

Drug Overdoses and Drug Related Deaths in NI : An overview

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Context

- Northern Ireland
- Thirty years of Conflict
- Post 1998 Agreement
- Drug Market changes
- Covid
- Structural Issues
- Transgenerational Trauma



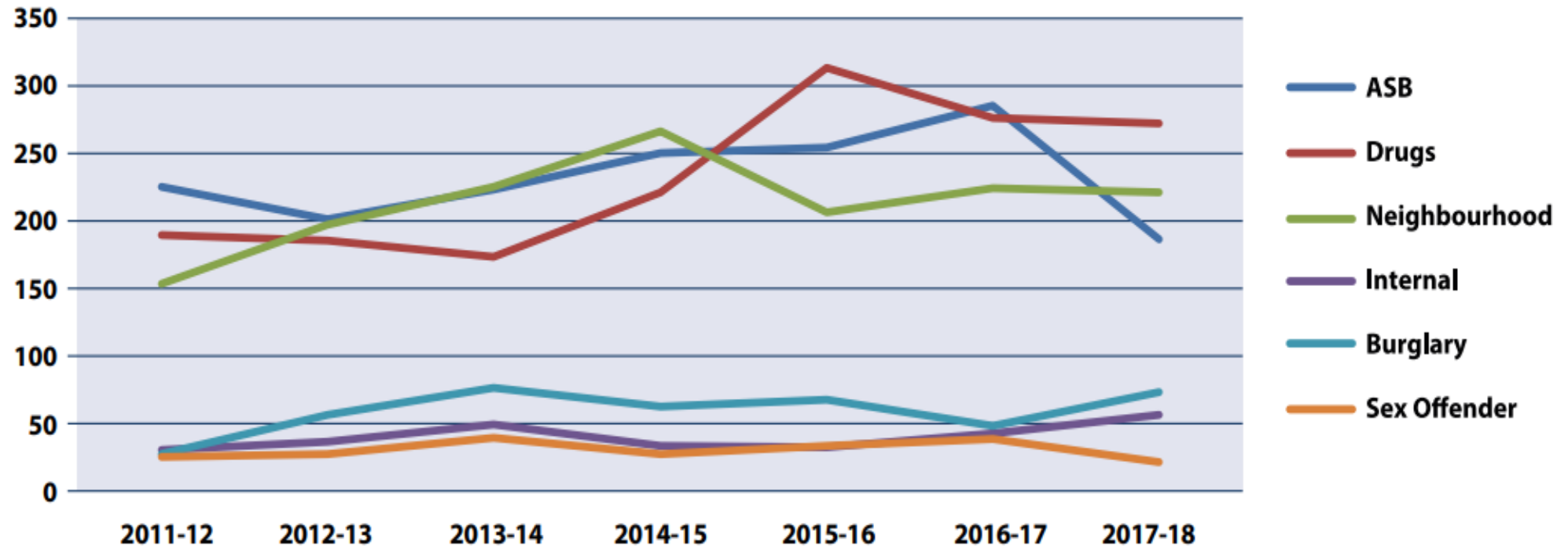


Younger Adults.....

- Multiple complex factors with high rate of complex co morbidities
- ACEs
- Transgenerational Trauma
- Suicide
- Paramilitary organizations ...Conflict and post conflict related trauma

Paramilitary Threat - Drugs

Figure 7 Reasons for Threats (Source Base 2)



Aims and Objectives of report

- This report presents data from multiple sources, including NISRA, The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS), National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths (NPSAD), Emergency Admissions Data from Trusts in NI and NISRA
- All data has been anonymized at the source, and the providers analysed the largest proportion of the data. This is the first time we have considered data from different sectors to provide an overview of overdoses and drug-related deaths in Northern Ireland.
- The siloed data enabled us to observe particular demographics, drug trends and specific risk factors. Therefore, it is a useful first foray into research on drug overdoses and related deaths in NI.

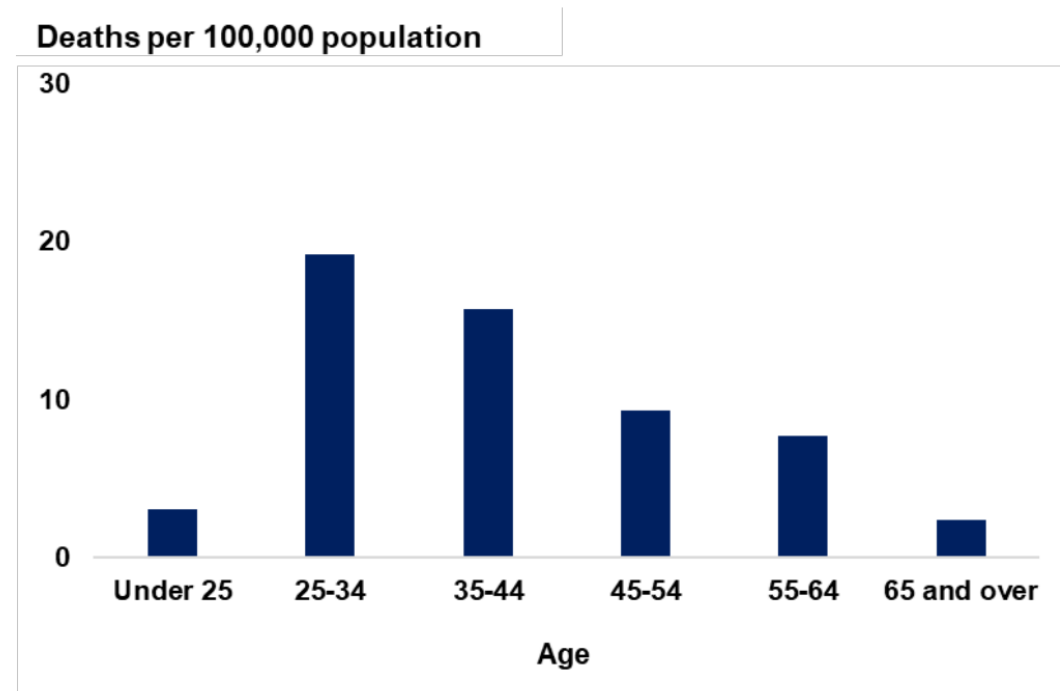
Limitations

- However, there are some limitations in the report. Firstly, there is no linkage between the datasets, preventing more detailed statistical analysis of the comprehensive information provided by the partners.
- Secondly, the organizations involved used different drug classifications, making comparisons challenging but manageable. Finally, the data collection periods varied among the partners, causing difficulties in temporal comparisons across the data.



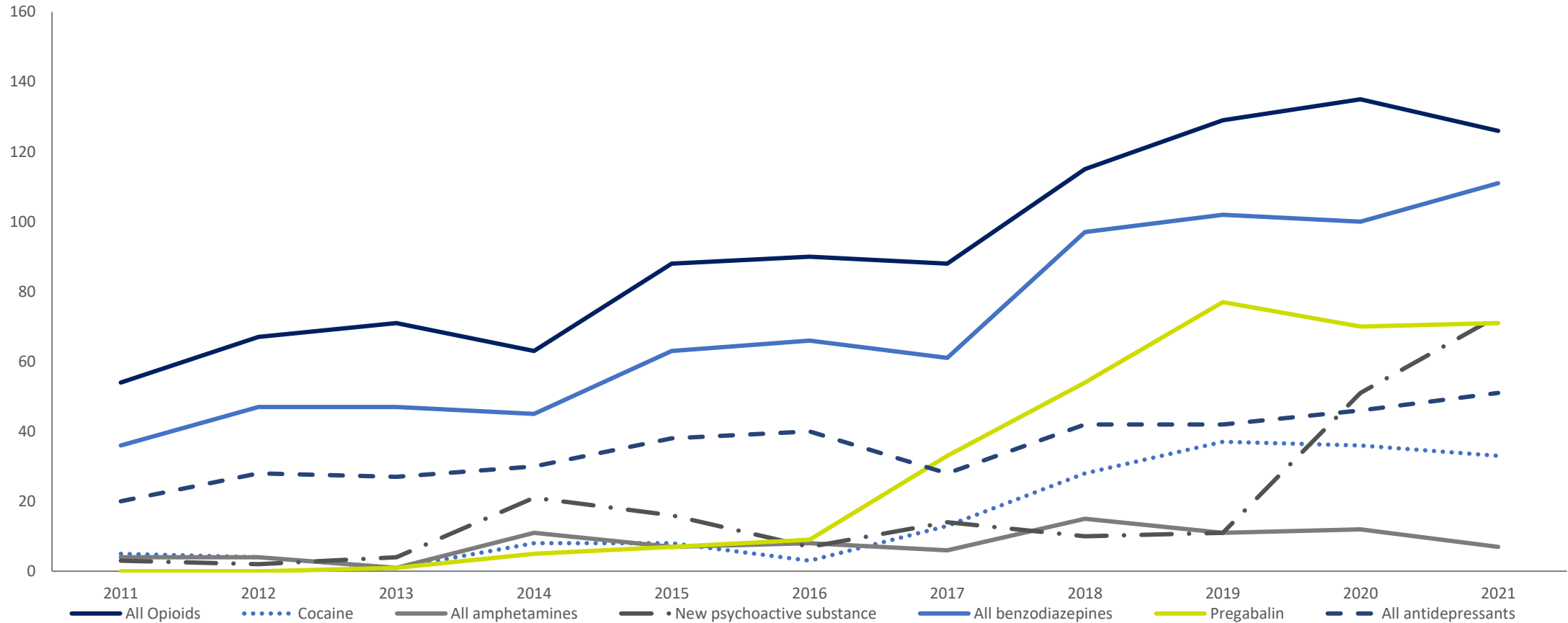
NISRA

Figure 4: Crude rate of drug-related deaths (per 100,000 population) by age, 2022

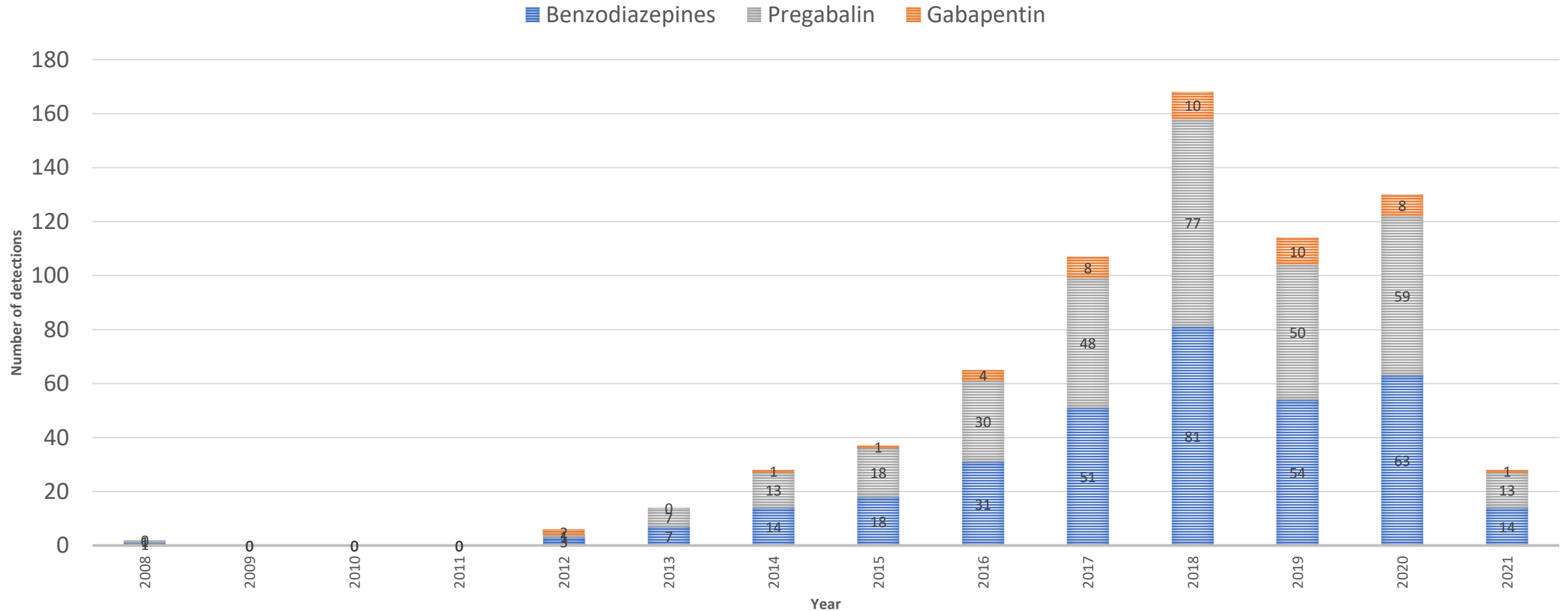


DRDs – Drug Types NISRA 2022

Figure 7: Number of drug-related deaths where selected substances were mentioned on the death certificate by registration year, 2011-2021

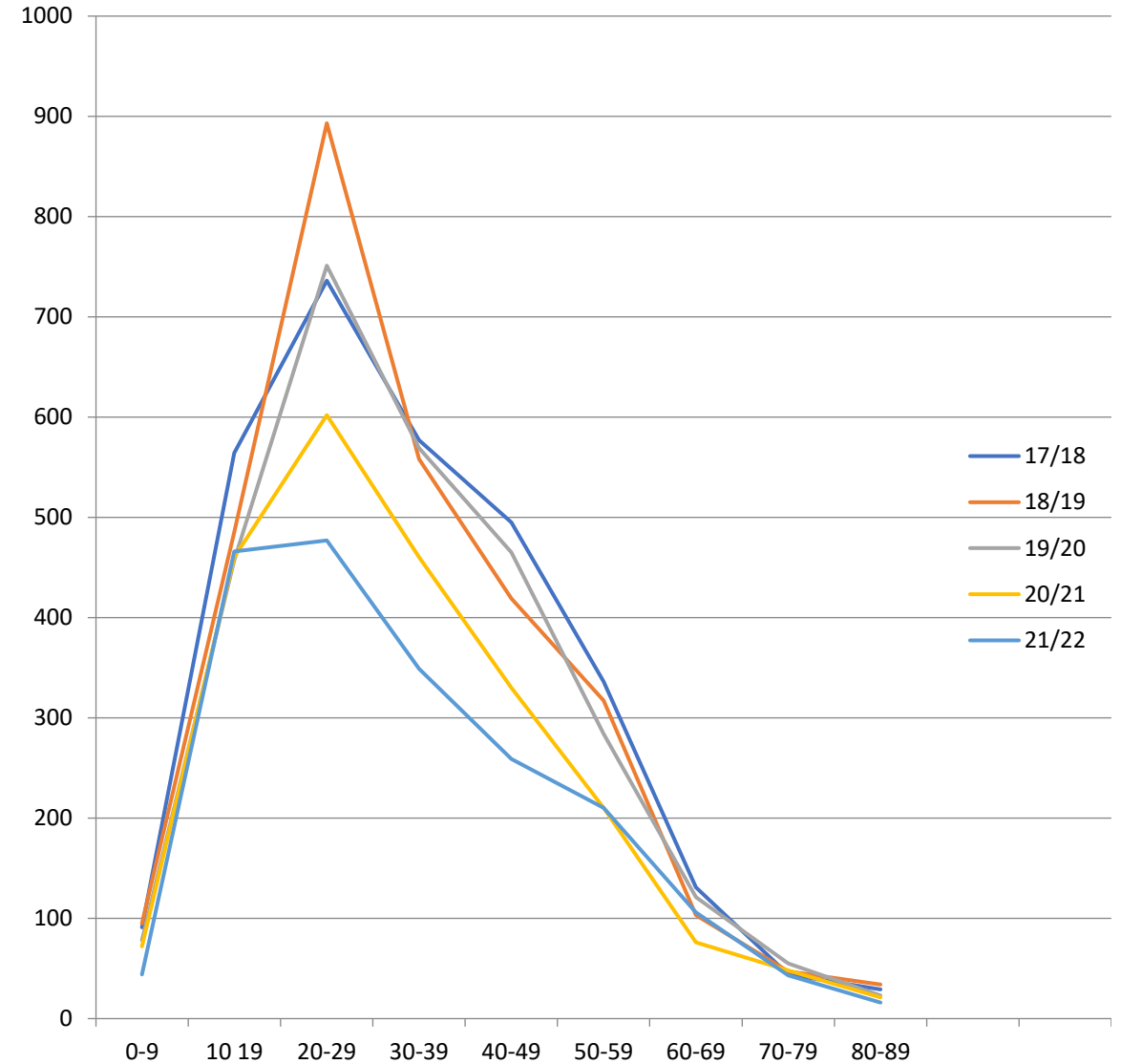


Benzos Pregabalin Gabapentin NPSAD 2023

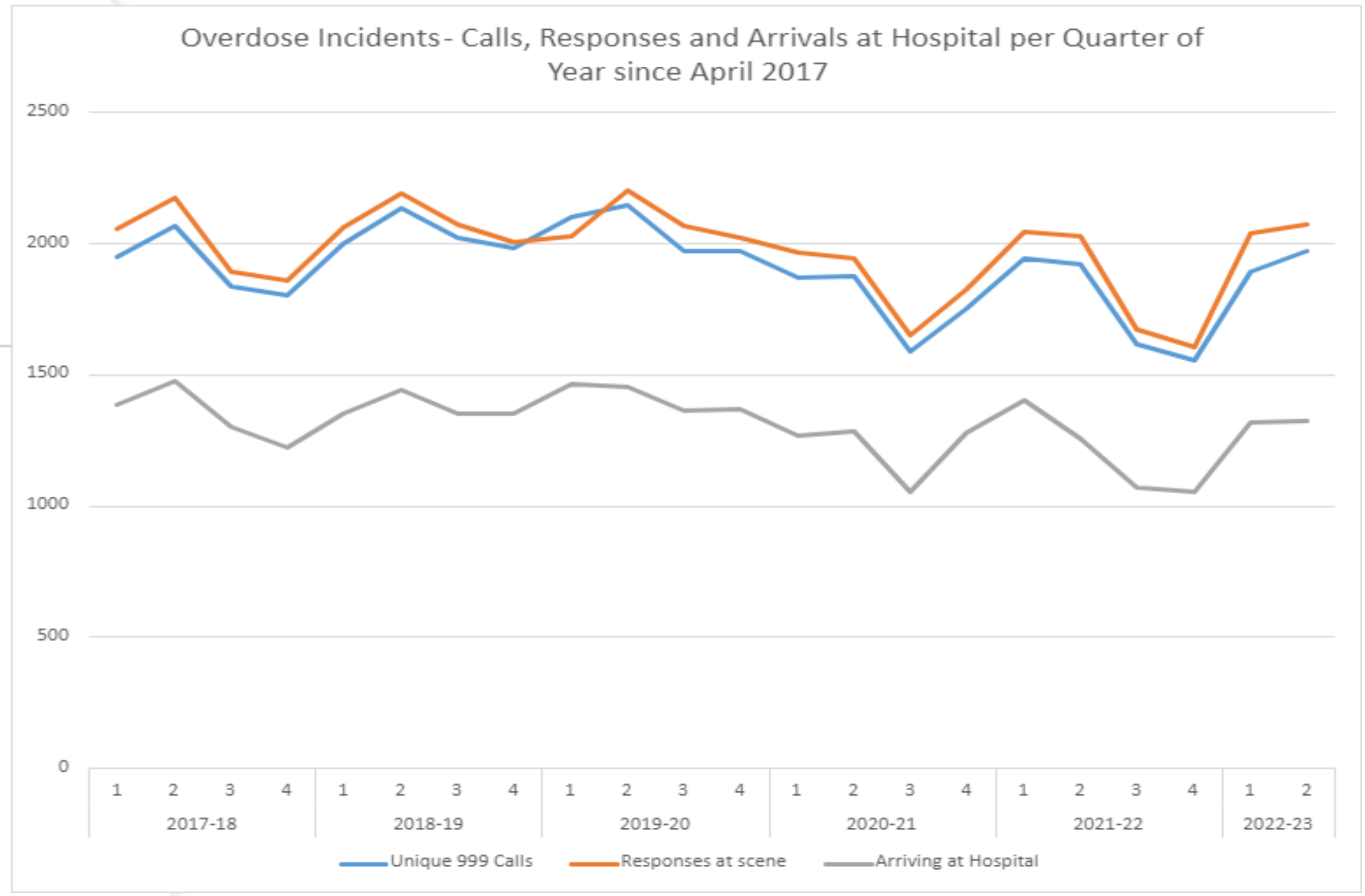


NI Hospital Admissions for overdoses 2017-22

- The age group that accounted for most hospital admissions each year was the 20-29 year old group.
- Notably, the total number of hospital admissions is the lowest for the 2021/22 period. However, the proportion of young people aged 10 –19 years attended by emergency services for overdose (n=466) was just slightly lower than recorded for the 20 –29 year old group (n=477) and higher than all other age groupings (see figure 12).

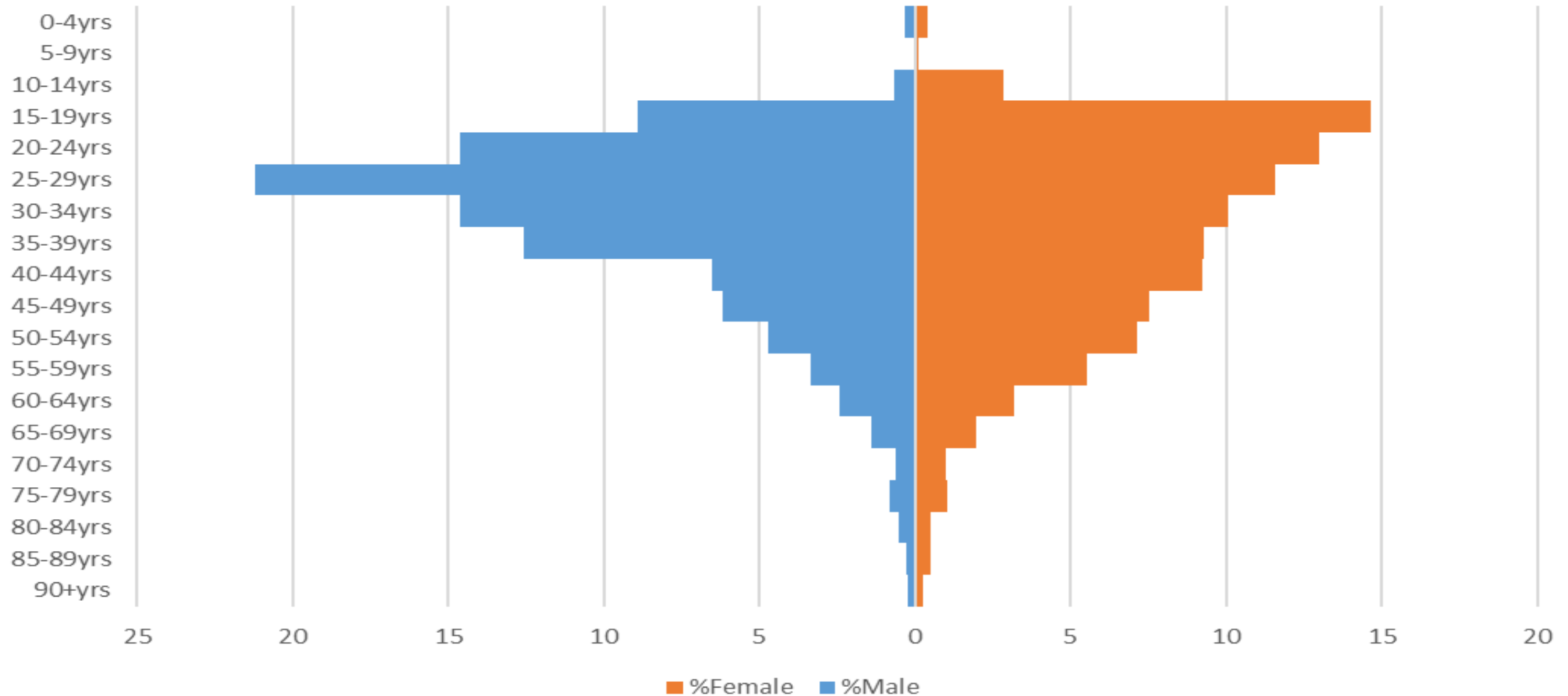


- NIAS (2023)



NIAS 2023 ctd

Age and Gender of Patients where Chief Complaint or What's The Problem involves Drugs or Overdose - 2021-22



Conclusions

In recent years, there has been an increase in drug deaths in Northern Ireland. The current rate is the second highest in the UK, following Scotland. Reliable reports, based on robust methodology, indicate that the increase in deaths primarily affects younger age groups (NISRA 2022).



Additionally, data from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) reveals that the highest number of drug-related/overdose calls for females is in the 15-19 age category, while for males it is in the 25-29 age category.

Conclusions ctd

Between 2019 to 2022 NPSAD reported that nitazenes have been cited in the UK coroners' reports including etodesnitazene , etonitazene and isotonitazene . Anecdotally, these figures have increased in the last year and these reports have been corroborated by the Welsh Emerging Drugs and Identification of Novel Substances project (WEDINOS) data (2023).

In Northern Ireland, it is clear that the drug landscape is also changing and we are beginning to see evidence of nitazenes in recent drug deaths (n= 6) between June 2022 and April 2023 (Coroner NI 2023). We are currently awaiting the results from 64 coroners' reports for the same period.

Benzodiazepines and gabapentinoids are playing a major role as contributing factors to opioid-related deaths and also as main causes of death in NI. Recently we have witnessed an increase in the presence of designer benzodiazepines in official statistics, for example flualprazolam and bromazolam.

Conclusions & recs ctd

- *Currently, drug outreach services are facing unprecedented challenges due to staffing shortages, making it difficult to handle the growing pressures associated with young people at high risk of problematic drug use in Northern Ireland.*
- *In addition, rather than wait until the drug deaths data is made available, real-time testing will make a significant difference in the effort to save lives. This is particularly crucial in the advent of newly discovered synthetic opioids or benzodiazepines, which are governed by fluctuations within UK, cross border and international markets.*
- *Additionally, the DAMIS system is a valuable source of information, but it could be enhanced by conducting immediate drug testing on samples submitted for disposal by community and voluntary sector organizations.*
- *Research should look specifically at the coding of non-fatal overdoses presenting to emergency departments in order to standardise recording, identify trends, improve treatment and help target future service provision.*



Thank You

Any questions ?

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Full report Campbell, A et al
2023 [8370-NIada-Drug-Overdoses-and-Drug-Related-Deaths-in-NI.pdf](#)

