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31/10/2024

Deputy Toibin  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 41831/24: To ask the Minister for Health the number of babies born with drug or alcohol addictions, by county, in each of the past ten years and to date in 2024.**

Dear Deputy Toibin.

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.

Information on children born addicted to or severely affected by alcohol is not easily available, as the impact on children, particular in relation to alcohol use, ranges across a spectrum, with no reliable clinical test or screening test available for more mild and subtle cases.

The frequency of fetal alcohol syndrome is difficult to determine. First there must a clear documented history of alcohol use during the pregnancy. Second, the description of a low birth weight baby with a distinctive facial pattern, and subsequent hyperactivity and cognitive problems. This complete picture is uncommon in clinical practice. Partial cases of fetal alcohol syndrome are where there is a history of alcohol ingestion and the baby has some cognitive problems but no typical facial features. The other challenges is that pregnant women with an alcohol problem may also be taking other recreational drugs. In these circumstances it is difficult to extract the specific effect of the alcohol from the effects of the other drugs.

In responding to your query, data has been derived from the HSE's HIPE Data collection system, which records the discharge data per episode of care. Patients may be admitted to hospital more than once in any given time period with the same or different diagnosis i.e. the data is not patient specific. HIPE collects day patient and in-patient activity. As you requested the data by county the data has been captured by county of residence.

Table 1: The number of newborn discharges (aged 0-3 completed weeks) from acute hospitals with a diagnosis of either P04.3, Q86.0 (alcohol related codes) or P04.4, P96.1 (drug related codes)b, reported to HIPE, by county of residence, 2014-2023.

County of Residence	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Carlow	~	~	~	~	~	0	~	~	0	0
Cavan	7	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	0	0
Clare	0	0	0	~	~	0	~	0	~	0
Cork	9	6	11	8	9	7	14	9	~	~
Donegal	0	0	~	0	~	~	~	~	~	~
Dublin	55	52	40	32	42	29	33	39	28	28
Galway	~	~	~	6	0	~	~	~	~	~
Kerry	~	6	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Kildare	~	0	6	~	0	~	~	~	~	~
Kilkenny	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	0
Laois	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Leitrim	~	0	0	0	0	0	0	~	0	0
Limerick	7	~	~	~	6	~	~	8	6	~
Longford	~	~	~	~	0	~	0	~	0	0
Louth	8	~	~	~	7	7	~	~	6	~
Mayo	0	0	~	~	~	~	~	~	0	~
Meath	0	0	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Monaghan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	~	~
Offaly	0	~	~	~	0	~	~	~	~	~
Roscommon	~	0	0	~	~	~	0	~	0	~
Sligo	~	~	~	~	0	~	~	0	~	0
Tipperary	~	0	~	~	~	8	0	7	~	~
Waterford	~	~	~	~	~	~	7	~	~	~
Westmeath	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Wexford	~	7	~	~	~	~	~	~	0	~
Wicklow	8	~	~	~	7	~	~	~	6	8
z Other/Overseas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	~	0
All	130	101	110	93	99	96	102	107	78	76

Small counts between one and five are suppressed and replaced with ~, but these small counts are included in the total figures presented for each year.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme**