



# Annual Epidemiological Report

September 2019

## Non-specific urethritis in Ireland, 2018

### Key Facts

- In 2018, 518 cases (10.9 per 100,000 population) of non-specific urethritis (NSU) were notified in Ireland
- NSU data were underreported in the second half of 2018; therefore the trends in the number and rate of cases should be interpreted with caution

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## Introduction

Non-specific urethritis (NSU), also known as non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU), occurs in individuals who have urethral inflammation that is not the result of infection with *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. NSU can have a number of causes, including irritation to the urethra by soaps, creams or an object, or sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Where caused by STIs, the most common organisms implicated are *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Mycoplasma genitalium* [1]. It's estimated that chlamydia is responsible for nearly half of all male cases of NSU [2]. Chlamydia is a notifiable disease in Ireland, and cases are generally notified separately as chlamydia rather than as NSU. Reports on chlamydia are available at <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/hivstis/sexuallytransmittedinfections/chlamydia/surveillanceanddiseasereports/>.

*M. genitalium* infection is not currently a notifiable disease in Ireland and is not reported separately to NSU.

NSU is notifiable under the Infectious Disease Regulations in Ireland [3]. Notifications from STI clinics and primary care are collated by Departments of Public Health and notified to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). Data are notified as total numbers of NSU by quarter, with breakdown to clinic level available for some, but not all, HSE areas.

## Data completeness

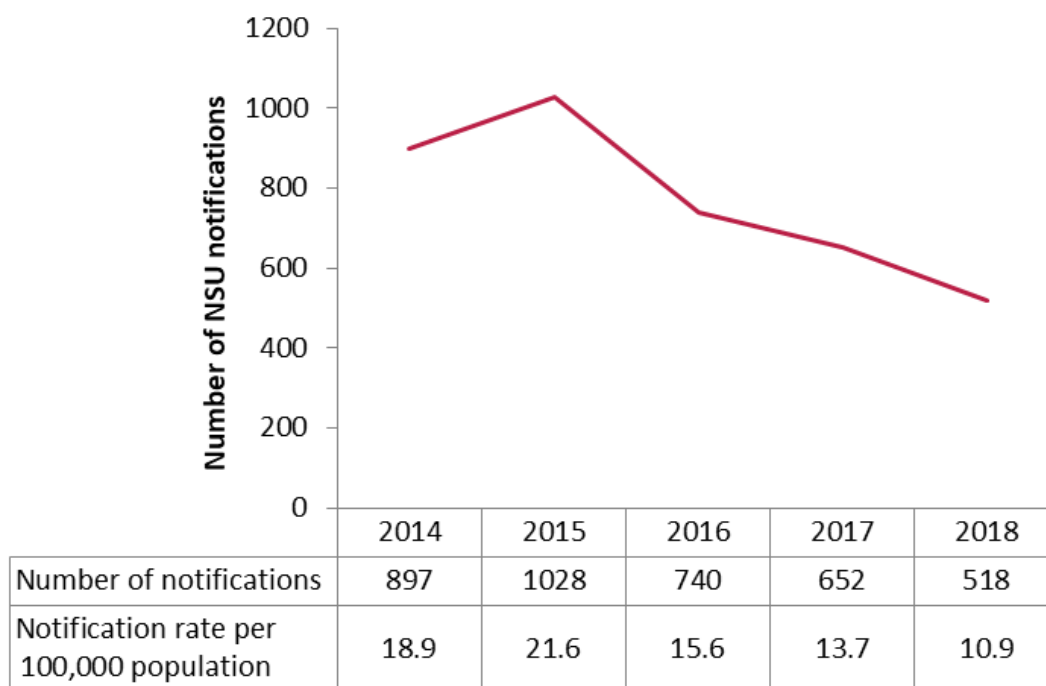
Data completeness is presented in Table 1. NSU data for 2018 could not be provided for three STI clinics in HSE East and for all STI clinics in HSE West; it is unlikely that these data will be reported as the pattern of missing data is unchanged since 2013.

For the second half of 2018, NSU data could not be provided for one additional STI clinic in HSE East, and for all STI services in HSE Midwest; trends should be interpreted with caution due to this underreporting.

## Epidemiology

There were 518 cases of NSU notified in Ireland in 2018, a 20% decrease compared to 2017 when 652 cases were notified (Figure 1). The notification rate (NR) in 2018 was 10.9 per 100,000 population. Interpretation of trends is difficult due to increased underreporting of cases in the second half of 2018, and given the absence of information on the causes of NSU.

**Figure 1: Notifications of non-specific urethritis in Ireland, 2014-2018**



## Technical notes

1. Data for this report were provided in aggregate format by Departments of Public Health, further detail on completeness of data is provided in Table 1.
2. Aggregate data were collated on 28 June 2019, and were correct at the time of publication. Data may be updated in future reports.
3. Notification rates were calculated using population data from Census 2016.

**Table 1: Non-specific urethritis returns by HSE area and site, 2015-2018**

HSE area	Site*	2015	2016	2017	2018
East <sup>†</sup>	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	GUIDE clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	‡
	Mater clinic	-	-	-	-
	Gay Men's Health Service	-	-	-	-
	Beaumont Hospital STI clinic	-	-	-	-
Midlands	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Portlaoise STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Mullingar STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Midwest <sup>†</sup>	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	‡
	Limerick STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	‡
	Nenagh STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	‡
	Ennis STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	‡
Northeast	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northwest	Public Health <sup>#</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Sligo STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Letterkenny STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Southeast <sup>†</sup>	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Carlow STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Clonmel STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Waterford STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
South <sup>†</sup>	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	STI clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
West	Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	STI clinic	-	-	-	-

\*Public Health includes GPs, other primary care, student health and others.

<sup>†</sup>Data were collated nationally as the total number of NSU notifications in the HSE area, the number of notifications by site was not collated nationally.

Yes, data returned; - data not returned

<sup>‡</sup>Data returned for quarter 1 and quarter 2, data not returned for quarter 3 and quarter 4.

<sup>#</sup>Data does not include Donegal patients who may have attended Altnagelvin GUM clinic in Derry.

## Further information

Previous years' NSU data are available at the following locations:

- 2017: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/sexuallytransmittedinfections/non-specificurethritis/surveillance-reports/>
- 2013-2016: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/sexuallytransmittedinfections/publications/stireports/>  
and  
<https://www.hpsc.ie/about-hpsc/annual-reports/annual-epidemiological-reports-1999-2016/>
- 1995-2012: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/sexuallytransmittedinfections/publications/stireports/2010-2012-reports/>

Keep up to date with HIV and STIs in Ireland at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/sexuallytransmittedinfections/publications/stireports/sti-weekly-reports/>

## Acknowledgements

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## References

1. P Horner, K.B., C O'Mahony, P Muir, K Radcliffe, C Evans and on behalf of the Clinical Effectiveness Group of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV, *2015 UK National Guideline on the management of non-gonococcal urethritis*. International Journal of HIV&AIDS, 2015. 0(0) 1-12.
2. Health Service Executive. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/n/non-specific-urethritis/causes-of-non-specific-urethritis.html> Accessed 22/07/2019.
3. Government of Ireland. Infectious Diseases (amendment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 567 of 2018)