

4.2 Malaria

Summary

Number of cases, 2010: 82
 Number of cases, 2009: 90
 Crude incidence rate, 2010: 1.9/100,000

Among EU Member States reporting malaria data to the European Centre for Disease Control, Ireland had the third highest incidence rate for imported malaria in 2008, third only to France and the United Kingdom.¹ Compared to the number of cases of malaria notified prior to 2006 (Figure 1), malaria notifications in Ireland in 2010 remained at elevated levels with 82 cases notified. Moreover, one Irish resident died as a result of their illness, a woman of African origin who was resident in Ireland for several years but who was exposed on a return visit to Africa.

The group most affected in Ireland continued to be African immigrants and their families who were exposed while returning to their countries of origin to visit family and friends. This almost certainly reflects the greater frequency with which this group travels to malarious areas, and reflects also Ireland's increasing importance as a destination for those emigrating from English speaking West Africa. Seventy per cent of cases with a known reason for travel in 2010 cited 'visiting family in country of origin', with at least 83% of these being of African origin (Table 1).

Unusually, the second most common reason for travel this year was being an 'Irish citizen living abroad' (10 cases -15% of cases with known reason for travel). This compares with a total of 6 cases listing this as their reason for 'travel' over the previous four years. At least six of these ten cases had been living in an endemic country for one year or more. There were only two

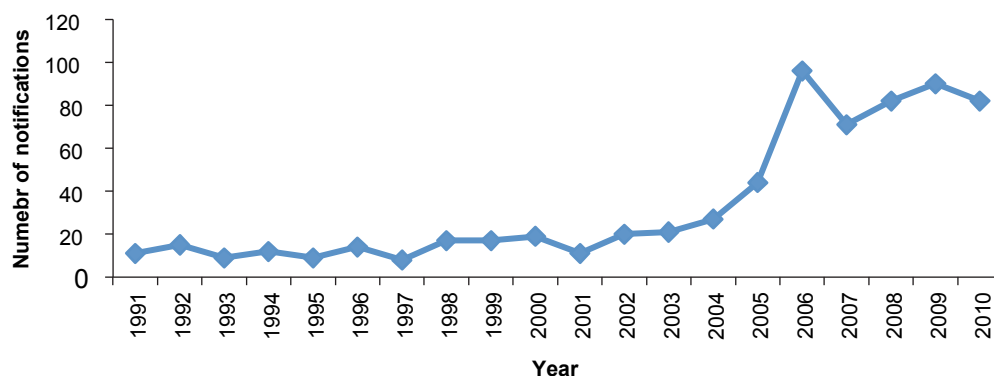


Figure 1. Annual number of notifications malaria, Ireland 1991-2010

Table 1. Number of cases malaria by reason for travel and country of birth, Ireland 2010

Reason for travel	Country of birth					Not specified	Total
	Nigeria	Other Africa	Asia	Ireland	Other		
Visit family country origin	28	10	0	5	2	1	46
Irish Citizen Living Abroad	0	0	1	7	1	1	10
Holiday travel	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Other	1	0	0	2	2	3	8
Not specified	2	0	0	0	0	14	16
Total	31	11	1	15	5	19	82

cases associated with holiday travel in 2010, down from between five and thirteen annually reported in the period 2006-2009.

Other reasons for travel includes: business/professional travel (n=2), new entrants (n=2), aid/volunteer workers (n=3), and foreign visitors ill while in Ireland (n=1)

Nigeria remained the country most frequently visited -50% of cases (Table 2). Ghana was reported as the country of infection for eight cases (10%). The remaining cases reporting travel to other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa or to Asia. And as in previous years, *P. falciparum* was responsible for the majority of malaria cases reported in Ireland in 2010 (Table 2), most likely because *P. falciparum* is the most common form of malaria acquired in Africa and the majority of Irish cases are acquired there.

In recent years in Ireland, there has been concern about the reported number of paediatric malaria cases. In 2010, 11 paediatric malaria cases were notified compared to between 16 and 26 cases annually in the previous four years. Eight of these reported 'visiting family in country of origin as their reason for travel, while one was a new entrant.

The small decline in case numbers in 2010 (9% decrease compared to 2009) in particular among children is welcome, however, efforts should continue in the education of the travelling public about the steps that can be taken to minimise their risk of contracting malaria while overseas.

References

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Annual Epidemiological Report on Communicable Diseases in Europe 2010. Stockholm: ECDC; 2010. ISBN 978-92-9193-222-1 http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/Forms/ECDC_DisForm.aspx?ID=578

Table 2. Number of cases malaria by infecting species and country of infection, Ireland 2010.

Species	Country of infection					Total
	Nigeria	Ghana	Other Africa	Asia	Not specified	
<i>P. falciparum</i>	34	7	13	3	10	67
<i>P. falciparum/ P. vivax</i>	2	0	0	0	0	2
<i>P. ovale</i>	2	1	1	0	2	6
<i>P. vivax</i>	0	0	0	1	1	2
<i>P. malariae</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Specified	3	0	1	0	1	5
Total	41	8	15	4	14	82