

# Annual Epidemiological Report

October 2019

## Chickenpox-hospitalised cases in Ireland, 2018

### Key Facts

In 2018, 99 (2.1/100,000) hospitalised chickenpox cases were notified in Ireland.

This is similar to 2017 and 2016 when 105 and 106 cases, respectively, were notified.

Two outbreaks of suspected chickenpox/chickenpox were notified in 2018.

One outbreak occurred in childcare facility with a total of 20 ill and one occurred in a residential institution with three ill.

## Chickenpox-hospitalised cases

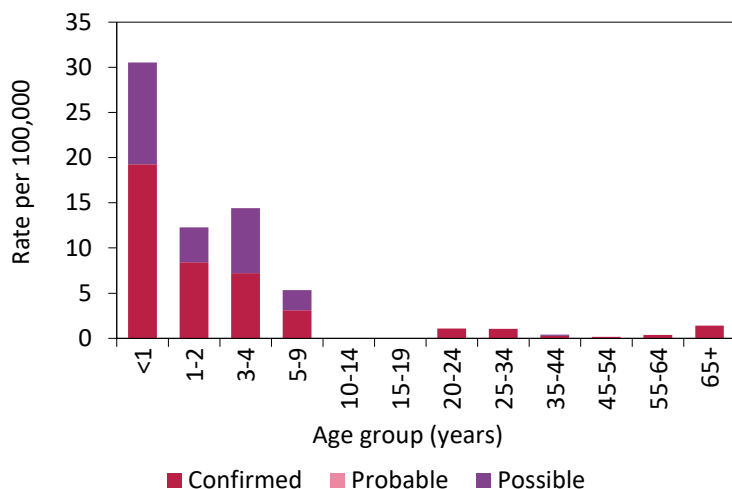
The Health Act, 1947 entitles the Minister for Health to declare by regulation diseases that are infectious, covered by legislation and that require notification to a Medical Officer of Health. The infectious diseases notifiable in Ireland are regulated in the 1981 Infectious Diseases Regulations. The amendment S.I. No. 452 of 2011 to these regulations specified for the first time the disease chickenpox, hospitalised cases only, as notifiable. Chickenpox is caused by varicella-zoster virus. The case definition is available at [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie).

In 2018, 99 (2.1/100,000) hospitalised chickenpox cases were notified in Ireland compared to 105 (2.2/100,000) in 2017, 106 (2.2/100,000) in 2016 and 69 (1.4/100,000) in 2015. In 2018, the largest number of cases was in the HSE E (table 1). Of the 99 cases, 68 (69%) were classified as confirmed, none as probable and 31 (31%) as possible. The highest age specific incidence rates were in those aged less than five years (figure 1). Of the 105 cases, 42 (42%) were female and 56 (57%) were male while sex was unreported for one case (1%). Two cases, both adults, were reported to have encephalitis, 17 cases were reported as not having encephalitis while it was unknown or unreported for the remaining 80 cases. One case, in the age group 55-64 years, was reported as having died but the cause of death was recorded on CIDR as not known.

**Table 1. Number of notified hospitalised chickenpox cases and the crude incidence rate per 100,000 population (CIR) by HSE Area in 2018**

HSE Area	Number	CIR
HSE E	54	3.2
HSE M	9	3.1
HSE MW	4	1.0
HSE NE	14	3.0
HSE NW	3	1.2
HSE SE	5	1.0
HSE S	4	0.6
HSE W	6	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>2.1</b>

**Figure 1. The age specific incidence rate (per 100,000 population) of notified hospitalised chickenpox cases in Ireland in 2018 by age group and case classification**



## Chickenpox/Varicella outbreaks

The amendment S.I. No. 707 of 2003 to the infectious disease regulations specified that unusual clusters or changing patterns of illness that may be of public health concern must be reported. Therefore, outbreaks of chickenpox/varicella must be notified regardless of hospitalisation status. Two outbreaks of suspected chickenpox/ chickenpox were notified in 2018. One outbreak occurred in childcare facility with a total of 20 ill and one occurred in a residential institution with three ill.

The figures presented in this summary are based on data extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019. These figures may differ slightly from those published previously due to ongoing updating of notification data on CIDR. The 2016 census data was used here to calculate rates.

## Acknowledgements

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