^a	13,984	1993	5,806	2005 ^b	3,475
1970	16,403	1982	13,428	1994	5,581	2006 ^a	3,389
1971 ^a	16,661	1983	12,802	1995	5,327	2007 ^b	3,314
1972	15,856	1984	12,484	1996	5,212	2010 ^a	2,812
1973	15,471	1985	12,097	1997	4,817		
1974	15,156	1986	11,643	1998	4,820		

^a MSRB (Medico-Social Research Board)/HRB Census completed on 31 March each year

^b Mental Health Commission

Note: There were no census figures available for 2008 or 2009.

In-patients who had been resident previously had a higher hospitalisation rate, at 47.9 per 100,000 population, compared with those who were first-time residents, at 18.4.

Gender and age

Males accounted for 53% of all residents on census night, representing a hospitalisation rate of 70.1 per 100,000 population, compared with a rate of 62.5 for females. The gender breakdown of in-patients has not changed over the last 40 years, with males typically accounting for just over half of all residents on census night.

One-third of in-patients on census night were aged 65 years and over; 18% were aged 55–64 years; a further 18% were aged 45–54 years; almost 14% were aged 35–44 years; 12% were aged 25–34 years; and almost 6% were under 25 years of age. The 75-year and over age group, which accounted for 16% of all residents, had the highest hospitalisation rate, at 224.0 per 100,000 population, followed by the 65–74 year age group, at 179.8, and the 55–64 year age group, at 123.8.

Marital status

Single persons accounted for 60% of in-patients on census night, married persons accounted for 20%, widowed persons accounted for 6% and divorced persons accounted for almost 3%. Divorced persons had the highest rate of hospitalisation, at 115.9 per 100,000, followed by widowed persons, at 90.9, single persons, at 72.7, and married persons, at 36.7.

Socio-economic group

Agricultural workers had the highest rate of hospitalisation, at 171.5 per 100,000 population, followed by the unskilled group, at 168.9, and farmers, at 73.1. Although agricultural workers had the highest rate of hospitalisation amongst all socio-economic groups, they accounted for just 2% of all in-patients on census night. A further important point worth noting is that 49% of occupations were returned as 'unknown' or 'unspecified', thus making it impossible to assign them to a socio-economic group.

Diagnosis

Over one-third (34%) of residents on census night had a diagnosis of schizophrenia; 17% had a diagnosis of depressive disorders; 10% had a diagnosis of organic mental disorder; and 8% had a diagnosis of mania. Patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia had the highest rate of hospitalisation, at 22.6 per 100,000 population, followed by depressive disorders, at 11.3, and organic mental disorders, at 6.4.

Legal status

Thirteen per cent of in-patients on census night were involuntary, representing a rate of 8.6 per 100,000 population. This is a reduction in the proportion of involuntary in-patients from 2006 (22%). Males accounted for 71% of involuntary residents on census night and had a higher rate of involuntary hospitalisation, at 12.3 per 100,000, compared with that for females, at 5.0.

Length of stay

Forty-two per cent of all in-patients were long-stay, i.e. they had been in hospital for one year or more on census night; 25% were old long-stay, i.e. they had been in hospital for five years or more. This represents very little change from 2006, when 46% of in-patients were long-stay and 29% were old long-stay. Twelve per cent of in-patients had been in hospital for between 3 months and one year, 17% had been hospitalised for between one to three months, 11% had been hospitalised for between two to four weeks and 18% were hospitalised for up to two weeks. Almost half (49%) of those who had been in hospital for five years or more were aged 65 years and over.

The number of in-patient days accounted for by all residents on census night totalled 5,501,727, with a mean length of stay of 1,956.5 days and median length of stay of 145.5 days. Schizophrenia accounted for the largest proportion of in-patient days, at 46.4% of all in-patient days, followed by intellectual disability, at 25.8% of in-patient days.

HSE areas

HSE Dublin North-East had the highest rate of hospitalisation on census night, at 77.5 per 100,000, followed by HSE South, at 73.8, HSE West, at 59.9, and Dublin Mid-Leinster, at 56.1.

A higher proportion of patients resident in Dublin North-East were aged 65 years and over, at 36%, followed by Dublin Mid-Leinster, at 34%, HSE South, at 33%, and HSE West, at 29%. Schizophrenia had the highest rate of hospitalisation in all HSE areas, with rates ranging from 27.2 per 100,000 in HSE South, to 19.9 in Dublin Mid-Leinster. Dublin Mid-Leinster had the highest proportion of involuntary in-patients, at 15%, followed by 14% in Dublin North-East, 13% in HSE West, and 10% in HSE South.

Hospital type

Forty-seven per cent of patients on census night were resident in psychiatric hospitals, 25% were in general hospital psychiatric units and 20% were resident in private hospitals (Table 2).

Table 2 Irish Psychiatric Units and Hospitals Census 2010
Hospital type

General hospital psychiatric units	25.4
Psychiatric hospitals	46.6
Private hospitals	19.6
Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum	3.5
Carraig Mór, Cork	1.4
St Joseph's Intellectual Disability Service	3.5
Total	100.0

The proportion of residents in general hospital psychiatric units has risen from 3% in 1981 to 25% in 2010, while there has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of residents in psychiatric hospitals, from 90% in 1981 to 47% in 2010. Psychiatric hospitals had the largest proportion of patients aged 65 years or over, at 43%, compared with private hospitals, at 37%, and general hospital psychiatric units, at 18%. Thirty-three per cent of those resident in general hospital psychiatric units had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, compared with 44% of those in psychiatric hospitals and 10% of those in private hospitals. Seventeen per cent of those resident in general hospital psychiatric units, 10% of those in psychiatric hospitals and 3% in private hospitals were involuntary on census night.

Child and adolescent in-patients

There were 43 children and adolescents (under 18s) resident in psychiatric units and hospitals and child and adolescent units on 31 March 2010. Thirty-five of these children and adolescents were resident in specialised child and adolescent units. Females accounted for 58% of all under 18s resident on census night. Thirty per cent were aged 17 years on census night, 26% were aged 16 years, 28% were aged 15 years, 9% were aged 14 years, and 7% were aged between 10 and 13 years. Nineteen per cent of under-18s had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, 12% had a diagnosis of eating disorders and 9% had a diagnosis of neuroses.

References

Central Statistics Office (2007) *Census 2006. Volume 1 – Population Classified by Area*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Daly A and Walsh D (2006) *Irish Psychiatric Units and Hospitals Census 2006*. Dublin: Health Research Board.

Department of Health and Children (2001) *Mental Health Act, 2001*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Contact details for queries regarding this bulletin:

Antoinette Daly

t +353 1 6761176 **ext** 142 or 45 531246

e adaly@hrb.ie