

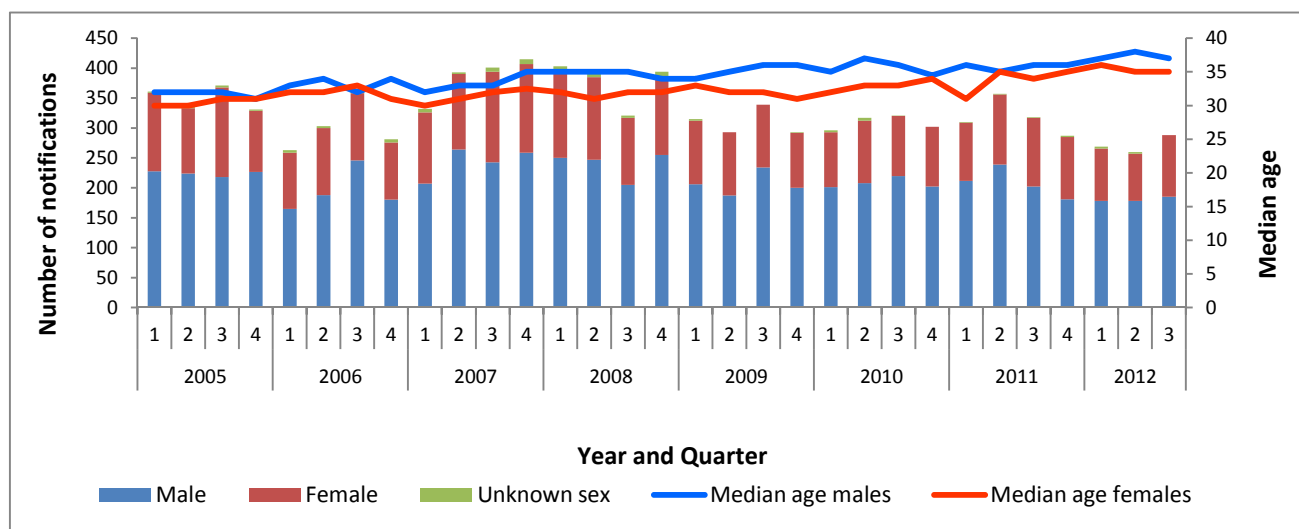
## Health Protection Surveillance Centre

### Introduction

Hepatitis C became a notifiable disease under an amendment to the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981, implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004 (S.I 707 of 2003). Prior to this, cases of hepatitis C could be notified as “viral hepatitis type unspecified”.

### Results

There were 288 notifications of hepatitis C in quarter 3 2012. This corresponds to a crude notification rate of 6.8 per 100,000 population and is slightly higher than quarter 2 2012 (n=260).



**Figure 1.** Number of notifications of hepatitis C and median age at notification, by sex, Q1 2005 to Q3 2012

### Geographic distribution

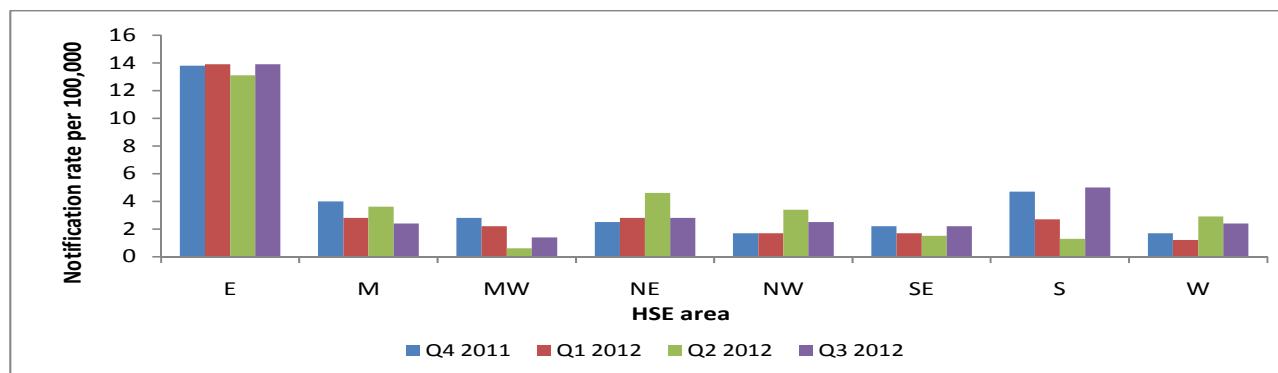
Notification rates for each HSE area for the past four quarters are shown figure 2. Rates have been highest in the HSE-East every quarter since hepatitis C became notifiable. Seventy three percent (n=209) of Q3 cases were reported by the HSE-East in 2012. This corresponds to a notification rate of 13.9 per 100,000 population.

### Age and sex

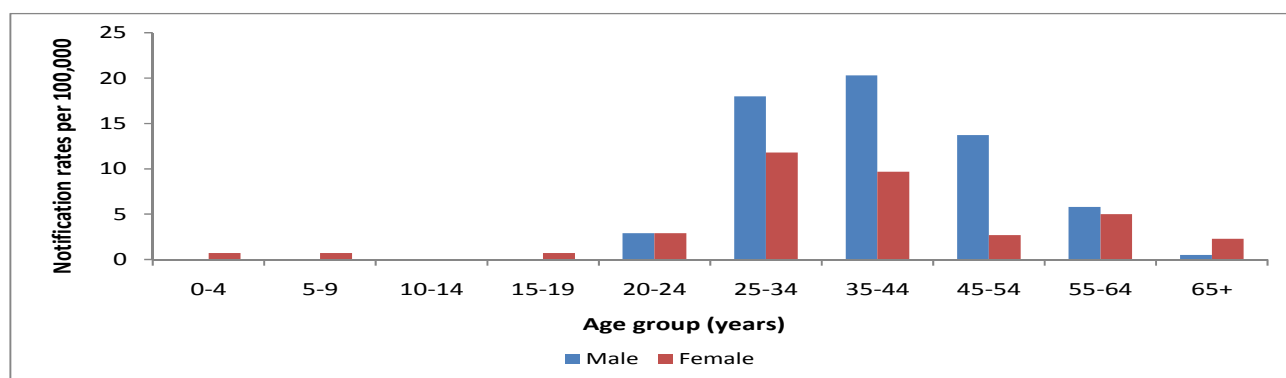
Sixty four percent of hepatitis C cases in Q3 were male (n=185) and 36% (n=103) were female. The median age at notification was 37 years for males and 35 years for females. Seventy percent (n=202) of cases were aged between 25 and 44 years (figures 1 & 3).

### Risk factor data

Information on most likely risk factor was available for 63% (n=182) of Q3 cases. Sixty nine percent of these were injecting drug users (n=125), 13% were likely to have been acquired sexually (n=23), 7% were born in endemic countries (n=12), 5% were infected through blood or blood products (n=9) and 2% were acquired through vertical transmission (n=4). Where data were available on those infected through blood or blood products in Ireland, infection occurred many years in the past.



**Figure 2.** Hepatitis C notification rates per 100,000 population, by HSE area, Q4 2011 to Q3 2012



**Figure 3.** Age and sex specific rates per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications, Q3 2012

## Discussion

The number of hepatitis C notifications in Q3 2012 (n=288) represents an 11% increase from those detected during Q2 2012 (n=260), and decreased by 9% compared to the same period last year (n=318). The overall number of hepatitis C notifications continues to be lower than the high notification rates of 2007 and 2008. However, the overall trends remain the same with males accounting for 64% of all new cases. The median age at notification for males at 37 years was slightly higher than that for females at 35 years. Where risk factor data were available, the vast majority of cases (69%) in Q3 2012 have acquired their infection through injecting drug use.

## Acknowledgements

HPSC would like to thank all those who provided data for this report - Departments of Public Health, laboratories and clinicians. Report by Joanne Moran and Dr Lelia Thornton, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

### Case definition for hepatitis C

*Clinical criteria* Not relevant for surveillance purposes. *Epidemiological criteria* Not relevant for surveillance purposes.

#### Laboratory criteria for diagnosis

##### Hepatitis C (acute)

At least one of the following two:

- Recent HCV seroconversion (prior negative test for hepatitis C in last 12 months)
- Detection of hepatitis C virus nucleic acid (HCV RNA) or hepatitis C virus core antigen (HCV-core) in serum/plasma AND no detection of hepatitis C virus antibody (negative result)
- Detection of hepatitis C virus nucleic acid (HCV RNA)
- Detection of hepatitis C virus core antigen (HCV-core)
- Hepatitis C virus specific antibody (anti-HCV) response confirmed by a confirmatory (e.g. immunoblot) antibody test in persons older than 18 months without evidence of resolved infection\*

##### Hepatitis C (chronic)

- Detection of hepatitis C virus nucleic acid (HCV RNA) or hepatitis C core antigen (HCV-core) in serum/plasma in two samples taken at least 12 months apart

##### Hepatitis C (unknown status)

Any case which cannot be classified according to the above description of acute or chronic infection and having at least one of the following three:

#### Case classification

Possible: N/A  
Probable: N/A  
Confirmed: Any person meeting the laboratory criteria

**Note:** Resolved infection should not be notified

\*Resolved infection: Detection of hepatitis C virus antibody and no detection of hepatitis C virus nucleic acid (HCV RNA negative result) or hepatitis C virus core antigen (HCV-core negative result) in serum/plasma

All data contained in this report are provisional (CIDR accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October 2012)

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