

Annual Epidemiological Report

November 2019

Antenatal HIV Screening in Ireland, 2018

Key Facts

- The national reported uptake of HIV antenatal screening (from 18 of 19 maternity hospitals/units) in 2018 was almost 100%.
- Ninety seven women tested HIV positive at their antenatal screen, giving a HIV prevalence of 0.17%, slightly higher than the prevalence in 2017 (0.13%). The prevalence of HIV among pregnant women varied by maternity hospital/unit, ranging from 0% to 0.43%
- Fourteen women were **newly** diagnosed with HIV at their antenatal screen. The prevalence of newly diagnosed HIV infection was 0.02%, which is the same as the rate in 2016 and 2017. The prevalence of new diagnoses among pregnant women varied by maternity hospital/unit, ranging from 0% to 0.07%

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Background

The transmission of HIV from a HIV positive mother to her child during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding is called mother-to-child transmission (MTCT), or vertical transmission. Diagnosis of HIV in pregnancy allows for effective interventions to be implemented and has dramatically reduced the risk of HIV transmission from mother-to-child during pregnancy, delivery and in the postnatal period to less than 1% (1, 2).

The objectives of HIV antenatal screening are to identify women who are HIV positive so they can be offered immediate treatment for their own clinical benefit, to prevent transmission of HIV to their child and to prevent transmission of HIV to their sexual partners.

A national voluntary programme of HIV antenatal screening has been in place in Ireland since 1999. As part of this programme, it is recommended that HIV testing be offered to all women who attend for antenatal services. A system for monitoring and evaluation of the routine antenatal testing programme was established in 2001 by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

This report describes data from the HIV antenatal screening programme in Ireland in 2018. Further information on the screening programme can be found at <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/hivandaids/antenatalhivtesting/>.

Data collection

Aggregate data on uptake of screening and the numbers of HIV diagnoses in pregnancy (known and new) are collected annually from all maternity hospitals/units and are collated nationally by HPSC. A copy of the HIV antenatal data collection form can be found at <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/hivandaids/antenatalhivtesting/>.

Results

Table 1 describes the results of the HIV antenatal screening programme from 2012 to 2018. Data for 2018 were provided by 18 of the 19 maternity hospitals/units in Ireland. Data were not provided by one hospital and data on private patients were not provided for eight hospitals (see appendix 1 for details).

The national reported uptake of HIV antenatal screening (from 18 of 19 maternity hospitals/units) in 2018 was almost 100%. The uptake by hospital ranged from 97.5% to 100%. There were 61,016 registered births in Ireland in 2018 but it is important to note that the antenatal screening data are based on date of antenatal screen rather than birth date.

Ninety seven women tested HIV positive at their antenatal screen in 2018, giving a HIV prevalence among pregnant women of 0.17%. This is an increase compared to 2017 (0.13%). Prevalence varied by individual hospital, ranging from 0% to 0.43%

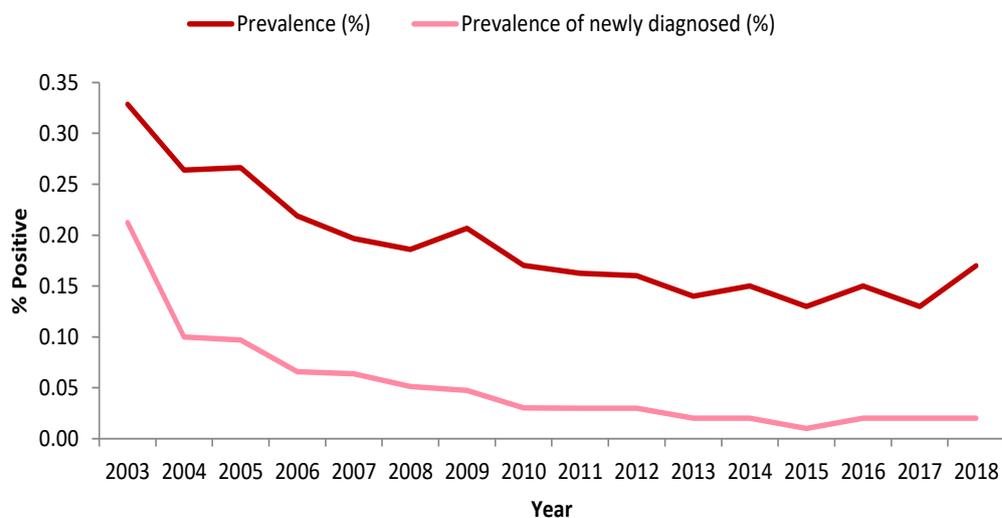
Of the 97 women, 14 were newly diagnosed at their antenatal screen (i.e. HIV positivity was not previously known), giving a prevalence of newly diagnosed HIV of 0.02%. This is very similar to the prevalence in recent years. Prevalence of newly diagnosed HIV varied by individual hospital, ranging from 0% to 0.07%.

Figure 1 shows the trend in national HIV prevalence and prevalence of new diagnoses among pregnant women from 2003 to 2018. There was a slight increase in prevalence of HIV among pregnant women in 2018, following a stable prevalence between 2013 and 2017, although the increase was not statistically significant. The prevalence of new diagnoses remained stable between 2013 and 2018.

The results for 2018 are summarised by hospital group in Table 2 and by HSE area in Table 3.

Table 1. Results of the HIV antenatal screening programme in Ireland, 2012 to 2018

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of hospitals/units	18/20	16/19	17/20	18/19	16/19	18/19	18/19
Number of live births per year (from CSO)	72,225	68,930	67,462	65,909	63,897	62,053	61,016
Number of women booked	64,803	57,638	63,538	63,217	56,865	62,720	58,401
Number of women offered HIV test	64,803	57,638	63,532	63,217	56,865	62,720	58,354
Number of women tested	64,781	57,618	63,532	63,214	56,747	62,715	58,305
Uptake of HIV antenatal test (%)	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.8
Number HIV positive	105	83	93	84	83	82	97
Prevalence of HIV (%)	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.17
Number newly diagnosed HIV positive	22	14	11	9	10	11	14
Prevalence of new HIV diagnoses (%)	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02

Figure 1. Prevalence of HIV among pregnant women and prevalence of new diagnoses among pregnant women in Ireland, 2003 to 2018**Table 2. Results of the antenatal screening programme by hospital group in Ireland, 2018¹**

Hospital group	Uptake of test (%)	Prevalence (%)	Prevalence of new diagnoses (%)
Dublin Midlands (TCD)	100.0	0.20	0.03
Dublin Northeast (RCSI)	100.0	0.27	0.03
Ireland East (UCD)	100.0	0.07	0.03
Midwest (UL)	100.0	0.03	0.03
South/Southwest (UCC)	100.0	0.24	0.03
West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	98.9	0.06	0.00
Total for Ireland	99.8	0.17	0.02

Table 3. Results of the antenatal screening programme by HSE Area in Ireland, 2018²

HSE area	Uptake of test (%)	Prevalence (%)	Prevalence of new diagnoses (%)
East	100.0	0.22	0.03
Midlands	100.0	0.06	0.00
Midwest	100.0	0.03	0.03
Northeast	100.0	0.13	0.02
Northwest	98.6	0.00	0.00
South	100.0	0.22	0.03
Southeast	100.0	0.23	0.02
West	99.1	0.09	0.00
Total for Ireland	99.8	0.17	0.02

¹ See Appendix 1 for hospital groups and corresponding hospitals

² See Appendix 1 for HSE areas and corresponding hospitals

Discussion

Data on the HIV antenatal screening programme for 2018 show a very high uptake of HIV screening among pregnant women in Ireland. The prevalence of HIV among pregnant women increased in 2018 compared to 2017, although the increase was not statistically significant. The prevalence of new diagnoses has remained stable since 2013. HIV antenatal screening remains a vital means of identifying women who would otherwise be unaware of their HIV status, thereby allowing treatment which is of direct clinical benefit to the individual and can also prevent mother to child transmission and transmission to sexual partners.

Limitations of the data collected include the lack of data on private patients from some hospitals.

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Technical Notes:

- Percent uptake is calculated as the number of women tested divided by the number of women booked, multiplied by 100.
- Prevalence of HIV infection (%) is calculated as the number of women who tested positive divided by the number of women tested, multiplied by 100.
- Prevalence of new diagnoses (%) is calculated as the number of women who tested newly HIV positive divided by the number of women tested, multiplied by 100.

Acknowledgments

We would sincerely like to thank the staff in the maternity hospitals and maternity units for providing antenatal screening data for 2018 and to other staff in regional Departments of Public Health (Northwest) and Laboratories (Southeast) for collating their regional data.

References

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2. Helen Peters, Kate Francis, Rebecca Sconza, Anna Horn, Catherine S. Peckham, Pat A. Tookey, Claire Thorne; UK Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission Rates Continue to Decline: 2012–2014, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 64, Issue 4, 15 February 2017, Pages 527–528

Appendix 1: Hospitals by Hospital Group and HSE area

Hospital	Type of data provided	Hospital Group	HSE Area
Coombe Women's Hospital	Public and Private	Dublin Midlands (TCD)	East
Regional Hospital, Portlaoise	Public and Private	Dublin Midlands (TCD)	Midlands
Rotunda Hospital	Public and Private	Dublin Northeast (RCSI)	East
Cavan and Monaghan Hospital	Public only	Dublin Northeast (RCSI)	Northeast
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda	Public only	Dublin Northeast (RCSI)	Northeast
National Maternity Hospital, Holles St	Public and Private	Ireland East (UCD)	East
Regional Hospital, Mullingar	Public and Private	Ireland East (UCD)	Midlands
St Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny	Public only	Ireland East (UCD)	Southeast
University Maternity Hospital, Limerick	Public only	Midwest (UL)	Midwest
Cork University Maternity Hospital	Public only	South/Southwest UCC	South
University Hospital Kerry	Public and Private	South/Southwest UCC	South
South Tipperary Hospital, Clonmel	Not Available	South/Southwest UCC	Southeast
University Hospital Waterford	Public only	South/Southwest UCC	Southeast
Wexford General Hospital	Public only	South/Southwest UCC	Southeast
Sligo University Hospital	Public and Private	West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	Northwest
Mayo University Hospital	Public and Private	West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	West
Portiuncula University Hospital	Public and Private	West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	West
University Hospital Galway	Public only	West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	West
Letterkenny University Hospital	Public and Private	West/North West (Saolta UHC; NUIG)	Northwest