

HIV in Ireland, 2015 – In Brief

In 2015, 485 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in Ireland, giving a rate of 10.6 per 100,000 population. This is an increase of 30% compared to 2014 (8.2 per 100,000). The increase was mainly confined to HSE East (where a 38% rate increase was seen).

A number of factors contributed to the increase in HSE East, including an improvement to the national surveillance case definition introduced in January 2015 which resulted in improved sensitivity, timeliness and increased number of notifications; an outbreak of HIV among people who inject drugs; and an increase in diagnoses among migrant men who have sex with men (MSM).

Since the early 1980's and to the end of 2015, 7,838 people have been diagnosed with HIV in Ireland. However, this number does not represent the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Ireland, as it does not take factors such as death and migration into account.

The key findings from 2015 are summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of HIV diagnoses, 2015

Number of HIV diagnoses		485
Rate of diagnoses (per 100,000 population) ¹		10.6
Gender	Males (%)	76.1
	Females (%)	23.9
	Male to female ratio	3.2
Age	Median age of adult cases (years)	34
	Age range of adult cases (years)	18-72
	Young people aged 15-24 years (%)	8.0
	Aged 50 and older (%)	9.3
Route of transmission	MSM (%)	50.9
	Heterosexual (%)	26.8
	Injecting Drug Use (%)	10.1
	Mother to Child transmission (%)	1.0
	Unknown (%)	11.1
Region of birth	Born in Ireland (%)	29.9
	Born Abroad (%)	55.1
	Unknown (%)	15.1
Co-infections	Acute STI (%)	14.0
	TB (%)	1.2
	Hepatitis B (%)	2.5
	Hepatitis C (%)	8.5
Previous history of testing	Previously tested positive abroad (%)	26.6
	Transfer of care (of those previously positive abroad)	79.1

¹ Based on 2011 census

Probable route of transmission

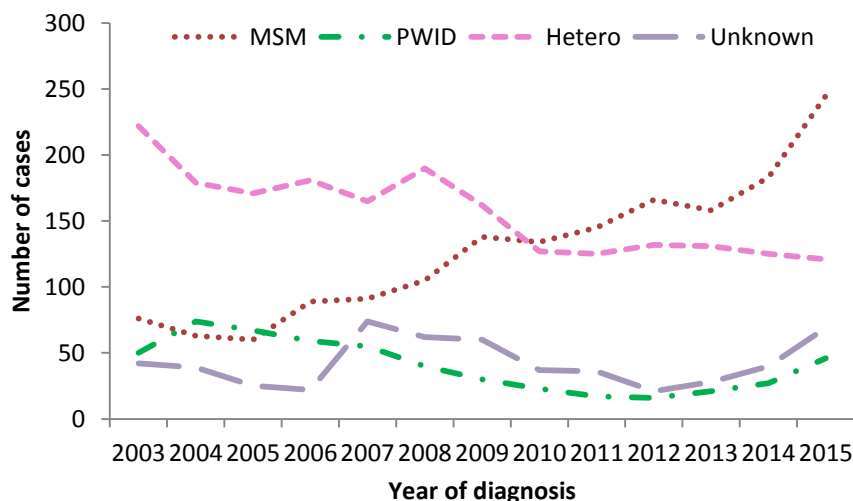
Information on probable route of transmission was available for 89% of diagnoses in 2015 (see figure 1). As in recent years, sex between men was the predominant route of HIV transmission in Ireland in 2015 and accounted for just over half of diagnoses (51%). In particular, there was a large increase in diagnoses among MSM from Latin America between 2014 and 2015 (from 38 to 84 diagnoses).

Heterosexual contact was the second most commonly reported mode of transmission in 2015, (130; 27%). The majority of heterosexual cases (58%) were born in countries with generalised HIV epidemics (>1% of the population with HIV).

Ten percent of new diagnoses (n=49) were among people who inject drugs (PWID) which was an increase of 81% compared to 2014 (n=27). The increase was due to an outbreak of recently acquired HIV infection among PWID living in Dublin in 2014/2015.

Five mother to child transmission (MTCT) cases were notified in 2015. None of these were born in Ireland and there were no reported MTC transmissions in Ireland in 2015 (*Personal communication: Michelle Goode, July 2016*).

Figure 1: Trends in HIV diagnoses by route of transmission, 2003 to 2015



Previously diagnosed HIV positive abroad

Among diagnoses in 2015, 27% were reported to have previously been diagnosed HIV positive abroad, up from a range of 14-18% between 2011 and 2014. This proportion was highest among heterosexuals (35%), followed by MSM (29%). Of those who had a previous diagnosis, 79% transferred their HIV care from another country to Ireland.

Late presentation (CD4 count <350 cells/ μ l or AIDS defining illness at diagnosis)

Of all people diagnosed with HIV in Ireland in 2015, 45% were late presenters (where information on CD4 count or AIDS defining illness at diagnosis was available). This was slightly lower than the proportion presenting late in 2014 (47%) and 2013 (49%). The proportion of people who presented late was much lower (31%) among those who had a previous HIV diagnosis abroad compared to those who did not (52%). The groups with the highest proportions presenting late were male heterosexuals, people aged 50 years and over and people born in sub-Saharan Africa.