

*Supporting us, helping others*  
Affected family members seeking  
treatment in their own right:

Insights from Irish health surveillance data for 2010 to 2020

EWODOR Conference 2023

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# Affected Family Members

Family members, friends,  
and colleagues affected  
by a significant other's  
problem substance use  
or addictions

> 100m worldwide <sup>1</sup>



# How are family members affected?



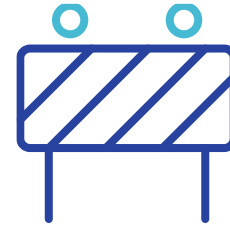
Stress and strain experienced by family members can negatively impact mental and physical health

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10



Social support enhances coping and reduces negative impacts on health and functioning

8, 10



Barriers exist for family members seeking help, such as stigma, fear and shame

7, 10

# Data on AFMs

Largely “unknown and uncounted” <sup>1</sup>

Prevalence data are lacking <sup>1, 3, 14</sup>

Some data from population surveys <sup>2</sup>



**National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS)**  
has collected data on AFMs  
since 2010 <sup>15</sup>

# NDTRS



- National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS)<sup>15</sup>
  - Irish national public health surveillance database
- Established 1991
- Reporting requirements at national, European and international levels
- Routine data collection
- Comprehensive measure of treatment demand
- Requirement for all publicly funded drug and alcohol services complete the NDTRS

# Research aims



Describe AFMs seeking treatment in their own right, and the services they received



Provide evidence to inform measures to address the support needs of AFMs

# NDTRS data on AFMs 2010 to 2020



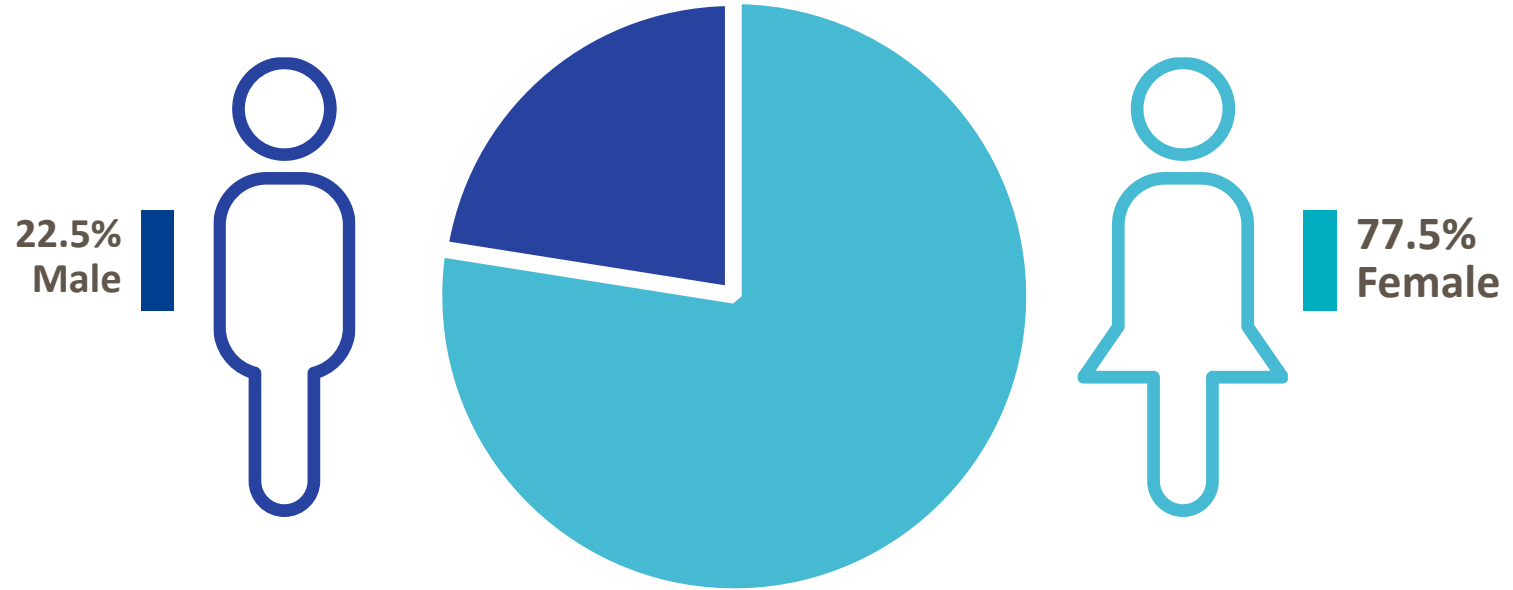
**13,744**

referrals  
2010-2020

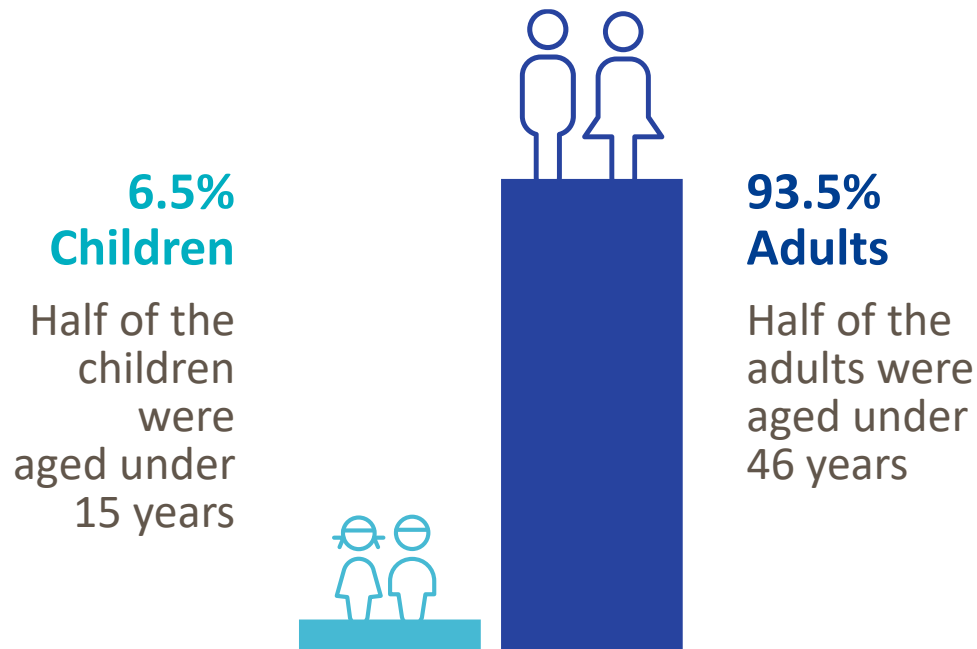
# Results



# Gender of referrals



# Age of referrals



# Gender and age group



**42%**

35–54 years



**11%**

35–54 years

**Adult referrals**



**55%**



**45%**

**Child referrals**

# Who were they living with?



**43%**  
with partner  
and child(ren)



**19%**  
alone with  
child(ren)



**14%**  
with partner  
alone



**11%**  
with parents  
or family



**10%**  
alone

**Adult referrals**



**93%**  
with parents  
and family

**Child referrals**

# Employment status



**51%**  
employed

**Adult** referrals



**94%**  
in education

**Child** referrals

# Education completed



**88%**  
above primary  
level

**Adult** referrals



**90%**  
at least  
primary level

**Child** referrals

# Who refers family members to services?



**63%**  
self-referral



**13%**  
social /  
community  
services



**11%**  
family and  
friends

**Adult referrals**



**41%**  
family and  
friends



**26%**  
social /  
community  
services



**16%**  
school /  
college

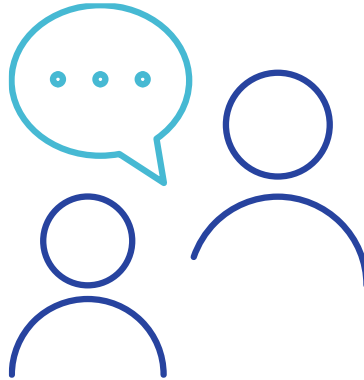
**Child referrals**

# Type of treatment provided

Individual  
counselling



Brief  
intervention



Individual education  
awareness

Group education  
awareness

Group counselling

Family therapy



# Treatment duration



## Group counselling

median

-(120 days)+

**Adult** referrals



## Individual education awareness

median

-(165 days)+

**Child** referrals

# Summary

**13,744**

referrals for  
family members  
2010-2020



**Three-in-four  
were females,**  
mainly aged 35 to  
54 years <sup>1, 8, 9, 10, 11</sup>



**One-in-twenty  
referrals were  
children,**  
half aged under 15  
years <sup>12</sup>



**Most were  
living with  
others,**  
three-in-five  
with children

# Conclusion

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## NDTRS is the only national dataset on AFMs

- Need and demand for treatment is likely much greater
- Difficult to assess the extent of hidden harm <sup>14</sup>
- Routine monitoring is a valuable source of evidence on AFMs and hidden harm
- Include further variables on AFMs and their significant others, associated problems, family relationships, living circumstances
- Raising awareness of AFMs and their support needs<sup>16</sup>

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# Thank you

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