

## Treated problem alcohol use in Ireland

2012 figures from the National Drug Treatment Reporting System



National Health Information Systems,  
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## Summary

This update presents figures from the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) on treated problem alcohol use in Ireland, for the period 2008 to 2012.

### Overview

The total number of cases treated for problem alcohol use in Ireland increased from 7,940 in 2008 to a peak of 8,604 in 2011, decreasing in 2012 to 8,336 (Table 2).

### New cases

- The total number of new cases treated for problem alcohol use increased each year except for 2012. The number of new cases treated rose by 17.9%, from 3,833 in 2008 to 4,520 in 2011, but dropping to 4,028 in 2012.
- Overall, the number of cases who returned for treatment increased (by 16.8%), from 3,606 cases in 2008 to 4,212 in 2012 (Table 2).

### Incidence and prevalence

- The incidence of treated problem alcohol use among 15–64-year-olds living in Ireland, expressed per 100,000 of the population, increased from 119.7 in 2008 to 141.2 in 2011 and subsequently decreased to 125.1 in 2012 (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 248.2 in 2008 to 269.8 in 2011 and subsequently decreased to 261.5 in 2012 (Figure 1).
- Fluctuations in prevalence and incidence may be attributed to changes in patterns of problem alcohol use in the population, levels of participation and reporting to the NDTRS, or a combination of both (Figure 2).

### Geographic distribution

- The incidence of treatment for problem alcohol use by county for the period 2008 to 2012 was highest in Waterford, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Wexford (with each of these counties reporting more than 224 cases per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population) (Figure 2).
- The incidence rates were lowest in Clare, Roscommon, Wicklow, Mayo and Meath (with each of these counties reporting less than 83 cases per 100,000) (Figure 2).
- As in previous years, the largest proportion (39.9%) of treated alcohol cases in 2012 lived in the HSE South region, and almost one-quarter (24.1%) lived in the HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster region (Table 4).

### Poly drug use

- 18% of those treated for problem alcohol use in 2012 also reported using at least one other drug, a similar proportion to that observed in previous years (Tables 6 & 8).
- In 2012, the most common drugs used by treated alcohol cases in conjunction with alcohol were cannabis, followed by cocaine, benzodiazepines and ecstasy. This reflects a minor change since 2008, when opiates were the fourth most common additional drug. Use of more than one substance increases the complexity of cases and can lead to poorer outcomes for the patient (Tables 6 and 8).

### Socio-demographic characteristics

- In 2012, many of those in treatment for problem alcohol use started drinking alcohol at 16 years of age, with almost no change seen over the past five years (Table 9).
- The median age for cases was 40 years, similar to previous years (Table 10).
- While the proportion of cases under the age of 18 remained small (3.4%) in 2012, the number of new cases in that age group has fallen, from 6.4% in 2010 to 5.4% in 2012 (Table 10).
- The majority of cases, both new (63.3%) and previously treated (65.9%) were male.
- The proportion of cases in employment decreased from 30.3% in 2008 to 19.7% in 2012 (Table 10).

- The proportion of all cases who were homeless was highest in 2011 at 5.6% and fell slightly in 2012 to 4.7%. Previously treated cases were more likely to be homeless (6.6%) compared to new cases (2.7%) (Table 10).
- Those who used other drugs along 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 example, 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:

- **New cases treated** describes individuals who have never been treated for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance); and
- **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
- **Status unknown** describes individuals whose status with respect to previous treatment for problem alcohol use (as a main problem substance) is not known.

<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

<b>Regional Drug Task Forces</b>	<b>Area included</b>
East Coast Region	South-east Dublin city and county and East Wicklow
Midland Region	Counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath
Mid West Region	Counties Clare and Limerick, and North Tipperary
North Dublin City and County Region	North Dublin city and county
North Eastern Region	Counties Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan
North West Region	Counties Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo, and north-west Cavan
South East Region	Counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford, and South Tipperary,
Southern Region	Counties Cork and Kerry
South Western Region	South-west Dublin, west Wicklow and County Kildare
Western Region	Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon

## Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, alcohol is the third leading risk factor contributing to the global burden of disease. The impact of alcohol consumption on disease and injury is largely determined by the total volume of alcohol consumed and the pattern of drinking.<sup>1</sup> Ireland has one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption per capita in Europe. In 2010, 11.9 litres of pure alcohol were consumed in this country for every adult aged 15 years or over, according to figures from the Revenue Commissioners and the CSO. Alcohol is associated with a range of chronic and acute medical conditions, including liver cirrhosis, various cancers, road traffic collisions and suicide. Problem alcohol use is pervasive in Irish society, with men and women, the old and the young, experiencing its negative effects.<sup>2, 3</sup>

The National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) is an epidemiological database on treated problem drug and alcohol use in Ireland. It is co-ordinated by the National Health Information Systems staff of the Health Research Board (HRB) on behalf of the Department of Health.

Alcohol and other drug treatment data are viewed as an indirect indicator of problem drug and alcohol use, as well as a direct indicator of demand for treatment services. NDTRS data are used at national level (alcohol and drug data) and at European level (drug data) to provide information on the characteristics of clients entering treatment and on patterns of problem substance use, such as types of substance used and consumption behaviours. Drug data are 'valuable from a public health perspective to assess needs, ... and to plan and evaluate services'.<sup>4</sup>

## Background and Methods

The NDTRS was established in 1990 in the Greater Dublin Area and was extended in 1995 to cover all areas of the country. It was developed in line with the Pompidou Group's Definitive Protocol<sup>5</sup> and subsequently refined in accordance with the Treatment Demand Indicator Protocol.<sup>6</sup> Originally designed to record problem drug use, 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 problem drug use but he/she also reported problematic use of alcohol. In 2004, the remit of the NDTRS was extended to include cases where alcohol was recorded as the main or only reason for seeking treatment.

The monitoring role of the NDTRS was recognised by the government in its document *Building on experience: National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008*.<sup>7</sup> The collection and reporting of data to the NDTRS was one of the actions identified and agreed by government for implementation. The *National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009–2016*<sup>8</sup> (NDS) recognised the positive impact of the NDTRS on the development of key indicators, stating that '...the information provided through the NDTRS provide[s] significant insights into the patterns of problem drug use', and that 'drug treatment data have also improved substantially through the NDTRS...' (p. 69). The NDS also recommends the continuation and further development of data-collection systems, including the NDTRS (Action 49).

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:

- In 1996 NDTRS data were used to identify a number of local areas with problematic heroin use.<sup>9</sup> These areas were later designated as local drugs task force (LDTF) areas, and task force teams have continued to provide strategic responses to problem drug use in their communities.
- In 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.<sup>10</sup>

- In 2007 NDTRS data were used to inform some of the recommendations of the Working Group on drugs rehabilitation, and to assist the Working Group on residential services in estimating the number of residential places required to address severe alcohol and drug problems in Ireland.<sup>11</sup>
- In 2009 the Comptroller and Auditor General used data from the NDTRS in a special report on treatment and rehabilitation services provided for people with drug addictions.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2009 the NDS steering group used NDTRS data extensively to assess progress under the previous strategy.<sup>8</sup>

Compliance with the NDTRS requires that one form be completed for each new client coming for their first treatment and for each previously treated client returning to treatment for problem substance use. Service providers at treatment centres throughout Ireland collect data on episodes of treatment, rather than on the individual person treated each year. HRB staff compile anonymous, aggregated data, which are analysed and reported at national and EU levels.

The main elements of the reporting system in the context of this paper are defined as follows:

*All cases treated* – individuals who receive treatment for alcohol as a **main problem substance** at each treatment centre in a calendar year, including:

*New cases treated* – individuals who have never been treated for problem alcohol use;

*Previously treated cases* – individuals who were previously treated for problem alcohol use at any treatment centre at any time in the past and have returned to treatment in the reporting year; and

*Status unknown* – individuals whose status with respect to previous treatment for problem alcohol use is not known.

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 problem substance use problems. Clients who attend needle-exchange services are not included in this reporting system. Treatment options for problem alcohol use include one or more of the following: medication, psychiatric treatment, brief intervention, counselling (including cognitive behavioural therapy), medication-free therapy, family therapy, complementary therapy, and/or life-skills training.

Treatment for problem use of alcohol in Ireland is provided by statutory and non-statutory services, including general hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, community-based services and residential centres. Most treatment of problem alcohol use takes place in outpatient facilities; more complex treatments are carried out in residential settings.<sup>2</sup> The 233 treatment services that returned alcohol treatment data to the HRB in 2012 included 141 non-residential centres and 37 residential centres and 55 low threshold services.

### **Interpretation of data**

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

1. Despite an increase from 191 in 2008 to 233 in 2012 in the number of alcohol treatment services reporting to the NDTRS, not all services participate in the system. In particular, the coverage for cases reporting alcohol as their main problem substance is incomplete in 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.
2. Each record in the NDTRS database relates to a treatment episode (a case), and not to a person. This means that the same person could be counted more than once in the reporting year if they had more than one treatment episode in that year.
3. The place of residence of almost two per cent of cases for the years 2008–2012 was not recorded, and an additional small number of cases lived outside Ireland. These cases could

not be assigned to a specified HSE region or county. The data presented in Tables 1–3 and Figures 1-2 in this paper are based on the total of 40,562 treated cases. The remainder of the tables and figures are based on the 39,654 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
- area of residence
- 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 2008–2012)**

Services	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>All services (cases treated)</b>	191 (7940)	206 (7816)	228 (7866)	233 (8604)	233 (8336)
Outpatient (cases treated)	149 (4396)	140 (4446)	146 (4179)	145 (4635)	141 (4508)
Residential (cases treated)	37 (3481)	46 (3179)	36 (3227)	34 (3378)	37 (3309)
Low-threshold* (cases treated)	5 (63)	20 (191)	46 (460)	54 (591)	55 (519)

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

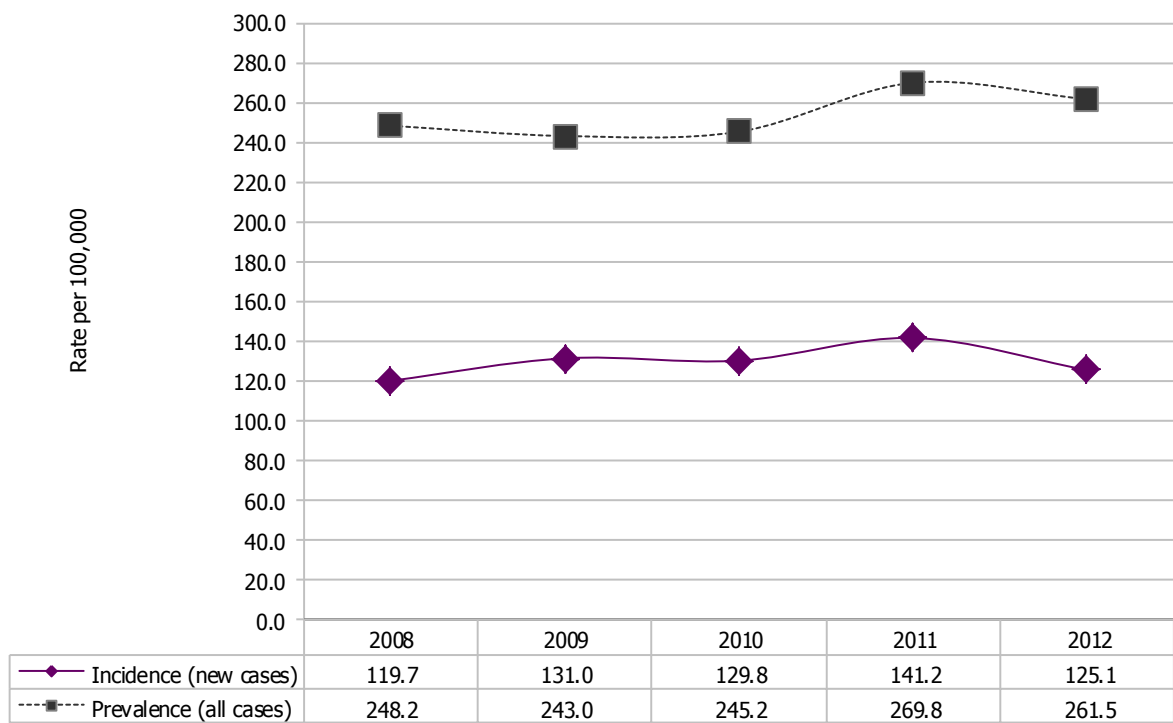
### Number of cases treated

**Table 2 Number (%) of cases treated, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

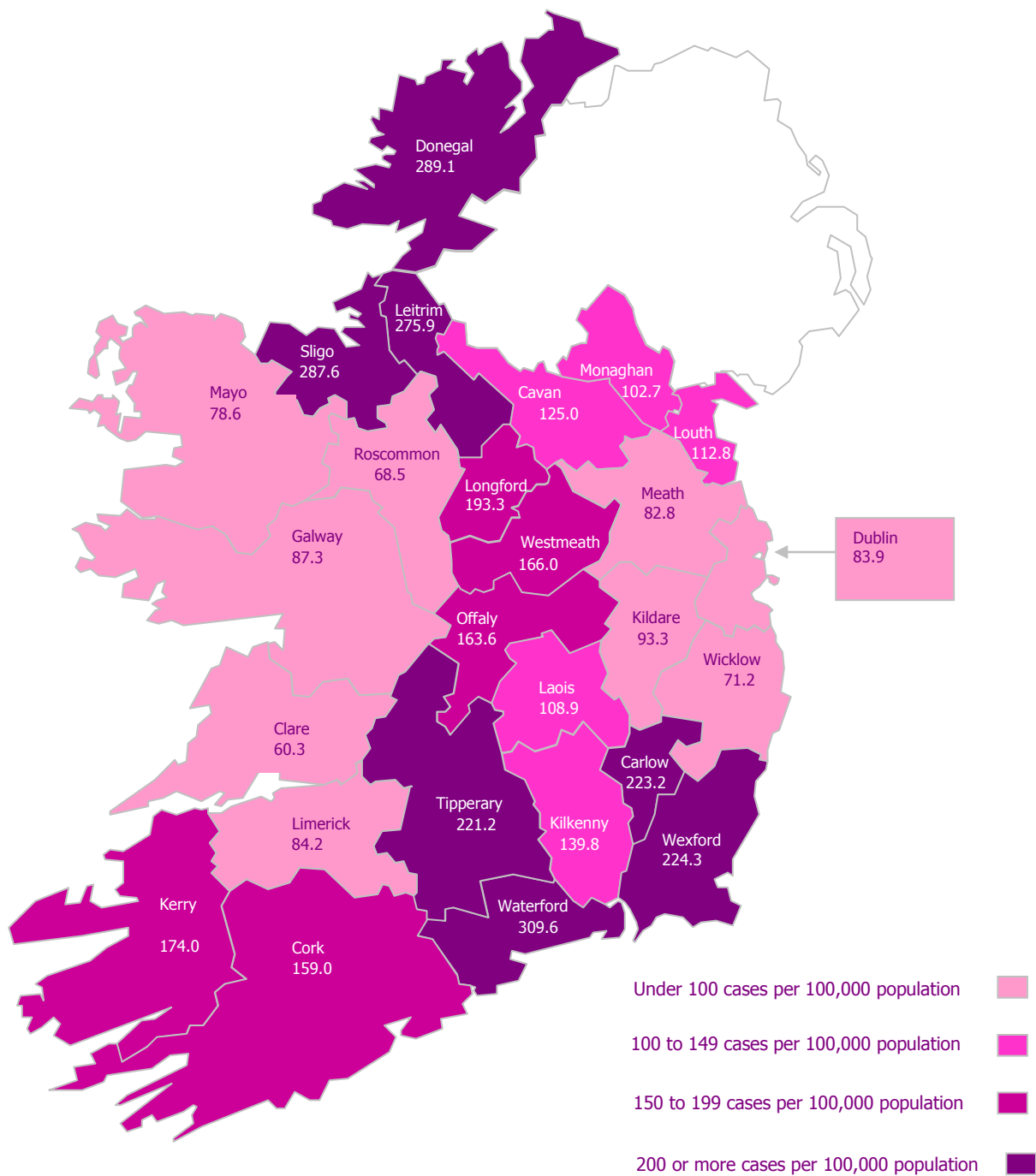
Treatment status	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	7940	7816	7866	8604	8336
New cases	3833 (48.3)	4220 (54.0)	4178 (53.1)	4520 (52.5)	4028 (48.3)
Previously treated cases	3606 (45.4)	3524 (45.1)	3583 (45.6)	3971 (46.2)	4212 (50.5)
Treatment status unknown	501 (6.3)	72 (0.9)	105 (1.3)	113 (1.3)	96 (1.2)

### Incidence and prevalence of treated alcohol use

In order to adjust for variation in population size in each county, the actual incidence of treated alcohol use in each area was calculated using the average number of new cases over the five-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 counties, using the Census of Population figures for 2011<sup>13</sup> and population estimates published by the CSO (2013).<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 1 Incidence and prevalence of treated problem alcohol use, per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population (NDTRS 2008–2012; CSO 2012, 2013)**



**Figure 2 Average annual incidence of treated problem alcohol use, by county of residence, per 100,000 of the 15–64-year-old population (NDTRS 2008–2012; CSO 2011, 2013)**

**Table 3 Number (%) of cases treated, by place of residence (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	7940	7816	7866	8604	8336
Specified HSE region	7641 (96.2)	7666 (98.1)	7745 (98.5)	8452 (98.2)	8150 (97.8)
Ireland, address not recorded	257 (3.2)	119 (1.5)	86 (1.1)	103 (1.2)	117 (1.4)
Outside Ireland	54 (0.7)	31 (0.4)	35 (0.4)	49 (0.6)	69 (0.8)

**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 2008–2012)**

HSE region of residence	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Number (%)				
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
Dublin North East	1232 (16.1)	1234 (16.1)	1020 (13.2)	1164 (13.8)	1206 (14.8)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	1792 (23.5)	1744 (22.7)	1691 (21.8)	1940 (23.0)	1967 (24.1)
South	2456 (32.1)	2793 (36.4)	3052 (39.4)	3507 (41.5)	3250 (39.9)
West	2161 (28.3)	1895 (24.7)	1982 (25.6)	1841 (21.8)	1727 (21.2)
<b>New cases</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
Dublin North East	618 (16.4)	697 (16.7)	566 (13.7)	598 (13.4)	538 (13.5)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	739 (19.6)	952 (22.8)	934 (22.5)	1108 (24.8)	945 (23.8)
South	1287 (34.1)	1524 (36.5)	1617 (39.0)	1827 (40.9)	1677 (42.2)
West	1127 (29.9)	1008 (24.1)	1025 (24.7)	933 (20.9)	818 (20.6)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
Dublin North East	444 (13.0)	509 (14.9)	430 (12.2)	548 (14.1)	638 (15.6)
Dublin Mid–Leinster	843 (24.8)	774 (22.7)	716 (20.4)	793 (20.4)	989 (24.2)
South	1125 (33.1)	1257 (36.8)	1419 (40.4)	1652 (42.5)	1555 (38.1)
West	991 (29.1)	876 (25.6)	946 (26.9)	895 (23.0)	897 (22.0)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>93</b>

**Table 5 Number (%) of cases treated, by Drug Task Force area of residence and by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

Task Force area of residence	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Number (%)				
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
Ballyfermot	63 (0.8)	50 (0.7)	65 (0.8)	48 (0.6)	49 (0.6)
Ballymun	21 (0.3)	36 (0.5)	38 (0.5)	39 (0.5)	33 (0.4)
Blanchardstown	49 (0.6)	50 (0.7)	64 (0.8)	68 (0.8)	54 (0.7)
Bray	26 (0.3)	43 (0.6)	47 (0.6)	51 (0.6)	35 (0.4)
Canal Communities	24 (0.3)	19 (0.2)	25 (0.3)	21 (0.2)	42 (0.5)
Clondalkin	121 (1.6)	110 (1.4)	114 (1.5)	111 (1.3)	139 (1.7)
Cork	370 (4.8)	314 (4.1)	440 (5.7)	538 (6.4)	424 (5.2)
Dublin North East	118 (1.5)	99 (1.3)	96 (1.2)	97 (1.1)	86 (1.1)
Dublin South Inner City	90 (1.2)	133 (1.7)	131 (1.7)	138 (1.6)	140 (1.7)
Dublin 12	88 (1.2)	88 (1.1)	95 (1.2)	108 (1.3)	129 (1.6)
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	119 (1.6)	157 (2.0)	128 (1.7)	131 (1.5)	144 (1.8)
Finglas-Cabra	74 (1.0)	68 (0.9)	90 (1.2)	109 (1.3)	78 (1.0)
North Inner City	113 (1.5)	130 (1.7)	134 (1.7)	175 (2.1)	123 (1.5)
Tallaght	183 (2.4)	186 (2.4)	172 (2.2)	185 (2.2)	164 (2.0)
East Coast	88 (1.2)	105 (1.4)	91 (1.2)	97 (1.1)	72 (0.9)
Midland	483 (6.3)	442 (5.8)	426 (5.5)	648 (7.7)	619 (7.6)
Mid West	570 (7.5)	441 (5.8)	505 (6.5)	463 (5.5)	376 (4.6)
North Dublin City and County	186 (2.4)	219 (2.9)	240 (3.1)	225 (2.7)	182 (2.2)
North Eastern	671 (8.8)	632 (8.2)	358 (4.6)	451 (5.3)	650 (8.0)
North West	958 (12.5)	945 (12.3)	1038 (13.4)	922 (10.9)	924 (11.3)
Southern	854 (11.2)	861 (11.2)	1078 (13.9)	1180 (14.0)	1186 (14.6)
South East	1324 (17.3)	1616 (21.1)	1519 (19.6)	1789 (21.2)	1640 (20.1)
South Western	413 (5.4)	407 (5.3)	388 (5.0)	386 (4.6)	405 (5.0)
Western	633 (8.3)	509 (6.6)	439 (5.7)	456 (5.4)	427 (5.2)
Not known	2 (0.0)	6 (0.1)	24 (0.3)	16 (0.2)	29 (0.3)
<b>New cases</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
Ballyfermot	30 (0.8)	30 (0.7)	42 (1.0)	25 (0.6)	25 (0.6)
Ballymun	7 (0.2)	18 (0.4)	23 (0.6)	17 (0.4)	17 (0.4)
Blanchardstown	27 (0.7)	33 (0.8)	41 (1.0)	30 (0.7)	30 (0.8)
Bray	8 (0.2)	31 (0.7)	28 (0.7)	23 (0.5)	19 (0.5)
Canal Communities	8 (0.2)	6 (0.1)	15 (0.4)	10 (0.2)	17 (0.4)
Clondalkin	45 (1.2)	60 (1.4)	78 (1.9)	67 (1.5)	62 (1.6)
Cork	183 (4.9)	151 (3.6)	241 (5.8)	295 (6.6)	237 (6.0)
Dublin North East	61 (1.6)	50 (1.2)	54 (1.3)	61 (1.4)	42 (1.1)
Dublin South Inner City	36 (1.0)	60 (1.4)	48 (1.2)	60 (1.3)	50 (1.3)
Dublin 12	40 (1.1)	47 (1.1)	65 (1.6)	69 (1.5)	58 (1.5)
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	41 (1.1)	81 (1.9)	68 (1.6)	67 (1.5)	49 (1.2)
Finglas-Cabra	30 (0.8)	30 (0.7)	57 (1.4)	53 (1.2)	36 (0.9)
North Inner City	45 (1.2)	64 (1.5)	62 (1.5)	78 (1.7)	57 (1.4)
Tallaght	80 (2.1)	123 (2.9)	95 (2.3)	119 (2.7)	91 (2.3)
East Coast	36 (1.0)	61 (1.5)	50 (1.2)	52 (1.2)	38 (1.0)
Midland	221 (5.9)	241 (5.8)	239 (5.8)	376 (8.4)	326 (8.2)
Mid West	284 (7.5)	246 (5.9)	256 (6.2)	216 (4.8)	165 (4.1)

<b>Task Force Area of residence</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
			<b>Number (%)</b>		
North Dublin City and County	79 (2.1)	119 (2.8)	142 (3.4)	113 (2.5)	78 (2.0)
North Eastern	369 (9.8)	383 (9.2)	187 (4.5)	246 (5.5)	278 (7.0)
North West	473 (12.5)	469 (11.2)	543 (13.1)	579 (13.0)	606 (15.2)
Southern	473 (12.5)	469 (11.2)	543 (13.1)	579 (13.0)	606 (15.2)
South East	665 (17.6)	903 (21.6)	827 (20.0)	953 (21.3)	834 (21.0)
South Western	159 (4.2)	210 (5.0)	200 (4.8)	229 (5.1)	198 (5.0)
Western	333 (8.8)	272 (6.5)	231 (5.6)	227 (5.1)	192 (4.8)
Not known	1 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	12 (0.3)	11 (0.2)	12 (0.3)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
Ballyfermot	26 (0.8)	20 (0.6)	22 (0.6)	21 (0.5)	23 (0.6)
Ballymun	9 (0.3)	12 (0.4)	15 (0.4)	21 (0.5)	15 (0.4)
Blanchardstown	13 (0.4)	17 (0.5)	22 (0.6)	36 (0.9)	23 (0.6)
Bray	13 (0.4)	10 (0.3)	15 (0.4)	23 (0.6)	16 (0.4)
Canal Communities	9 (0.3)	13 (0.4)	9 (0.3)	11 (0.3)	23 (0.6)
Clondalkin	61 (1.8)	50 (1.5)	32 (0.9)	43 (1.1)	74 (1.8)
Cork	187 (5.5)	160 (4.7)	196 (5.6)	240 (6.2)	184 (4.5)
Dublin North East	37 (1.1)	47 (1.4)	38 (1.1)	35 (0.9)	43 (1.1)
Dublin South Inner City	42 (1.2)	72 (2.1)	78 (2.2)	74 (1.9)	86 (2.1)
Dublin 12	41 (1.2)	38 (1.1)	28 (0.8)	38 (1.0)	70 (1.7)
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	58 (1.7)	75 (2.2)	55 (1.6)	59 (1.5)	91 (2.2)
Finglas-Cabra	30 (0.9)	37 (1.1)	30 (0.9)	56 (1.4)	41 (1.0)
North Inner City	45 (1.3)	59 (1.7)	68 (1.9)	96 (2.5)	59 (1.4)
Tallaght	73 (2.1)	61 (1.8)	72 (2.1)	66 (1.7)	72 (1.8)
East Coast	36 (1.1)	43 (1.3)	36 (1.0)	39 (1.0)	28 (0.7)
Midland	223 (6.6)	199 (5.8)	185 (5.3)	267 (6.9)	291 (7.1)
Mid West	261 (7.7)	190 (5.6)	244 (6.9)	240 (6.2)	208 (5.1)
North Dublin City and County	66 (1.9)	96 (2.8)	95 (2.7)	107 (2.8)	102 (2.5)
North Eastern	244 (7.2)	241 (7.1)	162 (4.6)	197 (5.1)	355 (8.7)
North West	440 (12.9)	452 (13.2)	499 (14.2)	429 (11.0)	455 (11.2)
Southern	371 (10.9)	388 (11.4)	530 (15.1)	595 (15.3)	576 (14.1)
South East	623 (18.3)	708 (20.7)	684 (19.5)	817 (21.0)	795 (19.5)
South Western	204 (6.0)	191 (5.6)	181 (5.2)	149 (3.8)	198 (4.9)
Western	290 (8.5)	234 (6.9)	203 (5.8)	226 (5.8)	234 (5.7)
Not known	1 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	12 (0.3)	3 (0.1)	17 (0.4)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>93</b>

### Additional problem substances

**Table 6 Number (%) of treated cases who used more than one substance, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

Cases using more than one substance	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
All cases using more than one substance	1477 (18.9)	1336 (17.4)	1364 (17.6)	1521 (18.0)	1429 (17.5)
<b>New cases</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
New cases using more than one substance	796 (21.1)	743 (17.8)	732 (17.7)	743 (16.6)	668 (16.8)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
Previously treated cases using more than one substance	616 (18.1)	576 (16.9)	610 (17.4)	752 (19.3)	733 (18.0)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>93</b>

**Table 7 Number (%) of problem substances used, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

Number of problem substances used	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	<b>Number (%)</b>				
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
One substance	6187 (81.0)	6330 (82.6)	6381 (82.4)	6931 (82.0)	6721 (82.5)
Two substances	717 (9.4)	746 (9.7)	775 (10.0)	887 (10.5)	829 (10.2)
Three substances	371 (4.9)	339 (4.4)	333 (4.3)	360 (4.3)	329 (4.0)
Four substances or more	366 (4.8)	251 (3.3)	256 (3.3)	274 (3.2)	271 (3.3)
<b>New cases</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
One substance	2974 (78.9)	3438 (82.2)	3410 (82.3)	3723 (83.4)	3310 (83.2)
Two substances	383 (10.2)	427 (10.2)	420 (10.1)	447 (10.0)	409 (10.3)
Three substances	202 (5.4)	187 (4.5)	192 (4.6)	179 (4.0)	152 (3.8)
Four substances or more	212 (5.6)	129 (3.1)	120 (2.9)	117 (2.6)	107 (2.7)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
One substance	2781 (81.7)	2840 (83.1)	2901 (82.6)	3136 (80.7)	3346 (82.0)
Two substances	315 (9.3)	306 (9.0)	342 (9.7)	423 (10.9)	400 (9.8)
Three substances	158 (4.6)	148 (4.3)	134 (3.8)	175 (4.5)	172 (4.2)
Four substances or more	149 (4.4)	122 (3.6)	134 (3.8)	154 (4.0)	161 (3.9)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>93</b>

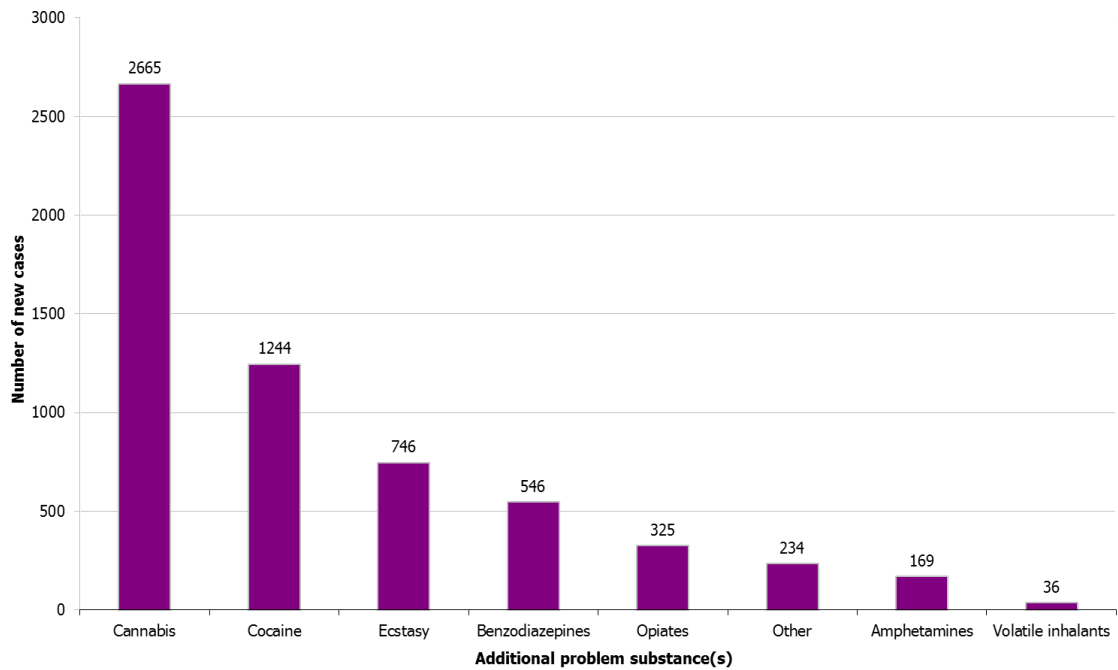


**Table 8 Additional problem substances used, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

Additional problem substance(s) used*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Number (% <sup>†</sup> )				
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
Cannabis	1013 (13.3)	961 (12.5)	936 (12.1)	1050 (12.4)	949 (11.6)
Ecstasy	418 (5.5)	261 (3.4)	229 (3.0)	217 (2.6)	208 (2.6)
Cocaine	601 (7.9)	476 (6.2)	426 (5.5)	436 (5.2)	390 (4.8)
Amphetamines	94 (1.2)	60 (0.8)	73 (0.9)	67 (0.8)	61 (0.7)
Opiates	182 (2.4)	140 (1.8)	145 (1.9)	193 (2.3)	205 (2.5)
Benzodiazepines	178 (2.3)	193 (2.5)	231 (3.0)	320 (3.8)	358 (4.4)
Volatile inhalants	18 (0.2)	13 (0.2)	13 (0.2)	10 (0.1)	10 (0.1)
Other substances	53 (0.7)	73 (1.0)	156 (2.0)	136 (1.6)	119 (1.5)
<b>New cases</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
Cannabis	581 (15.4)	555 (12.6)	521 (12.6)	545 (12.2)	463 (11.6)
Ecstasy	265 (7.0)	160 (3.8)	117 (2.8)	110 (2.5)	94 (2.4)
Cocaine	342 (9.1)	263 (6.3)	231 (5.6)	219 (4.9)	189 (4.8)
Amphetamines	54 (1.4)	30 (0.7)	33 (0.8)	24 (0.5)	28 (0.7)
Opiates	63 (1.7)	56 (1.3)	56 (1.4)	76 (1.7)	74 (1.9)
Benzodiazepines	93 (2.5)	87 (2.1)	113 (2.7)	120 (2.7)	133 (3.3)
Volatile inhalants	6 (0.2)	12 (0.3)	6 (0.1)	5 (0.1)	7 (0.2)
Other substances	19 (0.5)	25 (0.6)	87 (2.1)	57 (1.3)	46 (1.2)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
Cannabis	406 (11.9)	396 (11.6)	400 (11.4)	491 (12.6)	467 (11.4)
Ecstasy	152 (4.5)	101 (3.0)	108 (3.1)	104 (2.7)	112 (2.7)
Cocaine	245 (7.2)	209 (6.1)	190 (5.4)	208 (5.3)	197 (4.8)
Opiates	111 (3.3)	81 (2.4)	85 (2.4)	111 (2.9)	123 (3.0)
Benzodiazepines	81 (2.4)	104 (3.0)	114 (3.2)	197 (5.1)	222 (5.4)
Amphetamines	39 (1.1)	30 (0.9)	40 (1.1)	42 (1.1)	33 (0.8)
Volatile inhalants	11 (0.3)	1 (0.0)	7 (0.2)	5 (0.1)	3 (0.1)
Other substances	33 (1.0)	46 (1.3)	68 (1.9)	77 (2.1)	70 (1.7)

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

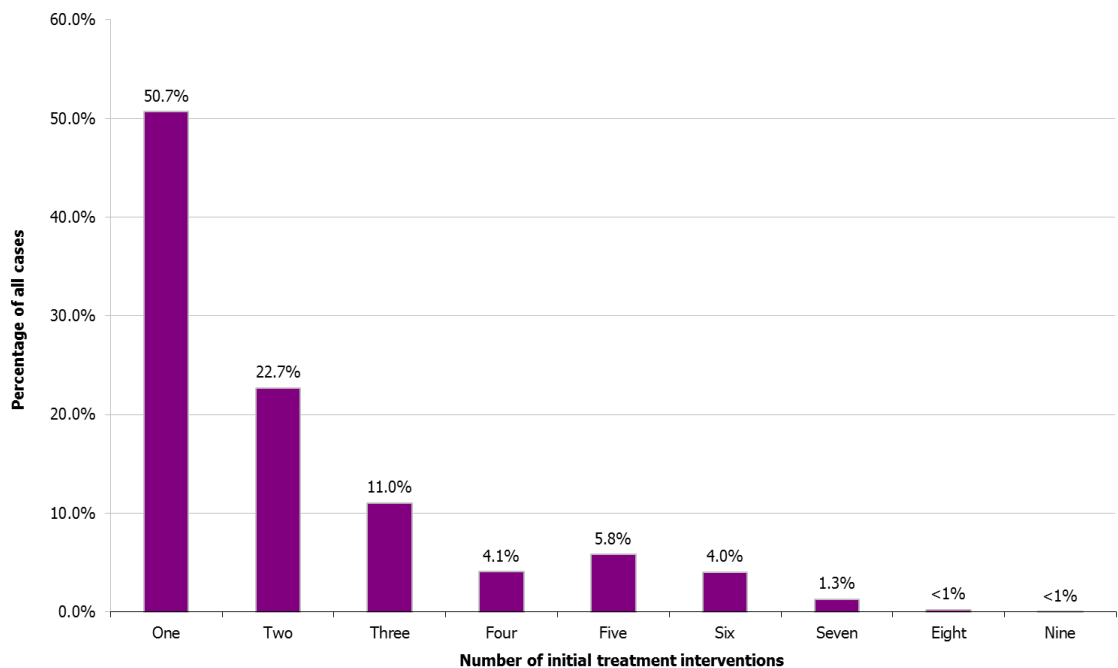
<sup>†</sup> The percentages shown are the proportions of all problem alcohol users who used each additional problem substance.



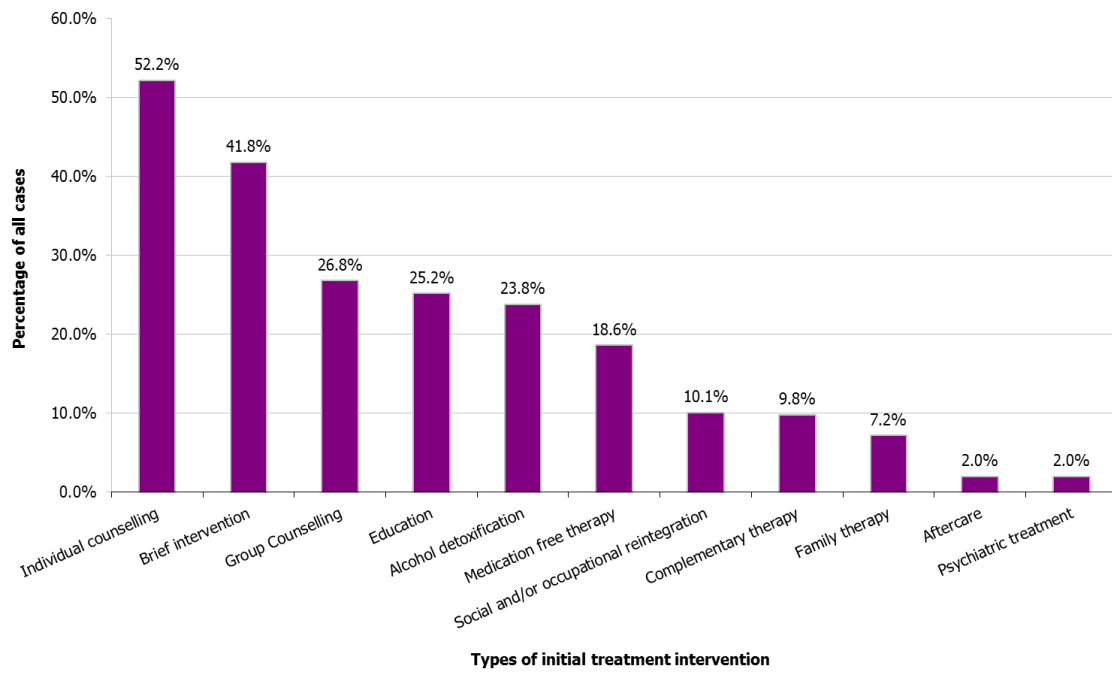
**Figure 3 Additional problem substances associated with alcohol as a main problem substance among new cases (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

### 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.<sup>15</sup> 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 2012)**



**Figure 5 Percentage of cases, by type of initial treatment provided (NDTRS 2012)**

## Age at which alcohol and other drug use started

**Table 9 Age at which substance use started, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>All cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	1889	2025	2235	2678	2476
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–29)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–29)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–30)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>	5972	6507	6097	6875	7262
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (12–23)	16 (11–23)	16 (12–22)	15 (11–22)	16 (12–22)
<b>New cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	1049	1125	1209	1350	1172
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–28)	16 (12–27)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–26)	16 (12–28)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>	3252	3442	3218	3562	3579
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (12–23)	16 (11–22)	16 (12–22)	16 (12–22)	16 (12–22)
<b>Previously treated cases</b>					
<b>Number of responses for age first used any drug (excluding alcohol)</b>	823	882	1011	1290	1272
Median age (range*) started use of any drug (excluding alcohol), in years	16 (12–30)	16 (12–28)	16 (12–30)	16 (12–30)	16 (12–30)
<b>Number of responses for age first used alcohol</b>	2698	2739	2846	3258	3640
Median age (range*) started use of alcohol, in years	16 (11–24)	16 (11–25)	15 (11–22)	16 (11–21)	16 (11–22)

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

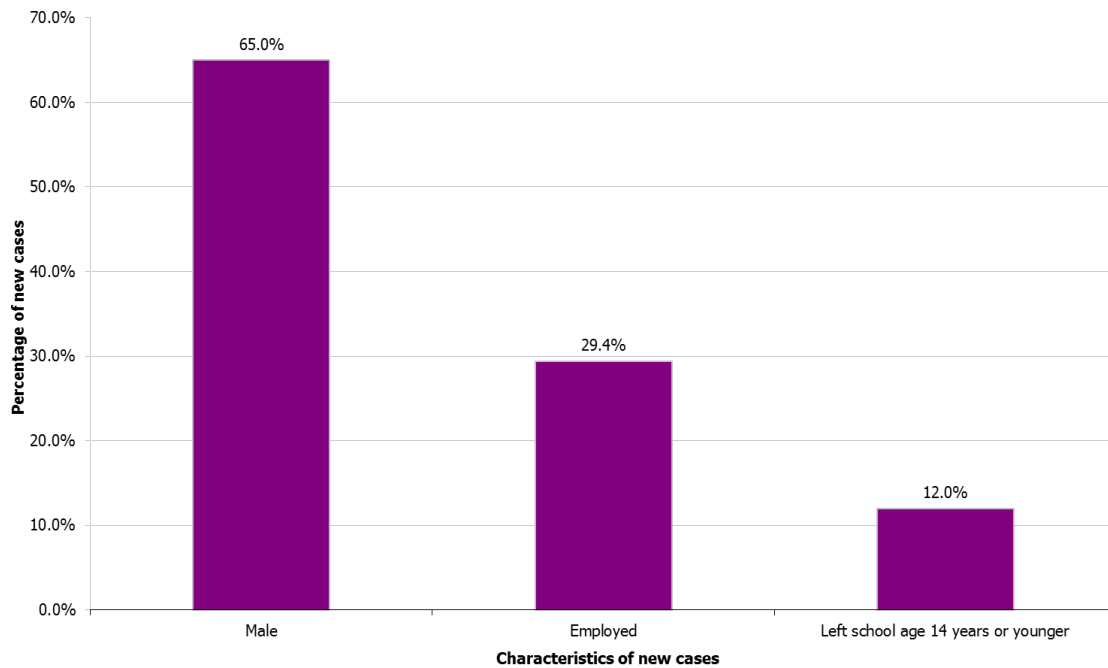
## Socio-demographic characteristics of treated cases

**Table 10 Socio-demographic characteristics, by treatment status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

Characteristics	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>All cases*</b>	<b>7641</b>	<b>7666</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>8452</b>	<b>8150</b>
Median age (range†) in years	39 (19–61)	39 (19–61)	39 (18–62)	39 (18–62)	40 (19–63)
Number (%) aged under 18	229 (3.0)	253 (3.3)	334 (4.3)	328 (3.9)	276 (3.4)
Number (%) of males	5110 (66.9)	5068 (66.1)	5016 (64.8)	5566 (65.9)	5273 (64.7)
Number (%) living with parents/family	2323 (30.4)	2302 (30.0)	2148 (27.7)	2379 (28.1)	2205 (27.1)
Number (%) homeless	337 (4.4)	238 (3.1)	326 (4.2)	471 (5.6)	383 (4.7)
Number (%) Irish	7224 (94.5)	7224 (94.2)	7211 (93.1)	7848 (92.9)	7556 (92.7)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	1001 (13.1)	939 (12.2)	1018 (13.1)	1129 (13.4)	1181 (14.5)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	2314 (30.3)	1990 (26.0)	1747 (22.6)	1732 (20.5)	1609 (19.7)
<b>New cases*</b>	<b>3771</b>	<b>4181</b>	<b>4142</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>3978</b>
Median age (range†) in years	36 (17–60)	36 (17–60)	36 (17–62)	36 (17–61)	38 (17–64)
Number (%) aged under 18	194 (5.1)	220 (5.3)	266 (6.4)	253 (5.7)	213 (5.4)
Number (%) of males	2466 (65.4)	2754 (65.9)	2700 (65.2)	2920 (65.4)	2517 (63.3)
Number (%) living with parents/family	1266 (33.6)	1469 (35.1)	1337 (32.3)	1459 (32.7)	1195 (30.0)
Number (%) homeless	89 (2.4)	61 (1.5)	96 (2.3)	164 (3.7)	109 (2.7)
Number (%) Irish	3546 (94.0)	3930 (94.0)	3840 (92.7)	4095 (91.7)	3621 (91.0)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	486 (12.9)	446 (10.7)	484 (11.7)	546 (12.2)	512 (12.9)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	1378 (36.5)	1238 (29.6)	1104 (26.7)	1051 (23.5)	966 (24.3)
<b>Previously treated cases*</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>3416</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>4079</b>
Median age (range†) in years	41 (21–62)	41 (22–62)	41 (20–62)	41 (20–62)	42 (21–63)
Number (%) aged under 18	34 (1.0)	23 (0.7)	60 (1.7)	73 (1.9)	61 (1.5)
Number (%) of males	2310 (67.9)	2269 (66.4)	2257 (64.3)	2581 (66.4)	2690 (65.9)
Number (%) living with parents/family	991 (26.8)	812 (23.8)	786 (22.4)	894 (23.0)	987 (24.2)
Number (%) homeless	232 (6.8)	170 (5.0)	227 (6.5)	296 (7.6)	271 (6.6)
Number (%) Irish	3225 (94.8)	3231 (94.6)	3288 (93.6)	3671 (94.4)	3849 (94.4)
Number (%) left school early (aged 14 years or under)	511 (15.0)	486 (14.2)	525 (15.0)	573 (14.7)	654 (16.0)
Number (%) employed (aged 16–64 years)	829 (24.4)	737 (21.6)	617 (17.6)	657 (16.9)	625 (15.3)
<b>Treatment status unknown</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>93</b>

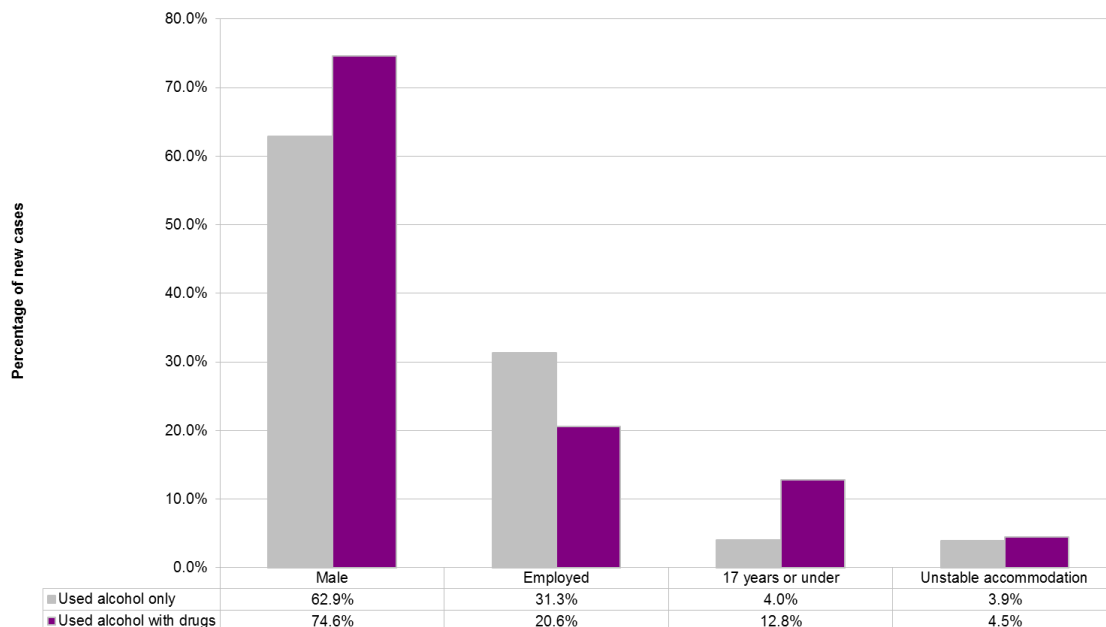
\* It is not possible to ascertain the percentage with each characteristic of interest from the total number because complete data were not reported in all cases.

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



**Figure 6 Characteristics of new cases (NDTRS 2008– 2012)**

**Relationship between alcohol and selected characteristics**



**Figure 7 Characteristics of new cases, by alcohol and other drug use status (NDTRS 2008–2012)**

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