

## Treated problem alcohol use in Ireland

2008 figures from the National Drug Treatment  
Reporting System



**Alcohol and Drug Research Unit  
Health Research Board, January 2010**

## Summary

Significant improvements in the NDTRS data-collection processes and procedures mean that the HRB is now able to report on the information collected from treatment centres on an a more regular basis. From 2009, the figures on the extent of treated drug and alcohol use will be published within a year of collection. Trends papers will also be published regularly to examine changes over time. The data presented in this paper provide a description of problem alcohol use in Ireland by HSE area of residence.

The total number of cases treated for problem alcohol use in Ireland increased from 7,312 in 2007 to 7,940 in 2008. This may be attributed to an increase in the number of people presenting for treatment, or it may reflect the increase in the number of treatment centres participating in the NDTRS. (Table 2)

The number of new cases treated for alcohol as their main problem substance rose by 2.6%, from 3,736 in 2007 to 3,833 in 2008. The number of cases who returned for treatment also increased, from 3,110 cases in 2007 to 3,606 in 2008.

As in previous years, the largest proportion (32%) of treated alcohol cases in 2008 lived in the HSE South region, and over one-quarter (28.3%) lived in the HSE West region. (Table 4)

The incidence of treatment for problem alcohol by county for the period 2004 to 2008 was highest in Sligo, Donegal, Leitrim, Carlow and Waterford (with more than 200 cases per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population). The incidence rates were lowest in Dublin, Mayo, Galway and Roscommon (with less than 50 cases per 100,000). The lower incidence rates observed in Dublin, Kildare, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon and Wicklow are due to the fact that services in these counties did not participate in the NDTRS up to the end of 2006. (Figure 1)

The prevalence of treated problem alcohol use among 15–64-year-olds living in Ireland, expressed per 100,000 of the population, increased from 222.6 in 2007 to 243.3 in 2008. The incidence increased from 118.3 in 2007 to 120.0 in 2008. These increases in prevalence and incidence may be explained by an increase in problematic alcohol use in the population, an increase in reporting to the NDTRS, or a combination of both. (Figure 2)

Almost one-in-five of those treated for problem alcohol use in 2008 also reported using at least one other substance, a similar proportion to that observed in 2007 and in 2006. In 2008, the most common drugs used by treated alcohol cases in conjunction with alcohol were cannabis, followed by cocaine, ecstasy and opiates. This reflects a minor change since 2007, when benzodiazepines were the fourth most common additional drug. Use of more than one substance increases the complexity of cases and leads to poorer outcomes for the patient. Information about combinations of substances used is important in terms of individual clients' care plans. (Tables 6 and 8)

The NDTRS records the treatment intervention(s) provided when a client is first admitted to a treatment service. However, more than half of clients attending treatment receive more than one treatment, which means that the number of treatments is greater than the number of clients. In 2008, 43.6% of cases presenting for treatment received one type of intervention, while 15.8% received two types of intervention. Counselling remained the most common initial treatment intervention, with three in every four cases receiving counselling. (Figures 4 and 5)

In 2008, the median age at which cases, both new and previously treated, began drinking was 16 years, similar to previous years. (Table 9)

The age profile of cases treated for problem alcohol use remained the same in 2007 and 2008. The median age for all treated cases was 39 years; the median age for new cases continued to be younger (36 years). While the proportion of cases under the age of 18 remained small, the number of new cases in that age group continued to rise. (Table 10)

The socio-demographic characteristics of cases, both new and previously-treated, remained similar to previous years. The majority were male, with low levels of employment. The

proportion of cases in employment decreased slightly compared to previous years. The proportion of cases who were homeless fell slightly between 2007 and 2008: new cases from 2.9% to 2.4%, and previously-treated cases from 7.0% to 6.8%. Those who used additional substances with alcohol were more likely to be unemployed and to live in unstable accommodation. (Table 10; Figures 6 and 7)

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## Glossary of terms

**The median** is the value at the mid-point in a sequence of numerical values ranged in ascending or descending order. It is defined as the value above or below which half of the values lie. Unlike the mean (average), the median is not influenced by extreme values (or outliers). For example, in the case of five drug users aged 22, 23, 24, 24 and 46 years respectively, the median (middle value) is 24 years, whereas the mean is 27.8 years. While both the median and the mean describe the central value of the data. In this case, the median is more useful since the mean is influenced by the one older person in this example.

**Incidence** is a term used to describe the number of new cases of disease or events that develop among a population during a specified time interval. For example, in 2007, 10 opiate users living in a specific county sought treatment for the first time. The incidence is the number of new opiate cases treated divided by the population living in the county (say 31,182 persons in this example) expressed per given number of the population, i.e., per 100, per 1,000, per 10,000, per 100,000 etc.

The calculation in this case is as follows:  $(10/31,182) \times 100,000$ , which gives an incidence rate of 32 per 100,000 of the specific county population in 2007.

**Prevalence** is a term used to describe the proportion of people in a population who have a disease or condition at a specific point or period in time. For example, in 2007, 10 opiate users living in a specific county sought treatment for the first time, 20 opiate users returned to treatment in the year and five opiate users continued in treatment from the previous year; in total there are 35 people treated for problem opiate use in 2007. The prevalence is the total number of cases (35) divided by the population living in the county (31,182 persons) expressed per given number of the population, i.e., per 100, per 1,000, per 10,000, per 100,000 etc.

The calculation in this case is as follows:  $(35/31,182) \times 100,000$ , which gives a prevalence rate of 112 per 100,000 of the specific county population in 2007.

**All cases treated** describes all of the individuals who receive treatment for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance) at each treatment centre in a calendar year. All cases treated include:

- **Previously treated cases** describes individuals who were treated previously for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance) at any treatment centre and have returned to treatment in the reporting year; and
- **New cases treated** describes individuals who have never been treated for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance); and
- **Status unknown** describes individuals whose status with respect to previous treatment for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance) is not known.

### Health Service Executive (HSE)

On 1 January 2005, the 10 health boards managing the health services in Ireland were replaced by a single entity, the Health Service Executive (HSE). The former health boards were responsible for health care provision to populations in specific geographical areas. In the interest of continuity of care, the HSE maintained these 10 areas for an interim period and called them HSE areas. The former Eastern Regional Health Authority was known as the HSE Eastern Region for this interim period. The table below presents the past health board structure and the interim HSE area structure.

<b>Regional health authority</b>	<b>Health board</b>	<b>HSE area</b>
Not applicable	North Eastern Health Board	HSE North Eastern Area
Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA*)	Northern Area Health Board	HSE Northern Area
Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA)	East Coast Area Health Board	HSE East Coast Area
Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA)	South Western Area Health Board	HSE South Western Area
Not applicable	Midland Health Board	HSE Midland Area
Not applicable	South Eastern Health Board	HSE South Eastern Area
Not applicable	Southern Health Board	HSE Southern Area
Not applicable	Mid-Western Health Board	HSE Mid-Western Area
Not applicable	North Western Health Board	HSE North Western Area
Not applicable	Western Health Board	HSE Western Area

\*The ERHA was known as the HSE Eastern Region for the interim period.

### **HSE regions**

Following a number of years of re-structuring, health care is now provided through four HSE regions and 32 local health offices (LHOs). The local health offices are based on the geographical boundaries of the former community care areas. The table below presents the current HSE structure.

<b>HSE region</b>	<b>Local health office</b>		
HSE Dublin North East	North West Dublin Dublin North Central	North Dublin Cavan/Monaghan	Louth Meath
HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster	Dublin South Dublin South East Dublin South City	Dublin South West Dublin West Kildare/West Wicklow	Wicklow Longford/Westmeath Laois/Offaly
HSE South	Cork South Lee Cork North Lee West Cork	North Cork Kerry Carlow/Kilkenny	Tipperary South Waterford Wexford
HSE West	Donegal Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan Galway	Mayo Roscommon Tipperary North/ East Limerick	Limerick Clare

## Introduction

### Background

The figures and information in this document are based on data collected through the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS). The NDTRS is an epidemiological database on treated drug and alcohol misuse in Ireland. It is co-ordinated by staff at the Alcohol and Drug Research Unit (ADRU) of the Health Research Board (HRB) on behalf of the Department of Health and Children.

Established in 1990 to record drug misuse only, the NDTRS recorded problematic use of alcohol only in cases where it was an additional problem substance, that is, where the client's main reason for entering treatment was drug misuse but he/she also reported problematic use of alcohol (Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation 2001; Hartnoll 1994; EMCDDA and Pampidou Group 2000).

However, it became increasingly evident that alcohol was the main problem substance in Ireland and that a large proportion of cases used both alcohol and drugs (Long *et al.* 2004a). In parts of the country, particularly outside Dublin, alcohol and drug treatment services are integrated. Failure to include alcohol data in reporting systems leads to an underestimation of problem substance use, and of the workload of addiction services (Long *et al.* 2004b). In recognition of this, the remit of the NDTRS was extended in 2004 to include cases where alcohol is recorded as the main or only reason for seeking treatment. The overlap between problem alcohol and other drug use has been identified in the current strategic plans of a number of drugs task forces, which have emphasised the need for treatment services that can address the many forms of polysubstance use.

### Impact of information provided

The HRB supplies service providers and policy makers with relevant data from the NDTRS to inform local and national substance misuse policy and planning. In recent years this information has been central to drug strategy and policy decisions:

**1996** NDTRS data were used to identify a number of local areas with problematic heroin use (Ministerial Task Force 1996). These areas were later designated as Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF) areas and are continuing to provide strategic responses to drug misuse in their communities.

**2004** NDTRS data were used to describe treatment-seeking characteristics and behaviours of those aged under 18 years and to inform the deliberations of the working group on treatment of under-18-year-olds (2005).

**2007** NDTRS data were used to inform some of the recommendations of the working group on drugs rehabilitation (2007), and by the working group on residential services (O'Gorman and Corrigan 2008) to help estimate the number of residential places required to address severe alcohol and drug problems in Ireland.

**2009** Alcohol has been included in the *National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009–2016*.

### Alcohol consumption in Ireland

Ireland has one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption per capita in Europe. In 2008, 12.4 litres of pure alcohol were consumed in this country for every adult aged 15 years or over (Revenue Commissioners 2008; CSO 2007). Alcohol is the third highest contributor to the total burden of disease in developed countries and is estimated to cause the deaths of 195,000 people per year in the European Union. It is associated with a range of chronic and acute medical conditions, including liver cirrhosis, various cancers, road traffic collisions and suicide. Alcohol-related harm has been shown to correlate with per capita alcohol consumption. Problem alcohol use is pervasive in Irish society, with men and women, the old and the young, experiencing its negative effects (Mongan *et al.* 2007, 2009).

The NDTRS collects alcohol data from outpatient services (including drug and/or alcohol treatment centres and some psychiatric services), inpatient specialised residential centres (for the treatment of addictions) and low-threshold services (which provide low-dose methadone or drop-in facilities only).

### **Data collection and reporting**

Significant improvements in the NDTRS data collection processes and procedures mean that the HRB is now able to report on the information collected from treatment centres on an annual basis. From 2009, the figures on the extent of treated drug and alcohol use will be published within a year of collection. Trends papers will also be published regularly to examine changes over time.

The NDTRS requires that one form be completed for each new client coming for first treatment and for each previously treated client returning to treatment for problem drug and/or alcohol use in a calendar year. Service providers at treatment centres throughout Ireland collect these data and return completed forms to the NDTRS. ADRU staff in the HRB compile anonymous, aggregated data, which are analysed and reported at national and EU levels.

For the purpose of the NDTRS, treatment is broadly defined as 'any activity which aims to ameliorate the psychological, medical or social state of individuals who seek help for their substance misuse problems'. Clients who attend needle-exchange services are not included in this reporting system. As of 2004, clients who report alcohol as their main problem drug are included in the system. Treatment options for alcohol cases include one or more of the following: brief intervention, alcohol detoxification, psychiatric treatment, medication-free therapy, counselling, family therapy, social and/or occupational reintegration, education/awareness programmes and complementary therapies. Treatment is provided in both residential and non-residential settings.

### **Interpretation of data**

Three factors must be taken into consideration when interpreting the figures in this paper.

First, not all alcohol treatment services in Ireland participate in the NDTRS. It may therefore be assumed that the data presented in this document underestimate the true extent of treated alcohol use in Ireland. However, the number of treatment services reporting problem use of alcohol increased from 174 in 2007 to 191 in 2008. The 191 treatment services that returned NDTRS forms to the HRB in 2008 included 154 non-residential centers and 37 residential centers.

The extent to which the number of treated alcohol cases is under-reported varies throughout the country. In particular, the coverage for cases reporting alcohol as their main problem substance is incomplete in the east (Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow) and the west (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon). Up to 2007, the alcohol services managed by the mental health services had never been invited to take part in the reporting system. The process of recruiting services that have not participated in the NDTRS to date is ongoing.

Second, this paper updates figures presented in an earlier Trends Series publication (Fanagan *et al.* 2008). The figures presented in that paper were calculated on the basis that cases treated more than once at the same centre during a calendar year were counted as a single case. The figures presented in the present paper count each attendance at treatment as a new episode, in line with NDTRS practice in relation to treated problem drug use figures. Therefore, there is the possibility of duplication in the database in the case of 'previously treated cases', who may have received treatment at more than one centre, or returned to treatment at the same centre, in the reporting year.

Third, the place of residence of almost five per cent of treated alcohol cases entered on the database for the years 2004–2008 is not recorded, and an additional small number of cases lived outside Ireland. These cases could not be assigned to a specific HSE region or area. The tables presenting data on service provision, treatment status and place of residence are based on the total of 31,861 treated cases (Tables 1 – 3). The remainder of the tables, and all of the figures, are based on the 30,144 treated cases who lived at a known address in Ireland.

## Outline of document

The tables presented examine:

- service provision
- number of cases treated
- incidence and prevalence of treated alcohol use
- additional problem substances
- treatment provision
- age at which alcohol and other drug use started
- socio-demographic characteristics of treated cases.

### Service provision

**Table 1 Number and type of services providing treatment for problem alcohol use and number of cases treated (in brackets) (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

Services	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>All services (cases treated)</b>	124 (5144)	123 (5526)	133 (5876)	174 (7312)	191 (7940)
Outpatient (cases treated)	102 (2735)	99 (2836)	107 (3181)	135 (3691)	149 (4396)
Residential (cases treated)	20 (2406)	23 (2686)	25 (2692)	34 (3569)	37 (3481)
Low-threshold* (cases treated)	1 (1)	1 (4)	1 (3)	5 (52)	5 (63)
General practitioner (cases treated)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

\*Low-threshold services provide low-dose methadone or drop-in facilities only.

### Number of cases treated

**Table 2 Number (%) of cases treated, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

Treatment status	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	5144	5526	5876	7312	7940
Previously treated cases	2177 (42.3)	2230 (40.4)	2345 (39.9)	3110 (42.5)	3606 (45.4)
New cases	2827 (55.0)	3228 (58.4)	3432 (58.4)	3736 (51.1)	3833 (48.3)
Treatment status unknown	140 (2.7)	68 (1.2)	99 (1.7)	466 (6.4)	501 (6.3)

**Table 3 Number (%) of cases treated, by place of residence (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

Place of residence	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	5144	5526	5876	7312	7940
Specified HSE region	4839 (94.1)	5191 (93.9)	5538 (94.3)	6874 (94.0)	7629 (96.1)
Ireland, address not recorded	284 (5.5)	310 (5.6)	298 (5.1)	376 (5.1)	257 (3.2)
Outside Ireland	21 (0.4)	25 (0.5)	40 (0.7)	62 (0.9)	54 (0.7)

**The tables and figures presented from this point on exclude cases whose HSE region of residence is not known, and cases who are not normally resident in Ireland.**



**Table 4 Number (%) of cases treated, by HSE region of residence and by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

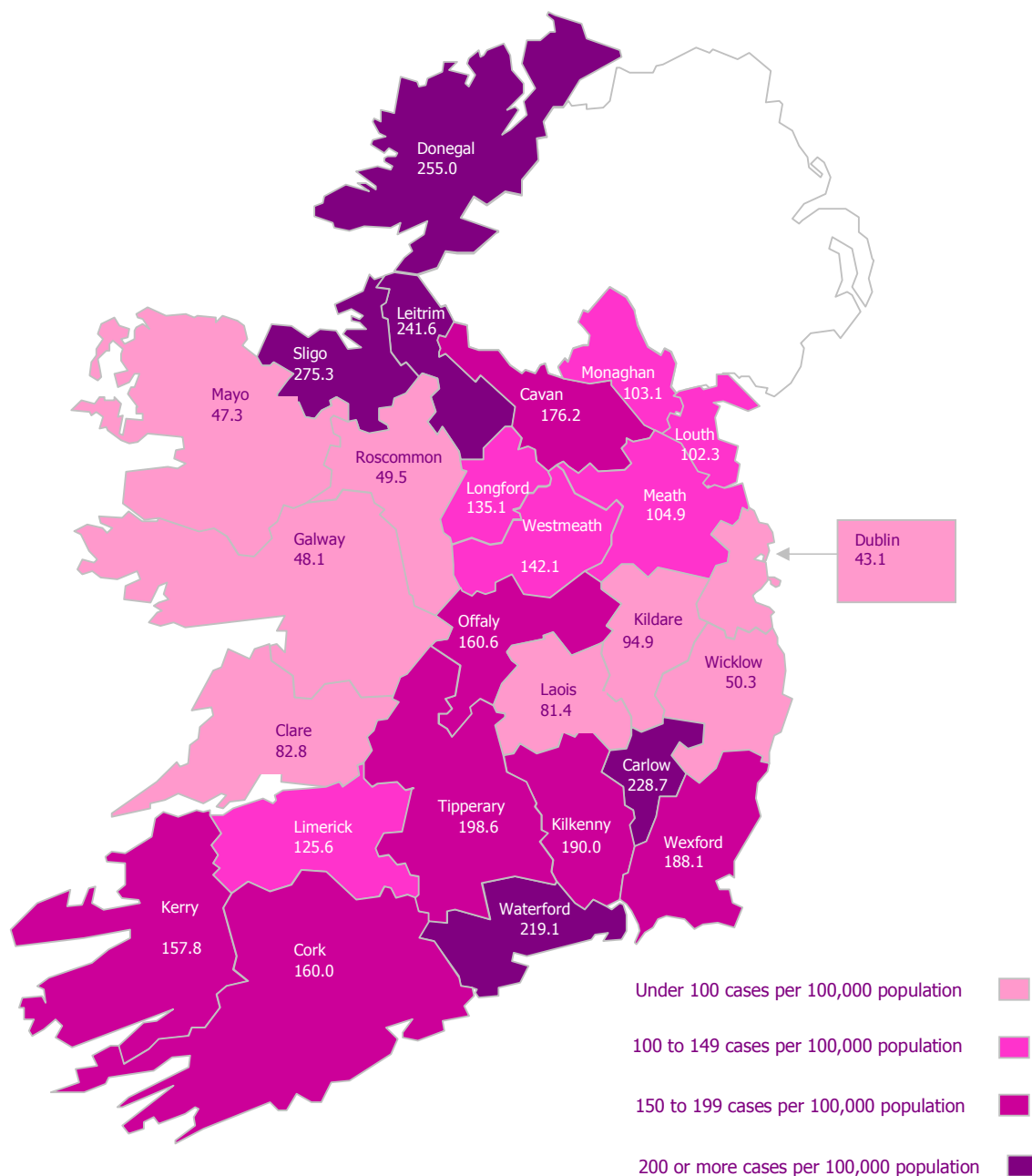
HSE region of residence	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	4839	5191	5538	6874	7641
Dublin North East	477 (9.9)	567 (10.9)	881 (15.9)	1267 (18.4)	1232 (16.1)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	1009 (20.9)	1077 (20.7)	1257 (22.7)	1311 (19.1)	1792 (23.5)
South	2162 (44.7)	2336 (45.0)	2197 (39.7)	2410 (35.1)	2456 (32.1)
West	1191 (24.6)	1211 (23.3)	1203 (21.7)	1886 (27.4)	2161 (28.3)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	2001	2028	2140	2859	3403
Dublin North East	192 (9.6)	211 (10.4)	291 (13.6)	476 (16.6)	444 (13.0)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	442 (22.1)	482 (23.8)	520 (24.3)	614 (21.5)	843 (24.8)
South	858 (42.9)	862 (42.5)	848 (39.6)	1021 (35.7)	1125 (33.1)
West	509 (25.4)	473 (23.3)	481 (22.5)	748 (26.2)	991 (29.1)
<b>New cases</b>	2706	3110	3318	3655	3771
Dublin North East	270 (10.0)	346 (11.1)	575 (17.3)	698 (19.1)	618 (16.4)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	547 (20.2)	584 (18.8)	712 (21.5)	538 (14.7)	739 (19.6)
South	1268 (46.9)	1465 (47.1)	1320 (39.8)	1350 (36.9)	1287 (34.1)
West	621 (22.9)	715 (23.0)	711 (21.4)	1069 (29.2)	1127 (29.9)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	132	53	80	360	467

**Table 5 Number (%) of cases treated, by former health board area of residence and by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

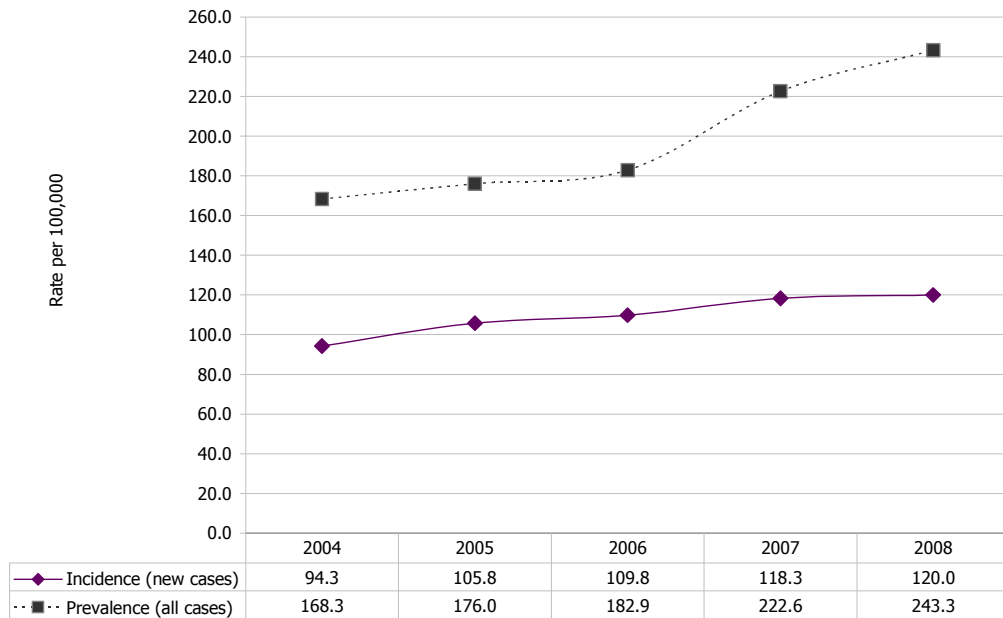
Former health board area of residence	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Number (%)				
<b>All cases</b>	4839	5191	5538	6874	7641
Northern Area (Dublin city and county)	184 (3.8)	205 (3.9)	280 (5.1)	543 (7.9)	561 (7.3)
South Western Area (of Dublin and Wicklow and all of Kildare)	337 (7.0)	489 (9.4)	588 (10.6)	579 (8.4)	972 (12.7)
East Coast Area (of Dublin and Wicklow)	83 (1.7)	84 (1.6)	151 (2.7)	188 (2.7)	233 (3.0)
North Eastern	293 (6.1)	362 (7.0)	601 (10.9)	724 (10.5)	671 (8.8)
Midland	428 (8.8)	356 (6.9)	392 (7.1)	435 (6.3)	483 (6.3)
Southern	1022 (21.1)	1170 (22.5)	990 (17.9)	1222 (17.8)	1224 (16.0)
South Eastern	1197 (24.7)	1251 (24.1)	1321 (23.9)	1282 (18.6)	1324 (17.3)
Mid Western	443 (9.2)	488 (9.4)	380 (6.9)	584 (8.5)	570 (7.5)
North Western	657 (13.6)	635 (12.2)	736 (13.3)	871 (12.7)	958 (12.5)
Western	91 (1.9)	88 (1.7)	87 (1.6)	431 (6.3)	633 (8.3)
Place of residence unknown	104 (2.1)	63 (1.2)	12 (0.2)	15 (0.2)	12 (0.2)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	2001	2028	2140	2859	3403
Northern Area (Dublin city and county)	90 (4.5)	81 (4.0)	95 (4.4)	198 (6.9)	200 (5.9)
South Western Area (of Dublin and Wicklow and all of Kildare)	172 (8.6)	223 (11.0)	248 (11.6)	282 (9.9)	450 (13.2)
East Coast Area (of Dublin and Wicklow)	45 (2.2)	39 (1.9)	50 (2.3)	63 (2.2)	107 (3.1)
North Eastern	102 (5.1)	130 (6.4)	196 (9.2)	278 (9.7)	244 (7.2)
Midland	157 (7.8)	157 (7.7)	161 (7.5)	195 (6.8)	223 (6.6)
Southern	373 (18.6)	385 (19.0)	302 (14.1)	471 (16.5)	558 (16.4)
South East	518 (25.9)	519 (25.6)	603 (28.2)	614 (21.5)	623 (18.3)
Mid West	169 (8.4)	164 (8.1)	140 (6.5)	222 (7.8)	261 (7.7)
North West	303 (15.1)	270 (13.3)	311 (14.5)	343 (12.0)	440 (12.9)
Western	37 (1.8)	39 (1.9)	30 (1.4)	183 (6.4)	290 (8.5)
Place of residence unknown	35 (1.7)	21 (1.0)	4 (0.2)	10 (0.3)	7 (0.2)
<b>New cases</b>	2706	3110	3318	3655	3771
Northern Area (Dublin city and county)	85 (3.1)	118 (3.8)	180 (5.4)	288 (7.9)	249 (6.6)
South Western Area (of Dublin and Wicklow and all of Kildare)	157 (5.8)	258 (8.3)	327 (9.9)	203 (5.6)	395 (10.5)
East Coast Area (of Dublin and Wicklow)	37 (1.4)	45 (1.4)	97 (2.9)	90 (2.5)	85 (2.3)
North Eastern	185 (6.8)	228 (7.3)	395 (11.9)	410 (11.2)	369 (9.8)
Midland	264 (9.8)	197 (6.3)	224 (6.8)	214 (5.9)	221 (5.9)
Southern	624 (23.1)	777 (25.0)	669 (20.2)	734 (20.1)	656 (17.4)
South East	667 (24.6)	730 (23.5)	707 (21.3)	642 (17.6)	665 (17.6)
Mid West	246 (9.1)	313 (10.1)	237 (7.1)	341 (9.3)	284 (7.5)
North West	325 (12.0)	353 (11.4)	420 (12.7)	513 (14.0)	510 (13.5)
Western	50 (1.8)	49 (1.6)	54 (1.6)	215 (5.9)	333 (8.8)
Place of residence unknown	66 (2.4)	42 (1.4)	8 (0.2)	5 (0.1)	4 (0.1)

### Incidence and prevalence of treated alcohol use

In order to adjust for variation in population size in each HSE area and county, the actual incidence of treated alcohol use in each area was calculated using the average number of new cases over the four-year period living in each of the 26 counties; this average was divided by the population aged 15 to 64 years living in the respective former health board areas and counties, using the census figures for 2002 and 2006 (CSO 2007). The 2008 figure is based on population estimates published by the CSO (2009).



**Figure 1 Average annual incidence of treated problem alcohol use, by county of residence, per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population (NDTRS 2004–2008; CSO 2007, 2009)**



**Figure 2 Incidence and prevalence of treated problem alcohol use, per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population (NDTRS 2004–2008; CSO 2007, 2009)**

#### Additional problem substances

**Table 6 Number (%) of treated cases who used more than one substance, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

<b>Cases using more than one substance</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	4839	5191	5538	6874	7641
All cases using more than one substance	1002 (20.7)	1133 (21.8)	1101 (19.9)	1344 (19.6)	1477 (18.9)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	2001	2028	2140	2859	3403
Previously treated case using more than one substance	377 (18.8)	395 (19.5)	402 (18.8)	533 (18.6)	616 (18.1)
<b>New cases</b>	2706	3110	3318	3655	3771
New cases using more than one substance	599 (22.1)	724 (23.3)	676 (20.4)	783 (21.4)	796 (21.1)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	132	53	80	360	467

**Table 7 Number (%) of problem substances used, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

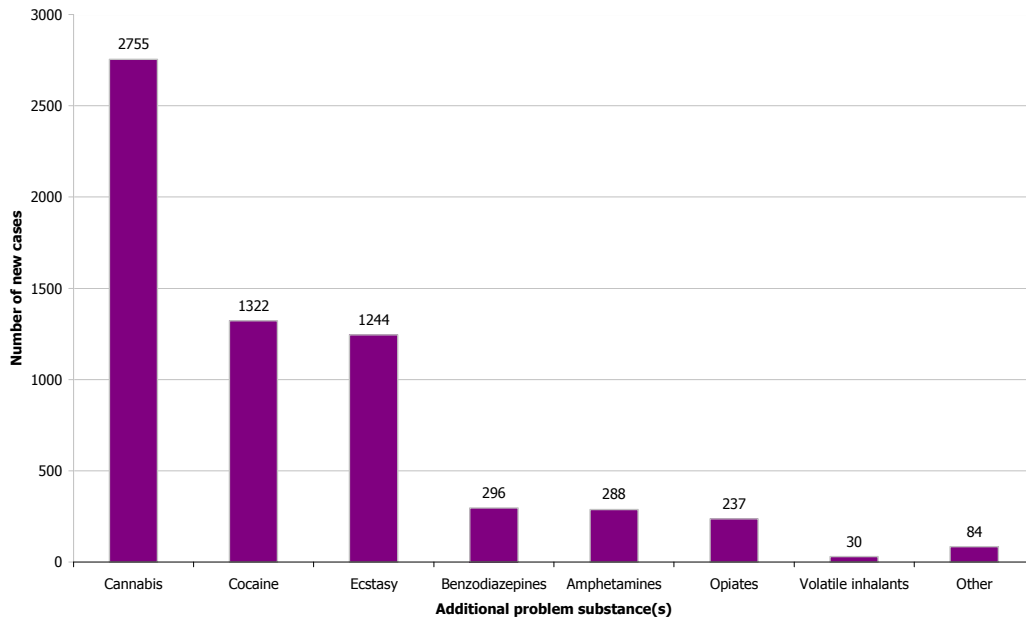
<b>Number of problem substances used</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	4839	5191	5538	6874	7641
One substance	3837 (79.3)	4058 (78.2)	4437 (80.1)	5530 (80.4)	6187 (81.0)
Two substances	486 (10.0)	545 (10.5)	578 (10.4)	665 (9.7)	717 (9.4)
Three substances	263 (5.4)	279 (5.4)	255 (4.6)	362 (5.3)	371 (4.9)
Four substances or more	253 (5.2)	309 (6.0)	268 (4.8)	317 (4.6)	366 (4.8)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	2001	2028	2140	2859	3403
One substance	1624 (81.2)	1633 (80.5)	1738 (81.2)	2326 (81.4)	2781 (81.7)
Two substances	164 (8.2)	188 (9.3)	214 (10.0)	276 (9.7)	315 (9.3)
Three substances	116 (5.8)	85 (4.2)	77 (3.6)	140 (4.9)	158 (4.6)
Four substances or more	97 (4.8)	122 (6.0)	111 (5.2)	117 (4.1)	149 (4.4)
<b>New cases</b>	2706	3110	3318	3655	3771
One substance	2107 (77.9)	2386 (76.7)	2642 (79.6)	2872 (78.6)	2974 (78.9)
Two substances	308 (11.4)	351 (11.3)	351 (10.6)	370 (10.1)	383 (10.2)
Three substances	142 (5.2)	190 (6.1)	174 (5.2)	215 (5.9)	202 (5.4)
Four substances or more	149 (5.5)	183 (5.9)	151 (4.6)	198 (5.4)	212 (5.6)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	132	53	80	360	467

**Table 8 Additional problem substances used, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

Additional problem substance(s) used*	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Number (% <sup>†</sup> )				
<b>All cases</b>	4839	5191	5538	6874	7641
Cannabis	770 (15.9)	896 (17.3)	839 (15.1)	975 (14.2)	1013 (13.3)
Ecstasy	373 (7.7)	400 (7.7)	334 (6.0)	400 (5.8)	418 (5.5)
Cocaine	254 (5.2)	385 (7.4)	359 (6.5)	537 (7.8)	601 (7.9)
Amphetamines	107 (2.2)	109 (2.1)	116 (2.1)	94 (1.4)	94 (1.2)
Opiates	99 (2.0)	90 (1.7)	87 (1.6)	129 (1.9)	182 (2.4)
Benzodiazepines	83 (1.7)	99 (1.9)	104 (1.9)	147 (2.1)	178 (2.3)
Volatile inhalants	14 (0.3)	8 (0.2)	10 (0.2)	10 (0.1)	18 (0.2)
Other substances	47 (1.0)	27 (0.5)	32 (0.6)	35 (0.5)	53 (0.7)
Not recorded	4 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	2001	2028	2140	2859	3403
Cannabis	266 (13.3)	301 (14.8)	300 (14.0)	369 (12.9)	406 (11.9)
Ecstasy	138 (6.9)	123 (6.1)	108 (5.0)	137 (4.8)	152 (4.5)
Cocaine	87 (4.3)	132 (6.5)	123 (5.7)	186 (6.5)	245 (7.2)
Opiates	53 (2.6)	45 (2.2)	51 (2.4)	76 (2.7)	111 (3.3)
Benzodiazepines	51 (2.5)	58 (2.9)	47 (2.2)	62 (2.2)	81 (2.4)
Amphetamines	42 (2.1)	49 (2.4)	49 (2.3)	47 (1.6)	39 (1.1)
Volatile inhalants	9 (0.4)	1 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	2 (0.1)	11 (0.3)
Other substances	25 (1.2)	11 (0.5)	15 (0.7)	22 (0.8)	33 (1.0)
Not recorded	1 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
<b>New cases</b>	2706	3110	3318	3655	3771
Cannabis	481 (17.8)	586 (18.8)	526 (15.9)	581 (15.9)	581 (15.4)
Ecstasy	226 (8.4)	271 (8.7)	221 (6.7)	261 (7.1)	265 (7.0)
Cocaine	162 (6.0)	247 (7.9)	226 (6.8)	345 (9.4)	342 (9.1)
Amphetamines	63 (2.3)	59 (1.9)	65 (2.0)	47 (1.3)	54 (1.4)
Opiates	44 (1.6)	44 (1.4)	34 (1.0)	52 (1.4)	63 (1.7)
Benzodiazepines	29 (1.1)	40 (1.3)	52 (1.6)	82 (2.2)	93 (2.5)
Volatile inhalants	5 (0.2)	6 (0.2)	5 (0.2)	8 (0.2)	6 (0.2)
Other substances	22 (0.8)	15 (0.5)	17 (0.5)	11 (0.3)	19 (0.5)
Not recorded	3 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

\* By cases reporting use of one, two or three additional substances.

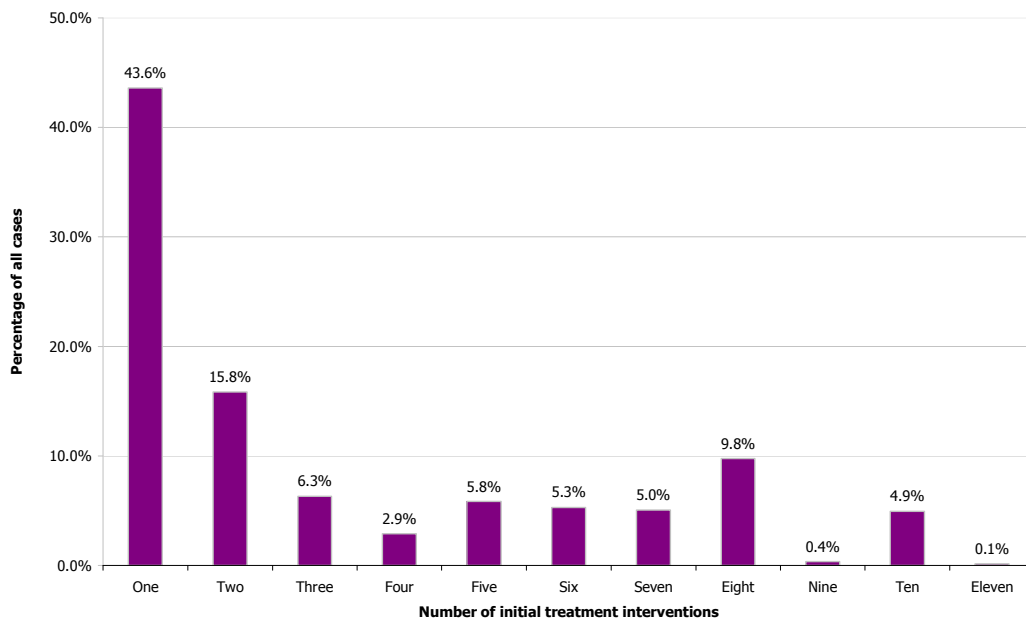
<sup>†</sup> The percentages shown are the proportions of all problem alcohol users who used each additional problem substance.



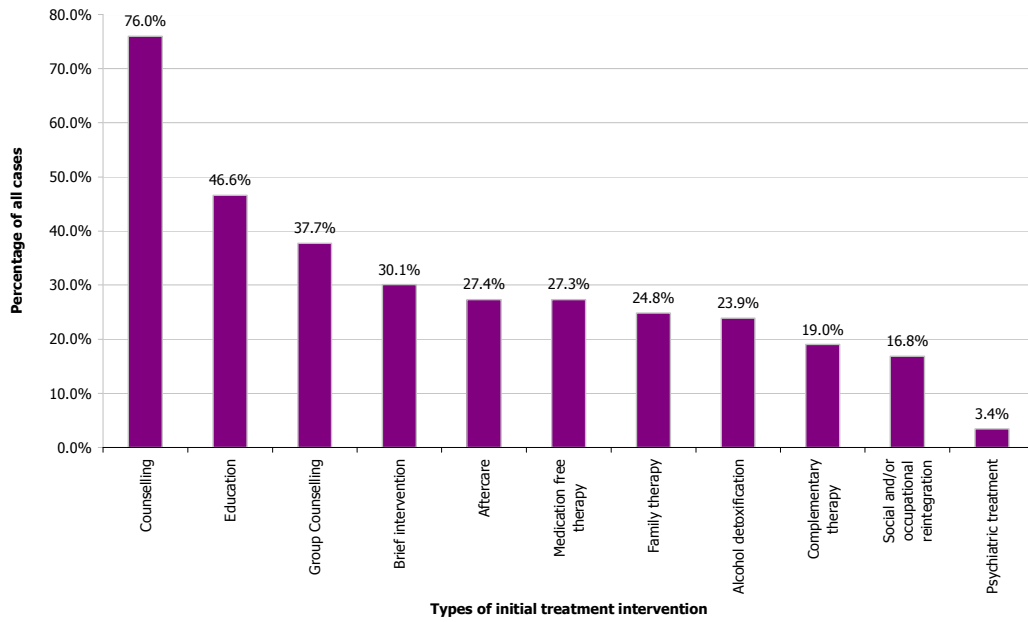
**Figure 3 Additional problem substances associated with alcohol as a main problem substance among new cases (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

### Treatment provision

It is well recognised that there is no single treatment method to address alcohol problems. In practice, there are a number of effective treatments that may be provided in various treatment settings and which meet the needs of different types of problem alcohol user. Those whose problems are more complex due to severe dependence, psychological morbidity or social disorganisation are likely to need more intensive treatments (Raistrick *et al.* 2006). A broad range of services covering treatment and rehabilitation is provided throughout the country. The NDTRS records the treatment intervention(s) provided when the client is first admitted to a treatment service.



**Figure 4 Percentage of cases, by the number of initial treatment interventions availed of (NDTRS 2008)**



**Figure 5 Percentage of cases, by type of initial treatment provided (NDTRS 2008)**



## Age at which alcohol and other drug use started

**Table 9 Age at which substance use started, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>All cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	988	1225	1309	1645	1889
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–28)	16 (12–29)	16 (12–29)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–29)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>					
	3365	3938	4123	4901	5972
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (12–22)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–23)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	368	432	502	680	823
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–30)	16 (12–30)	16 (12–34)	15 (12–28)	16 (12–30)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>					
	1271	1442	1546	2039	2698
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (12–23)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–24)	16(12–23)	16 (11–24)
<b>New cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	596	780	790	947	1049
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–26)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–28)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>					
	2041	2468	2534	2831	3252
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (12–22)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–23)	16 (12–22)	16 (12–23)

\* Age range presented is the 5th to 95th percentile (90% of cases are included within this range).

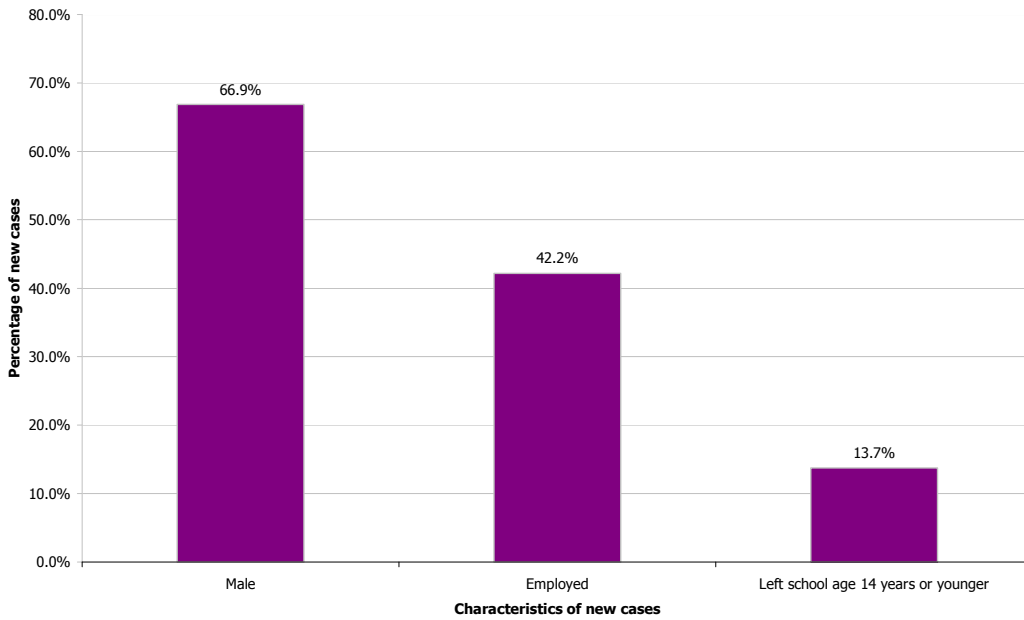
## Socio-demographic characteristics of treated cases

**Table 10 Socio-demographic characteristics, by treatment status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

Characteristics	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>All cases*</b>	<b>4839</b>	<b>5191</b>	<b>5538</b>	<b>6874</b>	<b>7641</b>
Median age (range <sup>†</sup> ) in years	38 (18–61)	38 (19–62)	39 (19–62)	39 (19–61)	39 (19–61)
Number (%) aged under 18	169 (3.5)	133 (2.6)	163 (2.9)	216 (3.1)	229 (3.0)
Number (%) of males	3321 (68.6)	3559 (68.5)	3763 (67.9)	4603 (66.9)	5110 (66.9)
Number (%) living with parents/family	1452 (30.0)	1520 (29.3)	1556 (28.1)	2006 (29.2)	2323 (30.4)
Number (%) homeless	167 (3.5)	223 (4.3)	198 (3.6)	314 (4.6)	337 (4.4)
Number (%) Irish	4648 (96.1)	4962 (95.6)	5239 (94.6)	6456 (93.9)	7224 (94.5)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	680 (14.1)	805 (15.5)	809 (14.6)	957 (13.9)	1001 (13.1)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	1911 (39.5)	1954 (37.6)	2073 (37.4)	2327 (33.9)	2314 (31.4)
<b>Previously treated cases*</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2140</b>	<b>2859</b>	<b>3403</b>
Median age (range <sup>†</sup> ) in years	42 (21–62)	41 (22–63)	41 (21–63)	41 (21–62)	41 (21–62)
Number (%) aged under 18	28 (1.4)	20 (1.0)	19 (0.9)	43 (1.5)	34 (1.0)
Number (%) of males	1377 (68.9)	1393 (68.7)	1502 (70.2)	1935 (67.7)	2310 (67.9)
Number (%) living with parents/family	475 (23.7)	465 (22.9)	498 (23.3)	717 (25.1)	911 (26.8)
Number (%) homeless	87 (4.3)	138 (6.8)	115 (5.4)	201 (7.0)	232 (6.8)
Number (%) Irish	1930 (96.5)	1927 (95.0)	2037 (95.2)	2693 (94.2)	3225 (94.8)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	286 (14.3)	320 (15.8)	358 (16.7)	459 (16.1)	511 (15.0)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	696 (14.4)	657 (32.4)	664 (31.0)	735 (25.7)	829 (25.1)
<b>New cases*</b>	<b>2706</b>	<b>3110</b>	<b>3318</b>	<b>3655</b>	<b>3771</b>
Median age (range <sup>†</sup> ) in years	35 (17–59)	36 (18–60)	37 (18–61)	37 (18–60)	36 (17–61)
Number (%) aged under 18	138 (5.1)	109 (3.5)	143 (4.3)	172 (4.7)	194 (5.1)
Number (%) of males	1853 (68.5)	2126 (68.7)	2206 (66.5)	2419 (66.2)	2466 (65.4)
Number (%) living with parents/family	950 (35.1)	1037 (33.3)	1038 (31.3)	1187 (32.5)	1266 (33.6)
Number (%) homeless	67 (2.5)	85 (2.7)	80 (2.4)	105 (2.9)	89 (2.4)
Number (%) Irish	2591 (95.8)	2984 (95.9)	3132 (94.4)	3413 (93.4)	3546 (94.0)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	378 (14.0)	480 (15.4)	440 (13.3)	490 (13.4)	486 (12.9)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	1179 (43.6)	1279 (41.1)	1383 (41.7)	1492 (40.8)	1378 (38.2)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>467</b>

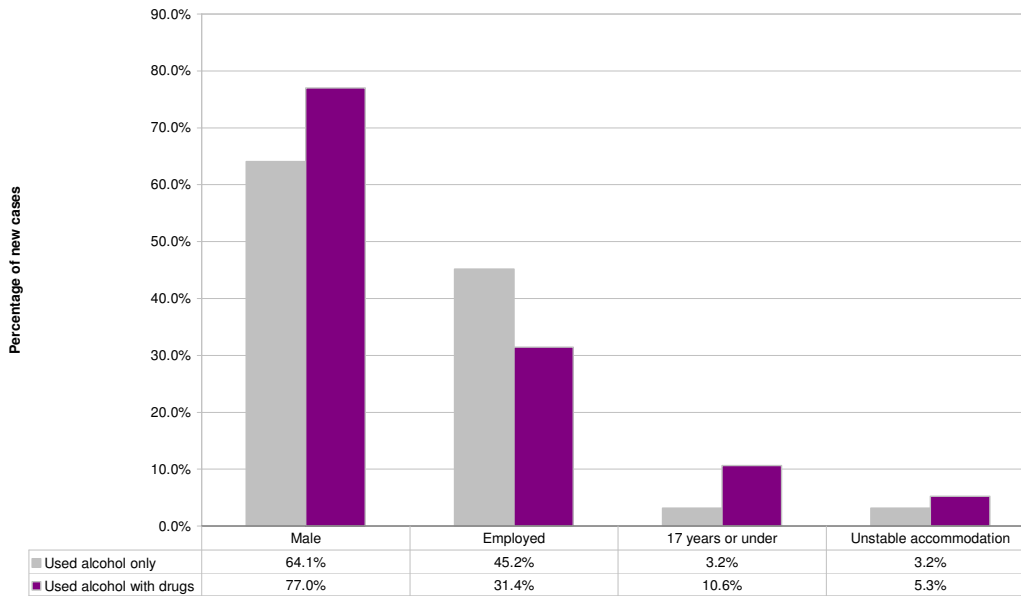
\* It is not possible to ascertain the percentage with each characteristic of interest from the total number because complete data were not reported in all cases.

<sup>†</sup> Age range presented is the 5th to 95th percentile (90% of cases are included within this range).



**Figure 6 Characteristics of new cases (NDTRS 2004– 2008)**

**Relationship between alcohol and selected characteristics**



**Figure 7 Characteristics of new cases, by alcohol and other drug use status (NDTRS 2004–2008)**

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