



Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)

Gonorrhoea in Ireland: Provisional updated trends to the end of 2023

Data extracted from Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) on February 1st, 2024, data was correct at time of publication.

Acknowledgements

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) would like to sincerely thank the data providers and all who have contributed data to this report including:

- Microbiology laboratories
- National Virus Reference laboratory
- Departments of Public Health
- Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP)
- Consultants in Infectious Disease/Genitourinary Medicine
- GPs
- Health Advisors
- All other clinical staff involved.

Key points: gonorrhoea trends to the end of 2023



- Ireland has seen an increase in gonorrhoea notification rates between 2019 and 2023
- The total gonorrhoea notification rate increased by 125% since 2019
 - Notification rate in males increased 107% since 2019
 - Those aged **15-19 years** up **116%**
 - Median age in **males** is 30yrs
 - Notifications in **males** peaked in March 2023
 - Notification rate in females increased 217% since 2019
 - Those aged **20-24 years** up **280%**
 - Median age in **females** is 22 yrs
 - Notifications in **females** have stabilised since February 2023
- In the 15-19 year old age group, those aged 18 and 19 account for 88% of female and 90% of male notifications
- Notification rate in those identified as gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) have increased 96% since 2019
- HSE Home STI Testing: Accounted for 25% of gonorrhoea notifications in 2023 (34% of female and 22% of male notifications)

Trend in gonorrhoea rates by gender, 2013 - 2023

- Gonorrhoea notification rates increased in both males and females in 2022 and 2023
- Between 2021 and 2022 HSE free home Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) testing was introduced
www.sexualwellbeing.ie/hometesting

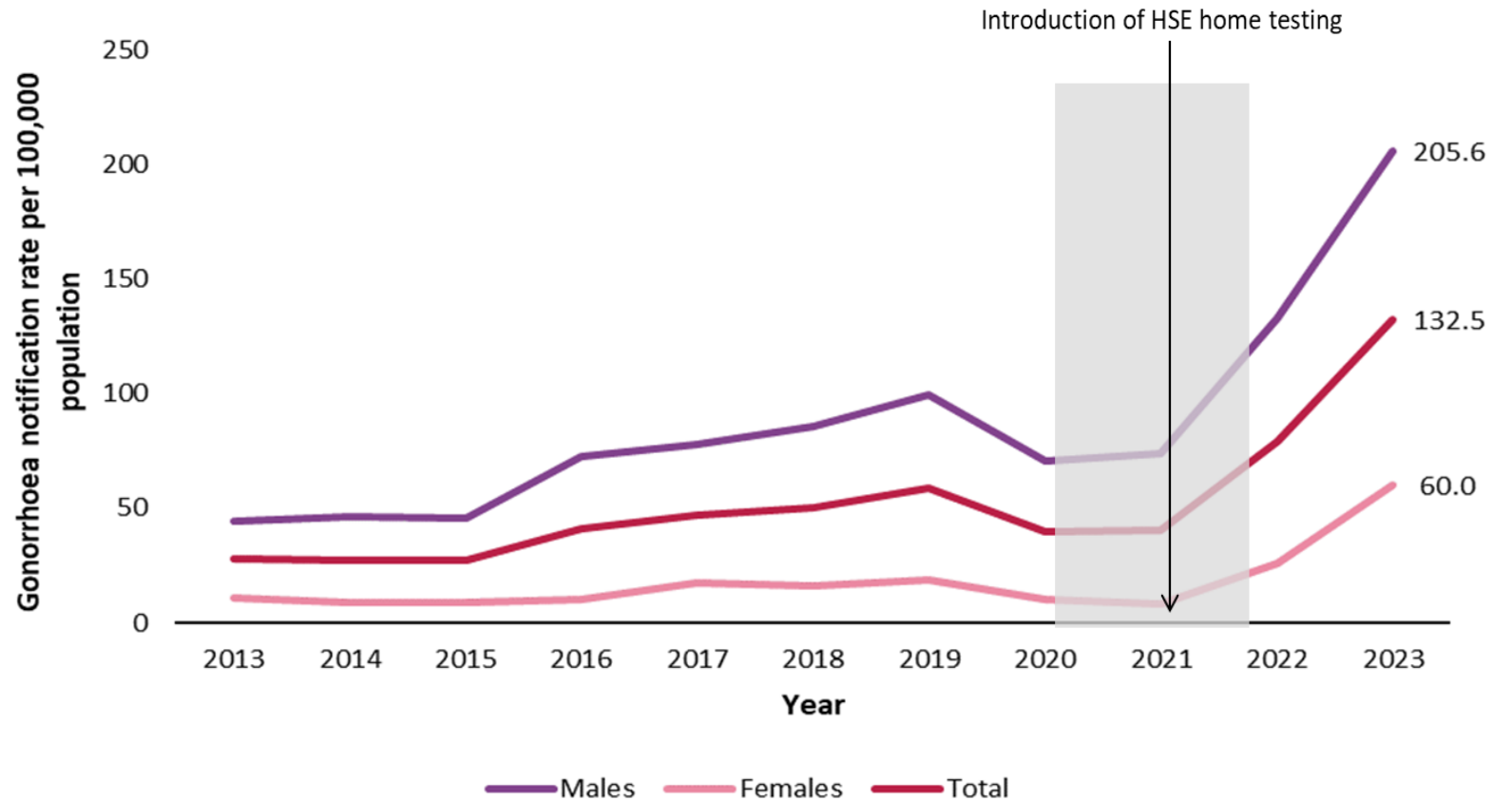


Figure 1. Gonorrhoea notification rates by gender, 2013 - 2023

The grey area highlights the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) when STI surveillance data have been likely impacted by reductions in transmission, under ascertainment and underreporting.

Trend in gonorrhoea notifications by gender, 2019-2023



- Notifications in males peaked in March 2023.
- Notifications in females peaked in February 2023 and have stabilised at a higher rate.

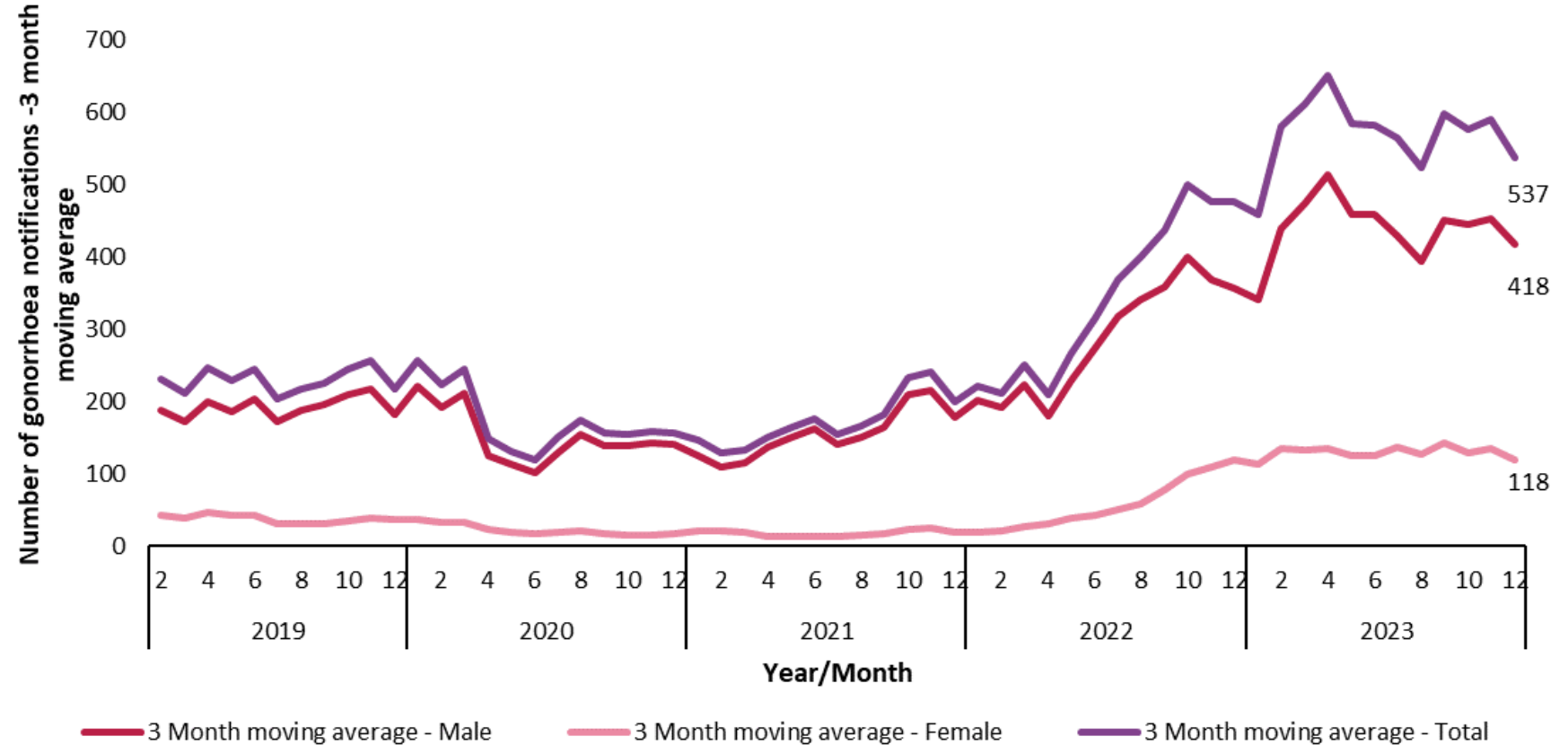


Figure 2. 3 month moving average of gonorrhoea notifications by gender, 2019-2023

Trend in gonorrhoea notifications by gender, 2019-2023



- The proportion of female notifications increased in 2023

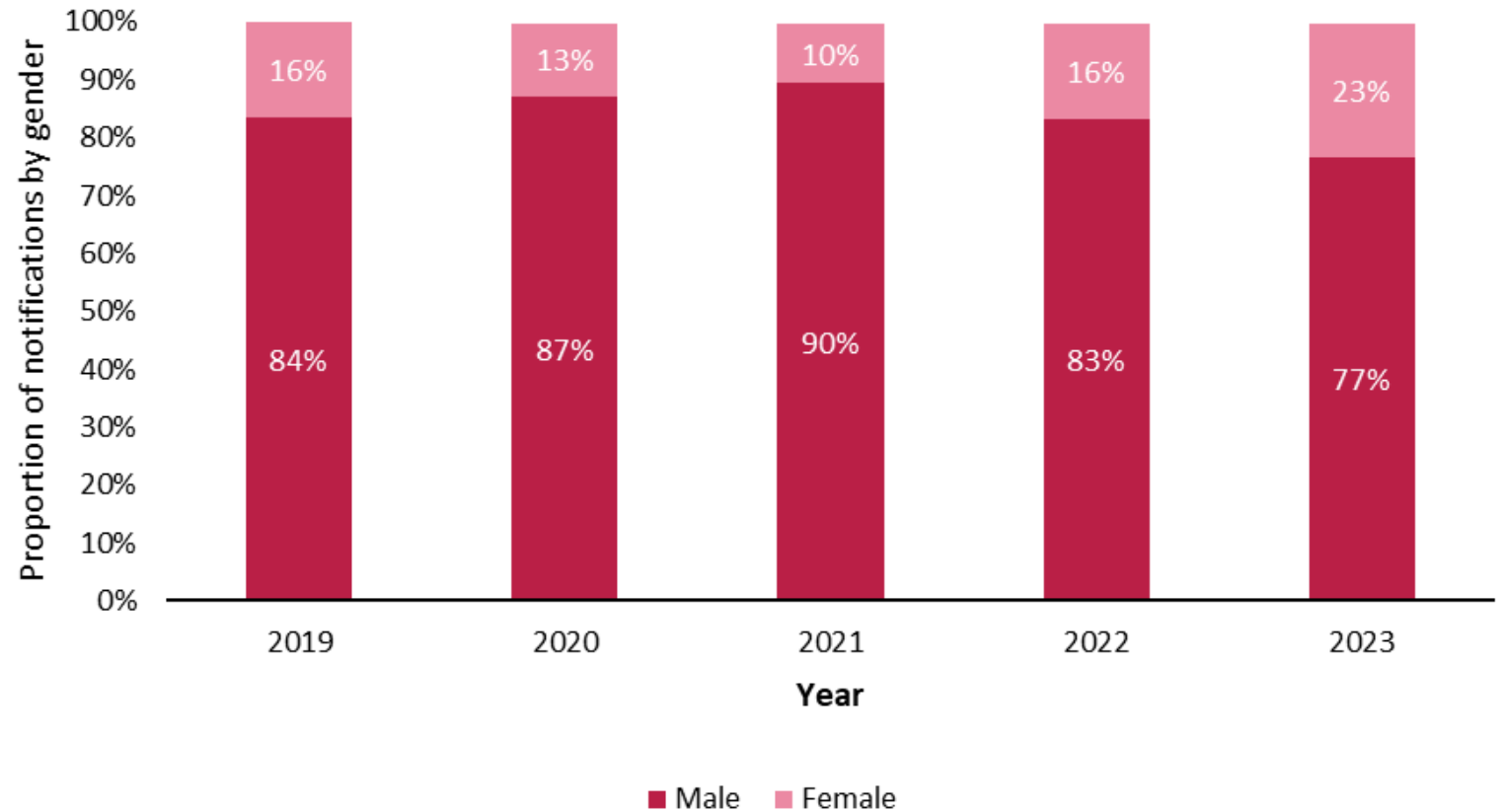


Figure 3. Proportion of gonorrhoea notifications by gender, 2019 - 2023

Trend in gonorrhoea rates by age group and gender, 2019-2023



- From 2019, gonorrhoea notification rates in **males**:
 - Aged 15-19 years **increased** by **116%**
 - 18 and 19-year-olds account for 90% of notifications in this age group
 - Aged 20-24 years **increased** by **115%**

- From 2019, gonorrhoea notification rates in **females**:
 - Aged 15-19 years **increased** by **204%**
 - 18 and 19-year-olds account for 88% of notifications in this age group
 - Aged 20-24 years **increased** by **280%**

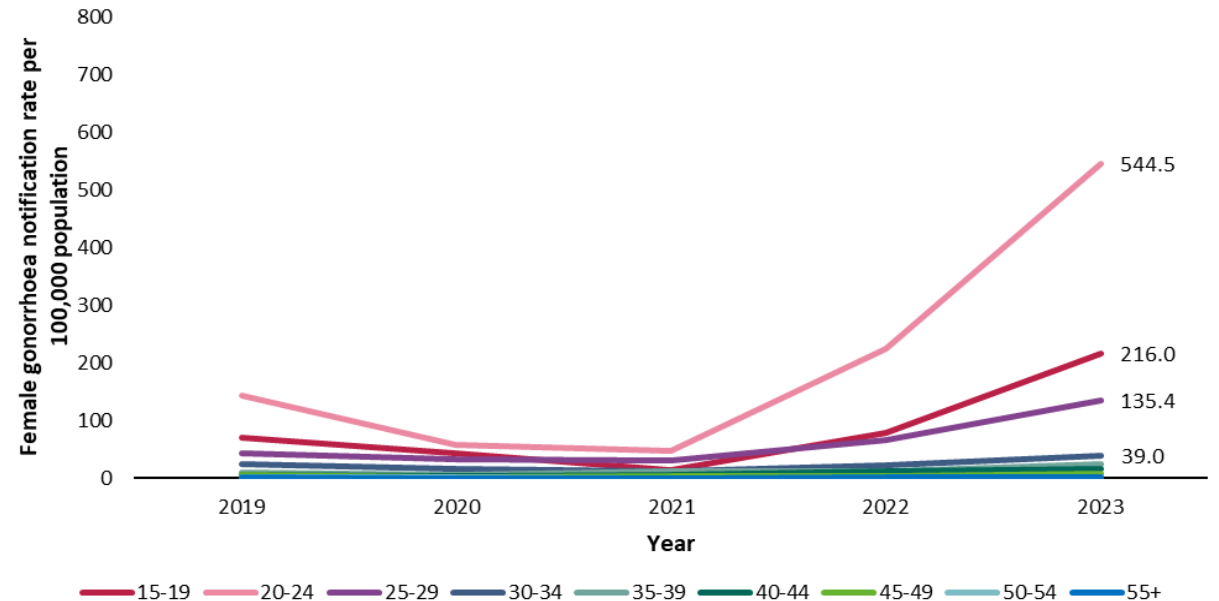
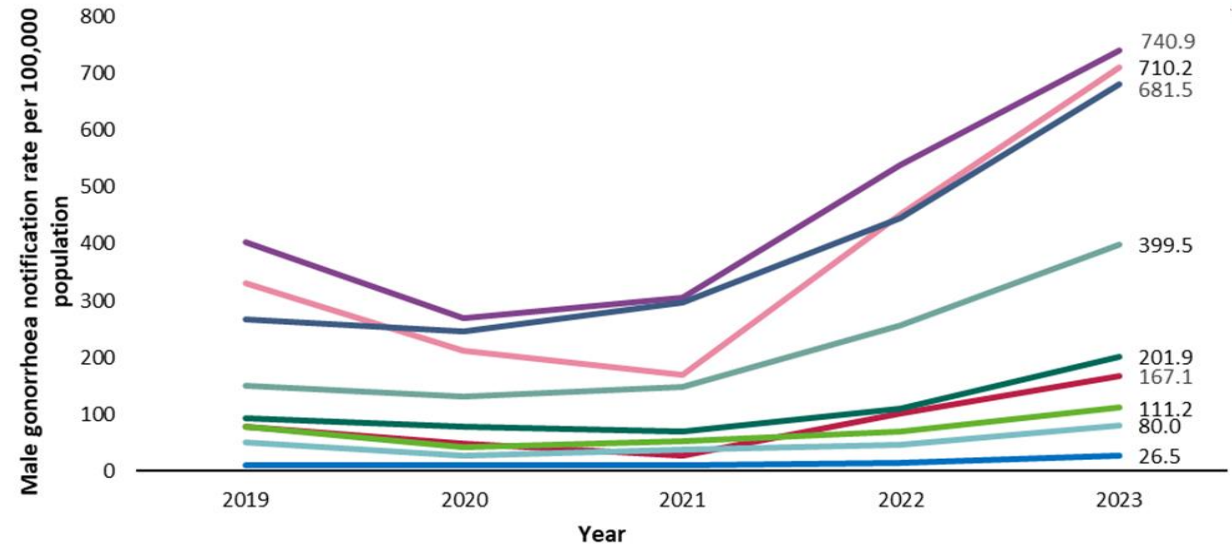


Figure 4. Gonorrhoea notification rate by age group and gender, 2019-2023

Gonorrhoea notifications by age and gender, 2023

- **Female** median age: 22 years
- **Male** median age: 30 years
- **15–19-year age group:**
 - Notifications are increasing in this age group, but number of diagnoses in those <17 years remain low
 - In the 15–19-year age group the median age is 19 years for both males and females in 2023

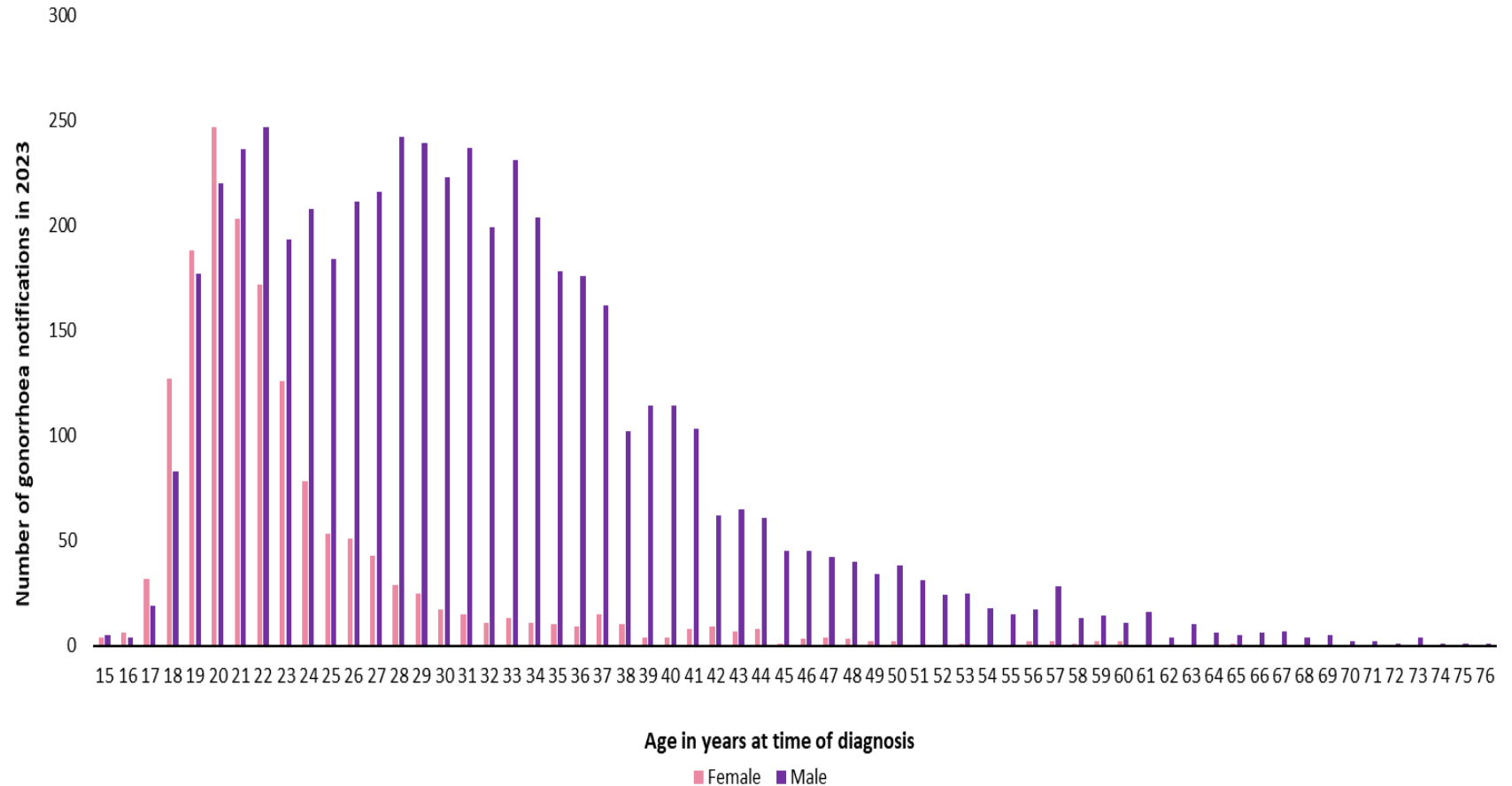


Figure 5. Number of gonorrhoea notifications by age at time of diagnosis and gender, 2023

Trend in gonorrhoea notifications by risk group



- Mode of transmission (MoT) is known for 48% of male cases in 2023.
- Where MoT is known, gbMSM account for 84% of male cases in 2023.

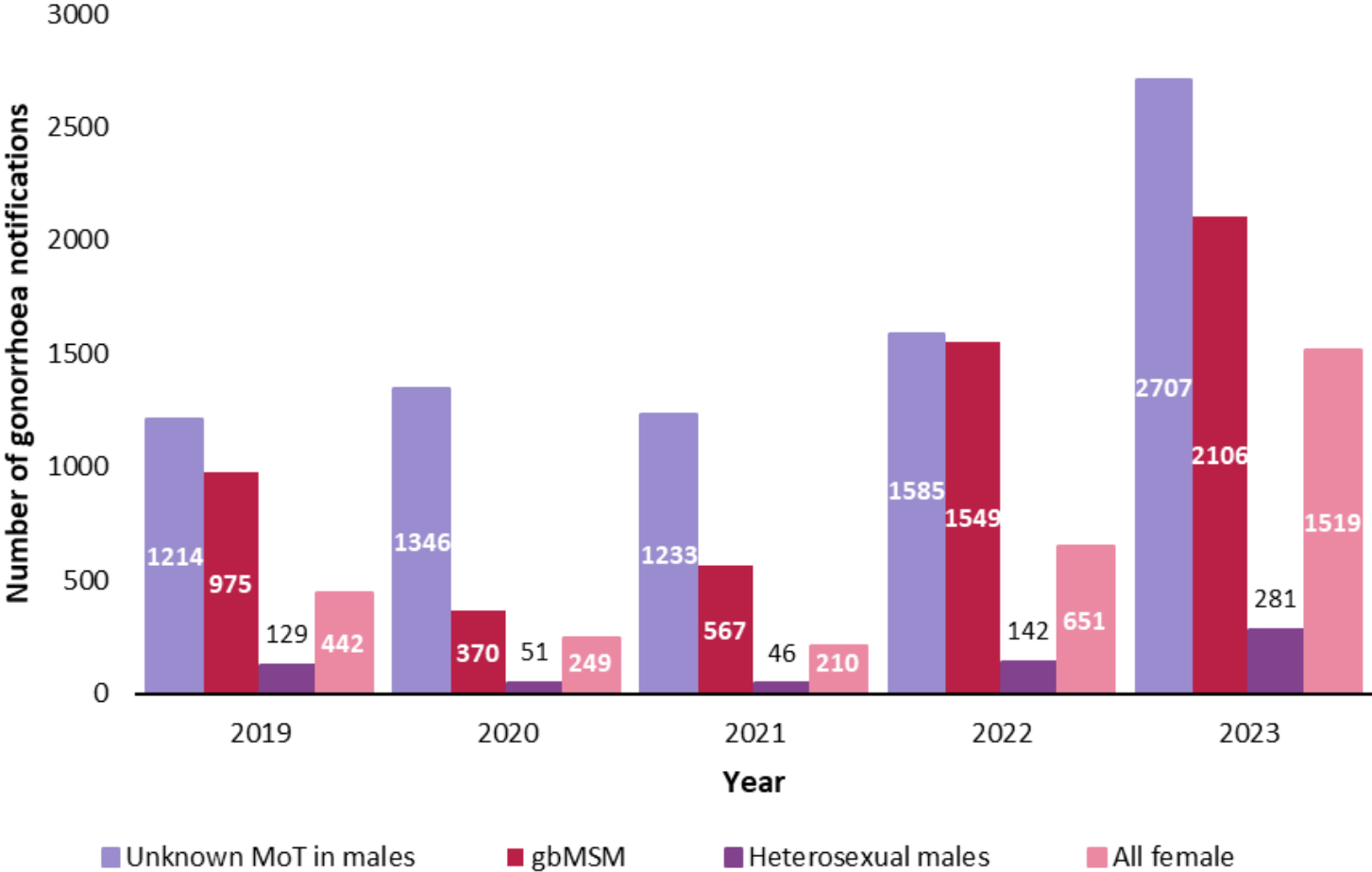


Figure 5: Number of gonorrhoea notifications in gbMSM, heterosexual males, unknown MoT in males and all females aged 18 years and over

Trend in gonorrhoea rates by risk group



- Notification rate in those identified as gbMSM have increased 96% since 2019
- Notification rate in **males** increased 107% since 2019
- Notification rate in **females** increased 217% since 2019

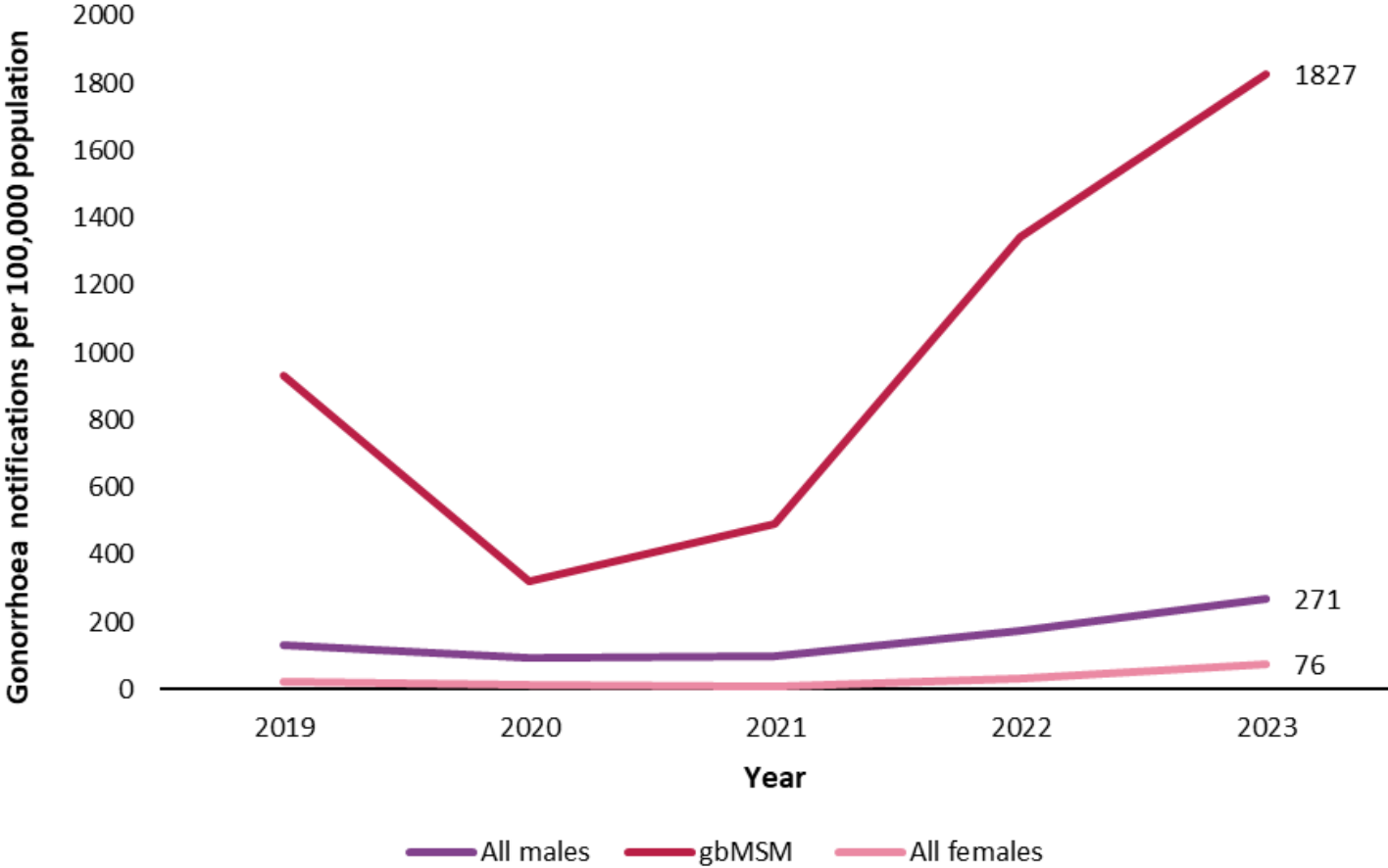


Figure 6: Trend in gonorrhoea rates in gbMSM, all males, and all females aged 18 years and over

Census data and estimates from the 2015 [Healthy Ireland survey](#) were used to calculate notification rates in gbMSM – see technical notes

- Data were extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) on February 1st, 2024, data was correct at time of publication. CIDR is a dynamic system and subject to change as data are reviewed and validated.
- The collection and review of enhanced data is an ongoing process, and the receipt of new information could impact the data at some point in the future.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of gonorrhoea dropped in 2020 and 2021. This reduction in notifications was likely attributed to several factors including long periods of national lockdown, social and physical distancing measures, reduced sexual health and GP services and reduced testing opportunities. The pandemic also impacted the collection and reporting of enhanced data variables, such as probable route of transmission, for gonorrhoea notifications during 2020 and 2021.

Population data and rates

- Unless otherwise stated, male includes cis male and trans male (where known) and female includes cis female and trans female (where known).
- Unless otherwise stated, population data were taken from Census 2011 for 2012-2013, Census 2016 for 2014-2019 and Census 2022 for 2020-2022 (www.cso.ie).
- To calculate rates among gbMSM, data from [Healthy Ireland survey 2015](#) (for males, gender of last sexual partner male for 6%) was applied to the male population (aged 18 and over) from census data.
- When rates by gender are reported, the numerator is gender identity as recorded on CIDR and the denominator is population data from the Census by sex (at birth).