



Deputy Pádraig Rice,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

13th March 2025

PQ ref 8827/25

To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing alcohol related health interventions in each of the years 2023, 2024, and 2025, in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Rice,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Alcohol ranks as one of the highest causes of disease burden in the world. Alcohol is a causal factor in more than 200 disease and injury conditions such as liver cirrhosis, heart disease, alcohol related brain injury and cancer. In Ireland, the majority of drinkers consume alcohol in a manner that is risky to their health. On average, there are four alcohol-related deaths every day and at least 40,000 alcohol-related hospital discharges each year. There are also significant health harms to others, such as injuries resulting from alcohol related crime, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and road traffic incidents.

Alcohol therefore places a considerable burden on the Irish health service, and the costs are difficult to estimate due to the wide ranging impacts across multiple services and challenges in data collection. In 2023, we saw an increase in hospital discharges wholly attributed to alcohol with 22,572 discharges recorded on the Hospital Inpatient Enquiry (HIPE) Scheme.¹ Alcohol treatment services for people with alcohol use disorders are provided through a network of HSE and commissioned services. Since the majority of these services also cater for clients with other substance use problems, it is not possible to extract the cost of providing alcohol treatment from overall budgets. However, the Health Research Board collate data on alcohol treatment through the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS). In 2023, the number of cases reported to NDTRS with alcohol reported as the main reason for seeking treatment was 8,163. Collated data for 2024 and 2025 are not yet available. Data are also unavailable for alcohol-related emergency department presentations, GP visits, and psychiatric admissions.

A cost analysis of the financial burdens of alcohol harm was commissioned by the Department of Health in 2014², and the analysis estimated the cost of alcohol harm at approximately €2.35 billion annually, including €793m costs to the health care system and €258m costs due to alcohol-related road accidents.

¹ <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/41557/1/HSE%20RHA%20Alcohol%20harm%20profile%20factsheet.pdf>

² <https://assets.gov.ie/19454/b1990c163eaf454f9f674355eaf4d504.pdf>

The Health Research Board estimated the cost to the health system at €1.5 billion in 2012, which was 11% of all public healthcare expenditure that year.³

The Health Research Board has commissioned an up-to-date research study on the social costs and benefits associated with alcohol use in Ireland, which will include an analysis of the financial impact on health services.⁴ This study commenced in Q1 2025 and will be completed by the end of 2027.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Aisling Sheehan

National Lead Alcohol and Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes, Access and Integration, HSE

³ https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Alcohol_in_Ireland_consumption_harm_cost_and_policy_response.pdf

⁴ <https://www.etenders.gov.ie/epps/cft/prepareViewCfTWS.do?resourceId=4882006>