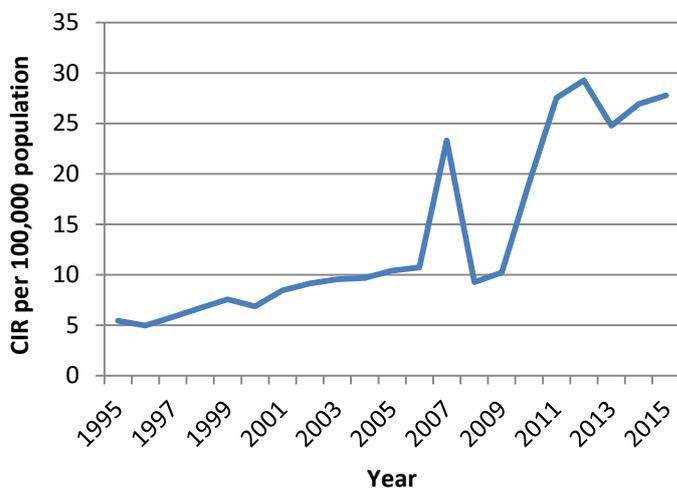


Herpes simplex (genital) is an incurable sexually transmitted infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two subtypes of HSV. Type 2 is commonly associated with genital infection. Type 1 can also cause genital infection but is more commonly linked with oral herpes (cold sores). After infection, HSV remains dormant in certain nerve cells of the affected area of the body for life. The dormant virus may reactivate and cause recurrences.

All laboratories and clinicians reported herpes simplex (genital) data via the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system in 2015.

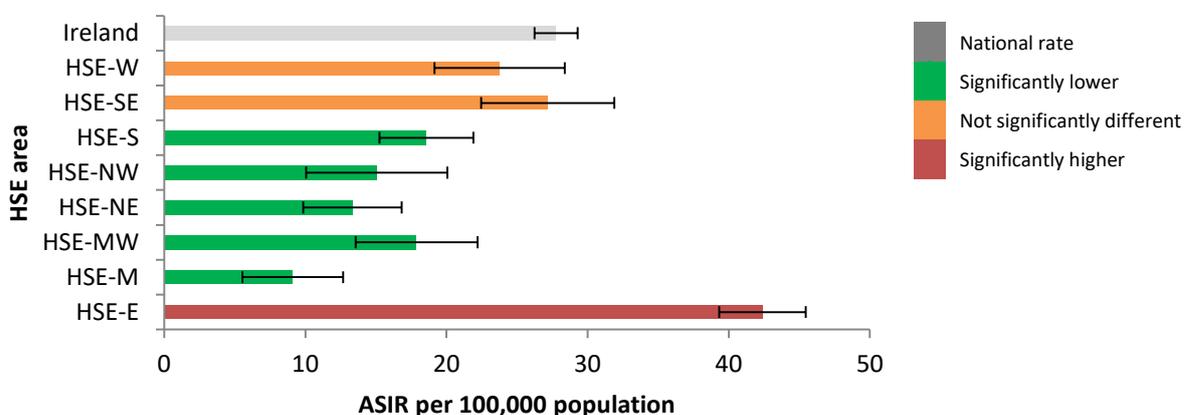
Figure 1: Trend in crude incidence rate (CIR) of herpes simplex (genital) in Ireland, 1995-2015



As of 2nd September 2016, there were 1,274 cases of herpes simplex (genital) notified in Ireland during 2015 corresponding to a crude incidence rate (CIR) of 27.8 per 100,000 population, a small increase from 2014 (26.9/100,000) (figure 1). The CIR among men in 2015 was 15.0/100,000 and 40.0/100,000 among women. The number of cases increased by 3% compared to 2014 (n=1,235). Cases were reported from all HSE areas with the majority (58%) reported in HSE East.

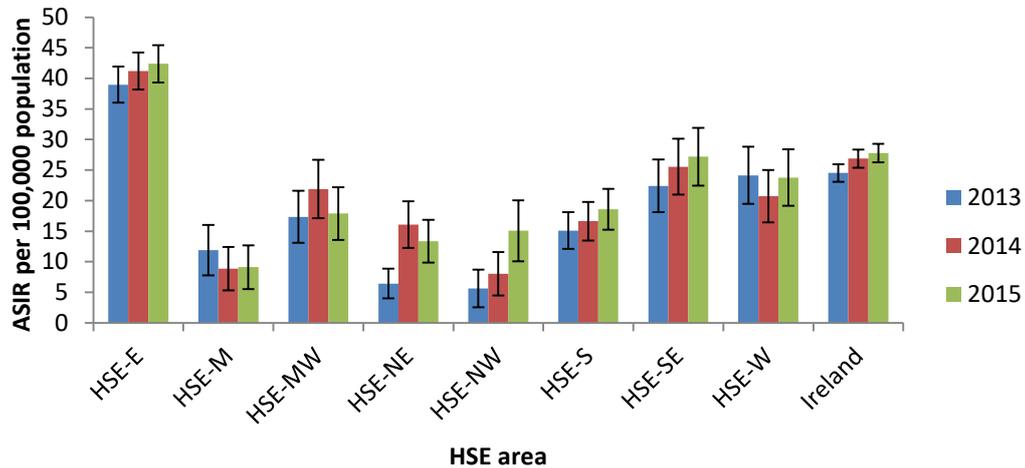
The highest ASIR was in HSE East (42.4/100,000), which was significantly higher than the national rate. The ASIR in HSE South, HSE Northwest, HSE Northeast, HSE Midwest, and HSE Midlands were significantly lower than the national rate.

Figure 2: Age-standardised incidence rate (ASIR) of herpes simplex (genital) by HSE area compared with national rate, 2015



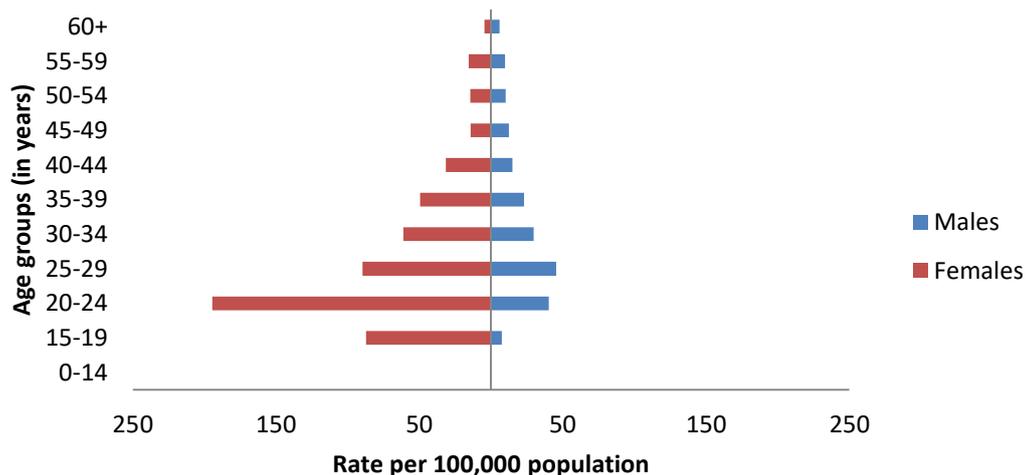
The ASIR in HSE Northwest steadily increased between 2013 and 2015. In 2015, the rate (15.1/100,000) was almost double the rate in 2013 (8.0/100,000) (figure 3).

Figure 3 Age-standardised incidence rate of herpes simplex (genital) by HSE area, 2013-2015



Seventy-three percent of all cases were in females. The median age of infection was 29 years in females (range 4-81 years) and 33 years in males (range 7-78 years). The highest age-specific rate was among 20-24 year olds (118.4/100,000). The rate among women in this age group (194.6/100,000) was almost five times greater than among men (40.2/100,000) (figure 3).

Figure 3: Age and gender-specific rates of herpes simplex (genital), 2015¹



¹ Excludes cases where gender and age are unknown (n=6).

In total, 98% of cases notified in 2015 were laboratory confirmed while 2% were probable (clinically compatible) cases. Most cases were reported as herpes simplex virus (HSV) type 1 (56%) and 34% as HSV type 2; subtype was not reported for 10% of cases.

Patient type (reflecting the service at which the patient was diagnosed) was recorded for 56% (n=717) of herpes simplex (genital) cases in 2015. Where patient type was reported, 58% were diagnosed in general practice (n=419) and 36% were diagnosed in STI clinics (hospital out-patients). Only 2% of cases were diagnosed in emergency departments or other hospital settings. Some patients diagnosed with herpes simplex (genital) were diagnosed with other STIs during 2015: chlamydia (n=33), gonorrhoea (n=9), hepatitis B (n=1), hepatitis C (n=2), HIV (n=10), LGV (n=1), and syphilis (n=4).

Technical Notes

1. Data are analysed by date of notification in CIDR.
2. Data for this report were extracted from CIDR on 2nd September, 2016, and were correct at the time of publication.
3. Percentages are rounded up in the text and provided to one decimal place in the tables.
4. The counties covered by each HSE area are as follows: HSE East: Dublin, Kildare & Wicklow; HSE Midlands: Laois, Longford, Offaly & Westmeath; HSE Midwest: Clare, Limerick & N. Tipperary; HSE Northeast: Cavan, Louth, Meath & Monaghan; HSE Northwest: Donegal, Leitrim & Sligo; HSE South: Kerry & Cork; HSE Southeast: Carlow, Kilkenny, S. Tipperary, Waterford & Wexford; HSE West: Galway, Mayo & Roscommon.
5. Age-standardised incidence rates were calculated using the direct method in which the national population was taken as the standard population. Population data were taken from Census 2011 from the Central Statistics Office. Data were aggregated into the following age groups for the analysis: 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, 20-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years and ≥65 years.

This report was prepared by Anita Kelly, Gillian Cullen, and Derval Igoe. September 2016.