

Unlinked Anonymous Prevalence Monitoring Programme



Survey of Injecting Drug Users

Summary of the findings for 2004/05 from the four collaborating centres in Northern Ireland:

For use by DHSSPS, CDSC Northern Ireland, & the collaborating agencies.

The Unlinked Anonymous Prevalence Monitoring Programmes (UAPMP) survey of injecting drug users monitors HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection levels in those injectors in contact with specialist services, such as needle exchanges, or on treatment programmes, such as methadone maintenance. It is a voluntary survey where those injectors who agree to participate provide an anonymous saliva sample and complete a brief behavioural questionnaire.

The Sample

1. During 2004/05 there were 248 eligible samples returned from the agencies in Northern Ireland.
2. Of these participating injectors 34 (14%) were aged under 25, 134 (55%) aged 25 to 34, and 74 (31%) aged 35 and over. The median age in Northern Ireland was 31 years, it was also 31 years in Wales, and it was 32 years in England.
3. The majority were male, with only 57 (23%) of the participants being female.
4. Of those providing information on their injecting careers, 16% had been injecting for 15 or more years, 14% had been injecting 10-14 years, 43% 5-9 years and 27% 0-4 years.
5. Among the 169 who had injected during the 12 months preceding participation 162 (96%) had used opiates and 67 (40%) used stimulants.
6. Among the 100 who had injected during the four weeks prior to participation 88% (82/93) reported heroin as the main drug they had injected.
7. The majority (88%, 203 of 231) were currently receiving either a detox or maintenance drug regime.

Hepatitis C

8. Of the injecting drug users participating 28% (69 of 248) had antibodies to hepatitis C.
9. The majority, 86% (201 of 234), reported having ever had a voluntary confidential test for hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B

10. Of the injecting drug users who took part in the survey 10% (24 of 248) had antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen.
11. Almost two-thirds of the participants (64%, 156 of 244) reported having received one or more doses of the vaccine against hepatitis B. This is a higher proportion than in Wales, but lower than the proportion in several regions of England.

HIV

12. Of IDUs who took part in the survey 2% (5 of 248) were HIV positive.
13. Most of the participants (72%, 171 of 238) reported that they had ever had a voluntary confidential test for HIV.

Injecting Behaviour and Access to Services

14. Of those who reported injecting during the four weeks prior to participating in the survey 24% (24 of 98) reported the direct sharing of needles and syringes during those four weeks. This was higher than the proportion in Wales but lower than in most regions in England.
15. Over a third (36%, 35 of 98) reported the sharing of injecting equipment other than needles and syringes, such as spoons, filters, and water, during the previous four weeks.
16. Nine in ten clients (219 of 243) had ever used a needle exchange. Of those who had started to inject in the last three years 90% (18 of 20) had ever used a needle exchange.
17. More than half (58%, 138 of 238) had ever been to prison, 26% (36 of 138) reported injecting in prison.

Table: Summary Comparison of the Results from the Collaborating Centres within Northern Ireland: 2004/05

	Homefirst Addiction Services	Other Centres
<i>Number of samples returned</i>	127	121
Proportion male	78%	76%
Proportion under 25	20%	8%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen	1.6%	18%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis C	15%	41%
Proportion with antibodies to HIV	0%	4.1%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for HIV	61%	83%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for hepatitis C	90%	81%
Ever used a needle exchange	90%	90%
Accepted offer of dose of the hepatitis B vaccine	83%	43%
<i>Number who had injecting in previous 4 weeks</i>	48	50
Proportion sharing needles and syringes in previous 4 weeks	13%	36%
Proportion sharing other injecting equipment in previous 4 weeks	27%	44%