

Statistics from the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme: 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009

This bulletin summarises information on people visiting the Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme and relates to the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2009. It is the eighth bulletin reporting on information collected on the operation of the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES), which began operation in April 2001.

Summary

In Northern Ireland during 2008/09:

- There were 13,389 visits to participating pharmacies by users of the scheme. This is an increase of 18% (2,002 visits) on the 2007/08 figure (11,387 visits).
- A cin bin is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes: 53% of cin bins issued to users of the scheme were returned in 2008/09 compared to 54% returned the previous year.
- 135,700 syringes were issued in 2008/09. This is a 16% increase from 2007/08 (116,935 syringes).
- Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients.
- Over half (55%) of all visits were made by individuals aged 31 years and over, just over a quarter (26%) by 26-30 year olds and a fifth (20%) by individuals aged 25 years and under.
- 108 visits were made by an outreach worker on behalf of a client; this is an increase of 32% (26 visits) on the 2007/08 figure (82 visits). In total 2,070 syringes were issued by outreach workers in 2008/09 compared to 1,330 in 2007/08.

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1. Background

1.1 Needle Exchange Schemes are a service for injecting drug users, targeted as a harm reduction measure to help limit the spread of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

1.2 In 2000 funding was made available to develop a free needle and syringe exchange scheme in community pharmacies in Northern Ireland. With input from community pharmacists and other expert advisors, and taking account of models of best practice developed elsewhere, the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES) was introduced in April 2001.

1.3 Initially five pharmacies were involved in the scheme; by the end of 2008/09 there were ten pharmacies offering needle and syringe exchange. Pharmacies were chosen based on their willingness to participate, their location, and the assessed need for needle exchange in the locality.

2. Data Collection

2.1 Information on syringe transactions only is collected from participating pharmacies. Administrative input from pharmacy staff is kept to a minimum and statistics are collected at the end of each month. The information is collated within the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety by the Public Health Information and Research Branch (PHIRB).

2.2 At the start of 2008/09 the NSES Daily Log was revised. Information is now collected on the number and size of packs issued at each exchange. Packs contain either 5 (half pack) or 10 (full pack) syringes, and syringe sizes include 1ml, 2ml or 5ml. The syringes in the 1ml packs have needles attached. Pharmacies

also issue needles to accompany the 2ml and 5ml packs but the number of needles issued is not recorded.

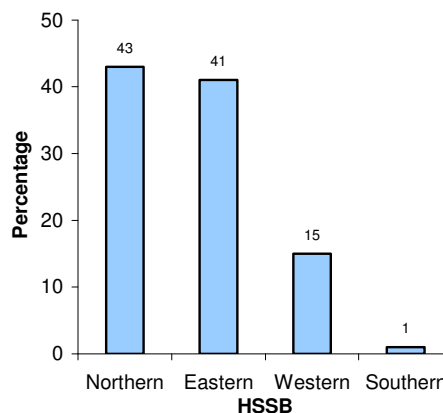
2.3 Information is collected on the number of visits by clients and outreach workers on behalf of clients undertaking a NSES transaction; the number of packs issued; returns of used equipment; year of birth and gender of the client. As data are collected in an anonymised form – to help underscore confidentiality and thus underpin confidence in the scheme – it is not possible to report directly on the number of individuals using the NSES during the year.

3. Number of Visits

3.1 There were 13,389 visits to NSES in 2008/09 and the number of visits were evenly spread across the four quarters within the year (Table 1).

3.2 The majority of visits (84%) took place at pharmacies based within the Northern (43%) and Eastern (41%) Health and Social Services Boards (HSSB). The Western HSSB accounted for 15% of the visits and the Southern HSSB had the lowest number of visits (139 visits or 1%) (Figure 1; Table 2).

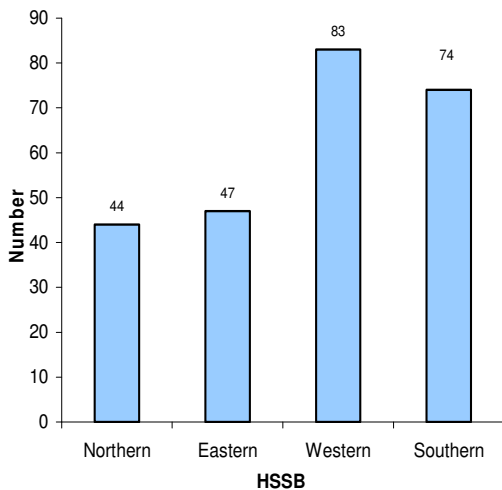
Figure 1. Visits by HSSB: 2008/09



4. Return Rates

4.1 Since 1st April 2007 when changes were made to the NSES Daily Log, the return rate is now calculated as the number of cin bins returned as a percentage of the number issued at every visit. In 2008/09, over half (53%) of cin bins were returned. This return rate varied across the four HSSBs from 44% in the Northern HSSB, 47% in the Eastern HSSB, 74% in the Southern HSSB to 83% in the Western HSSB (Table 3; Figure 2).

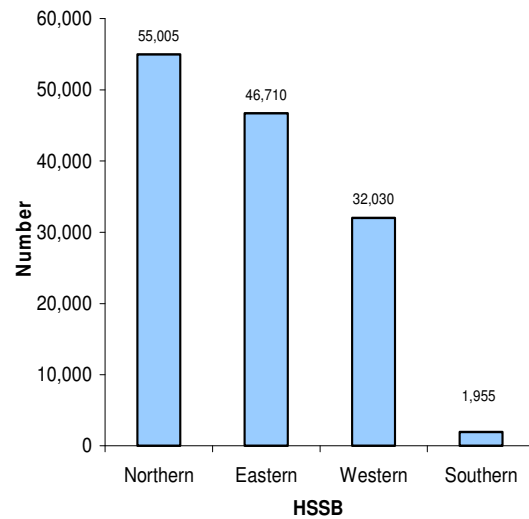
Figure 2. Return Rate by HSSB: 2008/09



5. Syringes Issued

5.1 There were 135,700 syringes issued in 2008/09 (Table 4). The Northern HSSB issued the highest number of syringes (55,005; 41%), followed by the Eastern HSSB (46,710; 34%), then the Western HSSB (32,030; 24%) and the Southern HSSB issued the lowest number of syringes (1,955; 1%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Syringes Issued by HSSB: 2008/09



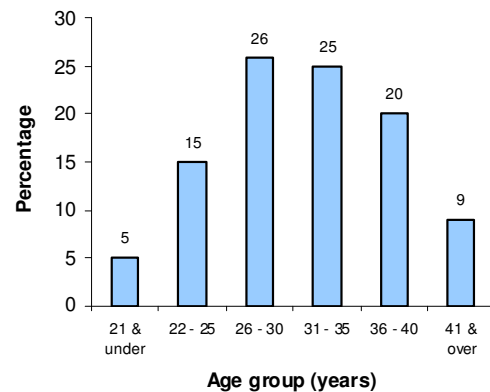
6. Profile of Service Users

Age and Gender

6.1 Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients (Table 5).

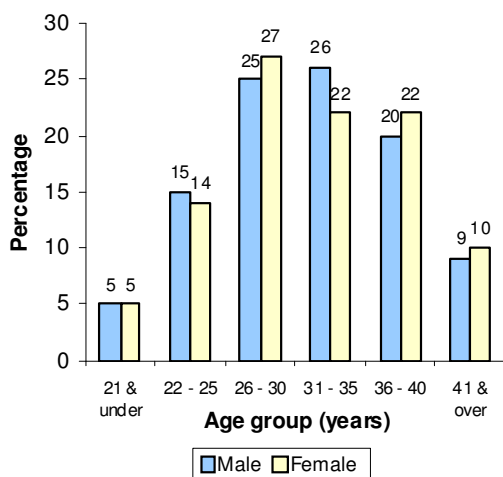
6.2 The mean age of clients using the NSES was 32 years. Over half (55%) of all visits were made by clients aged 31 years and over, just over a quarter (26%) by 26-30 year olds and a fifth (20%) by clients aged 25 years and under (Figure 4; Table 6).

Figure 4. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2008/09



6.3 There was some variation in the age profile for visits by males and females. Among males, the largest proportion of visits (26%) was made by 31-35 year olds, whereas among females, the largest proportion of visits (27%) was made by those in the 26-30 age group. The proportions of visits made by males and females aged 25 years and under were fairly similar, 20% and 19% respectively. A larger proportion of visits were made by females aged 36 years and over (32%) than males in this age group (29%) (Figure 5; Table 7).

Figure 5. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2008/09



7. Outreach Visits

7.1 In 2008/09, 108 of the 13,389 visits (less than 1%) to the participating pharmacies were made by outreach workers on behalf of a client (Table 8). In this report these visits are referred to as outreach visits.

Return Rates & Syringes Issued

7.2 A total of 220 cin bins were issued by outreach workers in 2008/09 and just over half (51%) were returned. A total of 2,070 syringes were issued by outreach workers during 2008/09 (Table 8).

Age & Gender

7.3 Almost three quarters of outreach visits (72%) were for male clients and 28% were for female clients (Table 9). More than half (54%) of the outreach visits were for clients aged 31-35 years (Table 10). It should be noted that for a large proportion of outreach visits the client's gender and/or year of birth was not recorded.

8. Comparisons: 2007/08 and 2008/09

Number of Visits

8.1 In 2008/09 there was an 18% (2,002) increase in the number of visits since 2007/08 (13,389 compared to 11,387). The proportion of visits that took place in the Northern HSSB was similar in both years (43% in 2008/09 and 44% in 2007/08). The proportion of visits that took place in the Eastern HSSB decreased slightly to 41% in 2008/09 from 43% in 2007/08. The proportion of visits in the Western HSSB increased to 15% in 2008/09 from 12% in 2007/08, whereas in the Southern HSSB the proportions remained the same across the two years (1%) (Table 11).

Return Rate

8.2 The overall return rate (percentage of visits where at least one cin bin was returned) has remained fairly similar; 53% in 2008/09 and 54% in 2007/08. The return rates decreased in the Northern HSSB (to 44% in 2008/09 from 46% in 2007/08) and the Eastern HSSB (to 47% in 2008/09 from 53% in 2007/08). However, the return rates increased in the Western HSSB to 83% in 2008/09 from 76% in 2007/08 and in the Southern HSSB to 74% in 2008/09 from 52% in 2007/08 (Figure 6; Table 12).

Figure 6. Return Rate: 2007/08 and 2008/09

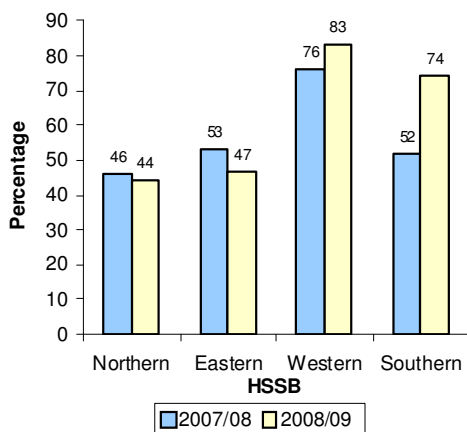
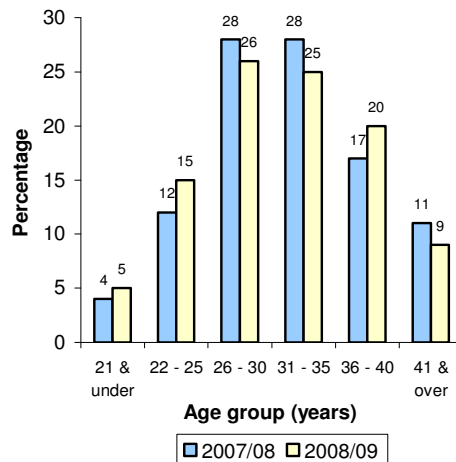


Figure 7. Age of Client at Each Visit: 2007/08 and 2008/09



Syringes Issued

8.3 In Northern Ireland in 2008/09, 135,700 syringes were issued, this is a 16% increase from 116,935 syringes issued in 2007/08. In both years the Northern HSSB (41% in 2008/09 and 42% in 2007/08) accounted for the largest proportion of syringes issued, followed by the Eastern HSSB (34% in 2008/09 and 39% in 2007/08) and then the Western HSSB (24% in 2008/09 and 19% in 2007/08). The Southern HSSB accounted for 1% of all syringes issued in each of the years (Table 13).

Age and Gender

8.4 The proportion of visits by both male and female clients was the same in 2007/08 and 2008/09: 86% of the visits were by males and 14% by females (Table 14).

8.5 The age profile of clients at each visit in 2008/09 was generally similar to that in 2007/08. In 2008/09, 20% of visits were by clients aged 25 years and under compared to 16% in 2007/08. The proportion of clients aged 26-35 years decreased over the year to 51% in 2008/09 from 56% in 2007/08. There was a similar proportion of clients aged 36 years and over in 2008/09 (29%) and in 2007/08 (28%) (Figure 7; Table 15).

Outreach Visits

8.6 In 2008/09 there were 108 outreach visits; this is an increase of 32% on the 82 visits in 2007/08. A total of 2,070 syringes were issued by outreach workers in 2008/09, compared to 1,330 syringes issued in 2007/08 – an increase of 56% (Table 16).

8.7 There were 220 bins issued by outreach workers in 2008/09 compared to 144 issued the previous year. The return rate increased from 42% in 2007/08 to 51% in 2008/09 (Table 16).

9. Acknowledgements

9.1 PHIRB would like to thank the community pharmacists and their staff, the Pharmaceutical Directors within the four HSSBs and the local Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinators for ensuring the provision of the data reported in this bulletin.

10. Editorial Notes

10.1 Percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding.

10.2 A cin bin is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes. One is contained in every NSES pack.

10.3 A return visit is a visit where at least one cin bin is returned.

10.4 An outreach visit is a visit made by an outreach worker on behalf of another individual.

10.5 Any comments or questions concerning the data contained in this publication, or requests for further information, should be addressed to:

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10.6 This publication is also available online at

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research-drugs_alcohol-2.htm

Many other statistical and research reports from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's Information and Analysis Directorate, in which PHIRB is located, are available from the DHSSPS website.

10.7 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

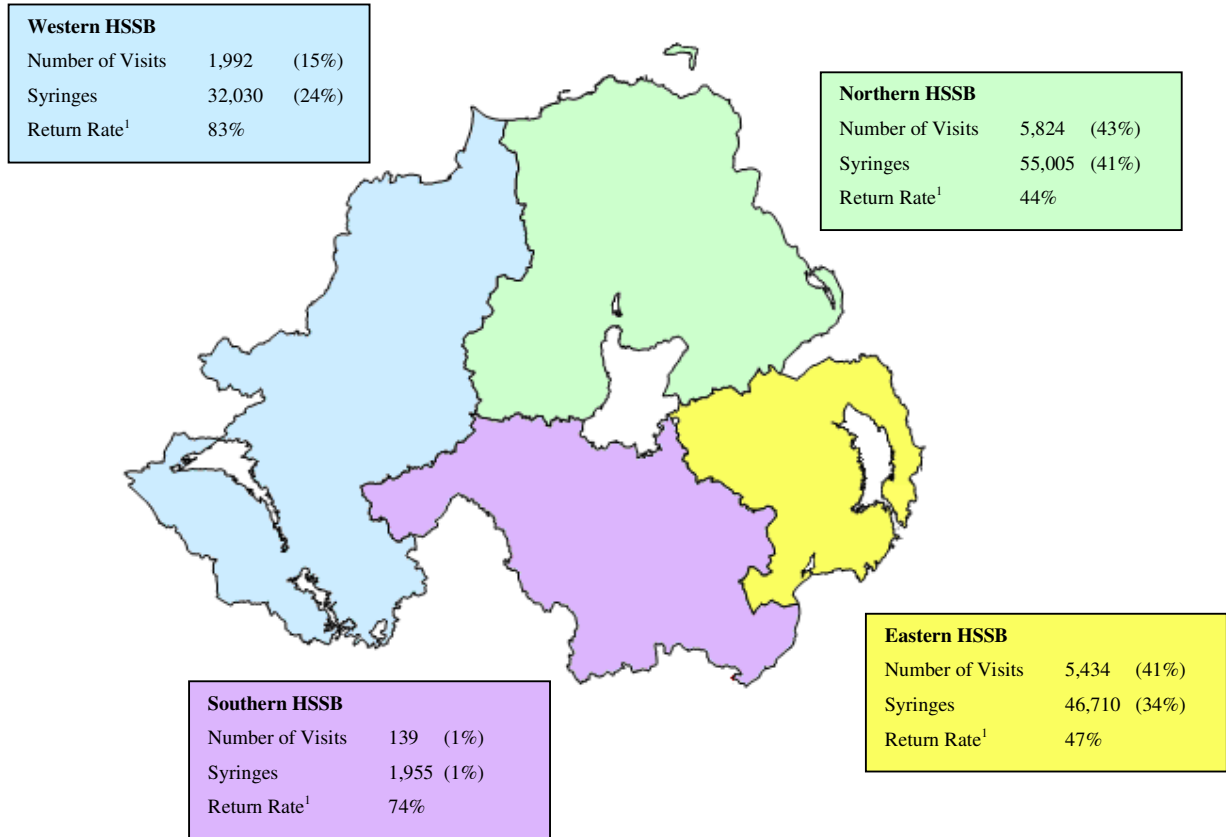
The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is the principal source of official statistical information about Northern Ireland. Further information is available from the NISRA website at www.nisra.gov.uk or via e-mail at info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk.

10.8 Future publications

This NSES publication will be updated on an annual basis. The next NSES annual bulletin will be published in summer 2010.

Annex A, Map 1

Total Number of Needles and Syringes Issued and Return Rates by Health & Social Services Board: 2008/09



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¹ Return Rate – percentage of cin bins returned.

Annex B – Tables: 2008/09

Table	Title	Page
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Table 1. Number of Visits by Quarter: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
April - June 2008	3,141	23
July - September 2008	3,228	24
October - December 2008	3,611	27
January - March 2009	3,409	25
Total	13,389	100

Table 2. Number of Visits by HSSB: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
Northern	5,824	43
Eastern	5,434	41
Western	1,992	15
Southern	139	1
Total	13,389	100

Table 3. Number of Cin Bins Returned and Issued by HSSB: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Bins Returned	Bins issued	Percent
Northern	3,319	7,517	44
Eastern	2,968	6,328	47
Western	2,998	3,604	83
Southern	163	219	74
Total	9,448	17,668	53

Table 4. Number of Syringes Issued: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Syringes Issued	Percent
Northern	55,005	41
Eastern	46,710	34
Western	32,030	24
Southern	1,955	1
Total	135,700	100

Table 5. Gender of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	-	-	5,320
Eastern	-	-	5,814
Western	-	-	1,977
Southern ⁽¹⁾	-	-	139
Total	11,438	1,812	13,250 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	-	-	100
Eastern	-	-	100
Western	-	-	100
Southern	-	-	100
Total	86	14	100

⁽¹⁾ The gender breakdown by HSSB is not presented as the table contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 139 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 6. Age of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Northern	236	907	1,793	1,495	1,168	211	5,810
Eastern	279	742	1,183	1,309	1,044	777	5,334
Western	134	302	394	523	388	250	1,991
Southern	15	24	25	20	38	16	138
Total	664	1,975	3,395	3,347	2,638	1,254	13,273 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Northern	4	16	31	26	20	4	100
Eastern	5	14	22	25	20	15	100
Western	7	15	20	26	19	13	100
Southern	11	17	18	14	28	12	100
Total	5	15	26	25	20	9	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 116 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Table 7. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	574	88	662
22-25 Years	1,718	250	1,968
26-30 Years	2,901	483	3,384
31-35 Years	2,933	401	3,334
36-40 Years	2,232	396	2,628
41 & Over	1,061	187	1,248
All Ages	11,419	1,805	13,224 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	5	5	5
22-25 Years	15	14	15
26-30 Years	25	27	26
31-35 Years	26	22	25
36-40 Years	20	22	20
41 & Over	9	10	9
All Ages	100	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 165 visits where the client's year of birth or/and gender was not recorded.

Table 8. Outreach Visits: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

Number of Outreach Visits	108
Number of Syringes Issued	2,070
Number of Bins Issued	220
Number of Bins Returned	113
Return Rate (percent)	51

Table 9. Gender of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	Number of visits	Percent ⁽¹⁾
Male	13	72
Female	5	28
Total	18	100

⁽¹⁾ The percentages exclude visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 10. Age of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2008/09
numbers and percentages

	Number of visits ⁽¹⁾	Percent ⁽²⁾
21 & Under	-	-
22-25 Years	-	-
26-30 Years	-	-
31-35 Years	7	54
36-40 Years	-	-
41 & Over	-	-
All Ages	13	100

⁽¹⁾ The age group breakdown of outreach visits is not presented fully as the table contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽²⁾ The percentages excludes visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

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Table 11. Number of Visits by HSSB: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
Northern	5,064	5,824
Eastern	4,910	5,434
Western	1,340	1,992
Southern	73	139
Total	11,387	13,389

Percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
Northern	44	43
Eastern	43	41
Western	12	15
Southern	1	1
Total	100	100

Table 12. Cin Bins Issued by HSSB: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08		2008/09	
	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate
Northern	6,604	46	7,517	44
Eastern	6,015	53	6,328	47
Western	2,523	76	3,604	83
Southern	126	52	219	74
Total	15,268	54	17,668	53

Table 13. Syringes Issued by HSSB: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08		2008/09	
	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate
Northern	48,655	42	55,005	41
Eastern	45,530	39	46,710	34
Western	21,820	19	32,030	24
Southern	930	1	1,955	1
Total	116,935	100	135,700	100

Table 14. Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
Male	9,716	11,438
Female	1,580	1,812
Total	11,296 ⁽¹⁾	13,250 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
Male	86	86
Female	14	14
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 91 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 139 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 15. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
21 & Under	452	664
22-25 Years	1,375	1,975
26-30 Years	3,114	3,395
31-35 Years	3,217	3,347
36-40 Years	1,940	2,638
41 & Over	1,203	1,254
Total	11,301 ⁽¹⁾	13,273 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
21 & Under	4	5
22-25 Years	12	15
26-30 Years	28	26
31-35 Years	28	25
36-40 Years	17	20
41 & Over	11	9
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 86 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 116 visits where the client's date of birth was not recorded.

Table 16. Outreach Visits: 2007/08 and 2008/09

numbers and percentages

	2007/08	2008/09
Number of Outreach Visits	82	108
Number of Syringes Issued	1,330	2,070
Number of Bins Issued	144	220
Number of Bins Returned	60	113
Return Rate (percent)	42	51

Recent and Future Publications from the Public Health Information and Research Branch

Statistical Bulletins

Number	Title	Publication Date
1/2009	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Addicts Index 2008	March 2009
3/2009	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database: 31 st March 2009	September 2009
4/2009	Statistics on Smoking Cessation in Northern Ireland: 2008/09	September 2009
5/2009	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database: 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009	October 2009

Results from the 2006/2007 Drug Prevalence Survey Published jointly with the National Advisory Committee on Drugs, Ireland

Number	Title	Publication Date
Bulletin 3	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Cannabis Results	December 2008
Bulletin 6	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2006/7: Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-Depressants Results	March 2009
Bulletin 5	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2006/7: Polydrug Use Results	June 2009

Research Reports

Title	Publication Date
Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland 2008	December 2008
Secondary Analysis of the 2007 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol and Smoking)	January 2009

Copies of these publications can be obtained on-line at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research-drugs_alcohol-2.htm