

4.2 Malaria

Summary

Number of cases, 2009: 90
 Number of cases, 2008: 82
 Crude incidence rate 2009: 2.1/100,000

In 2009, 90 cases of malaria were notified in Ireland, similar to the numbers reported for the previous three years (Figure 1). Malaria, in particular that caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, is a potentially fatal illness, and one individual in 2009 died as a result of their illness. Furthermore, 62% of cases required hospitalisation (42/68 cases for which data were provided).

Table 1 describes the distribution of cases by country of birth and reason for travel. The primary reason for

travel reported was 'visiting family in country of origin' (Table 1). The majority of cases reported were non-Irish born (75%), and even among those described as Irish-born, half reported their reason for travel as 'visiting family in country of origin' (presumably the children of immigrants).

Where country of infection was reported, around two-thirds of cases reported being exposed in Nigeria, with most of the remaining cases reporting travel to other Sub-Saharan African or Asian countries (Table 2). One *P. falciparum* case was reported not to have travelled to a malaria endemic country for many years.

P. falciparum was responsible for the majority of cases which were acquired in Africa, while *P. vivax* was the most common species acquired in Asia (Table 2). As

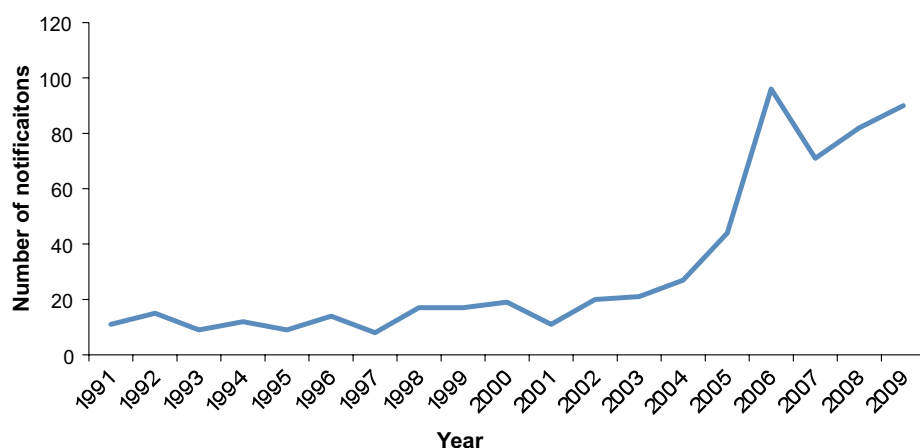


Figure 1. Annual number of notifications malaria, Ireland 1991-2009

Table 1. Number of cases malaria by reason for travel and country of birth, Ireland 2009

Reason for travel	Country of birth					Total
	Nigeria	Other Africa	Asia	Ireland	Other	
Visit family country origin	26	5		8		40
Holiday travel	2	1		2	2	7
Other	4	2	4	6		16
Not specified	3					24
Total	35	8	4	16	2	90

Other reasons for travel include: new entrants, Irish citizens living abroad, volunteer workers, etc

expected, the median interval between return/arrival from a malarious area and onset of illness was shorter for *P. falciparum* cases (7 days) than *P. ovale* (87 days) and *P. vivax* (237 days) cases.

Half of all cases in Ireland in 2009 were notified during quarter 3 (Figure 2), coinciding with the summer holiday period, and most likely reflecting increased travel to endemic countries during this time. This seasonal peak was most prominent among cases who reported their reason for travel to an endemic country as 'visiting family in country of origin'. Cases reported among holidaymakers were more common during winter months (Figure 2).

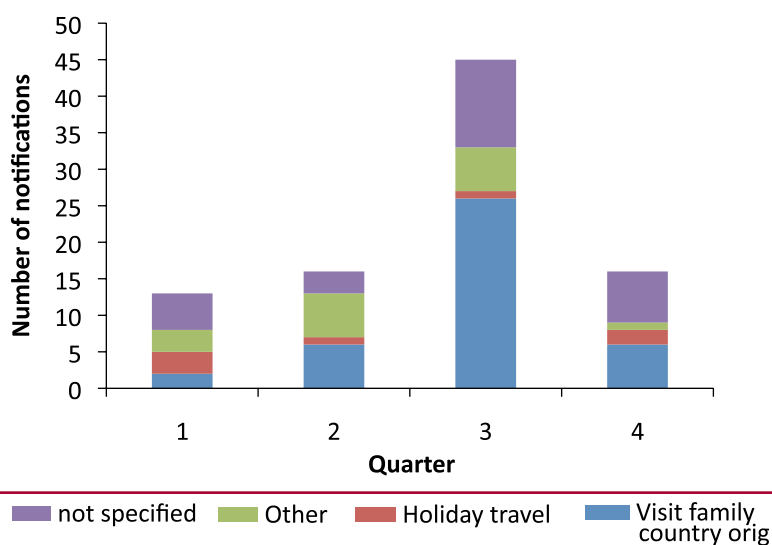


Figure 2. Number of malaria notifications by reason for travel and quarter of notification, Ireland 2009. [Other includes: new entrants, Irish citizens living abroad, volunteer workers, etc.]

Table 2. Number of cases malaria by infecting species and country of infection, Ireland 2009

Species	Country of infection					Total
	Nigeria	Other Africa	Asia	Ireland	Not specified	
<i>P. falciparum</i>	35	11	1	1	23	71
<i>P. ovale</i>	3	1	1			5
<i>P. vivax</i>		1	3		2	6
<i>P. malariae</i>		1				1
Not Specified	3		1		3	7
Total	41	14	6	1	28	90