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Patterns in health service utilisation: Results from Wave 5 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing

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Staidéar Fadaimseartha na hÉireann um Dhul in Aois

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Patterns in health service utilisation: Results from Wave 5 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing

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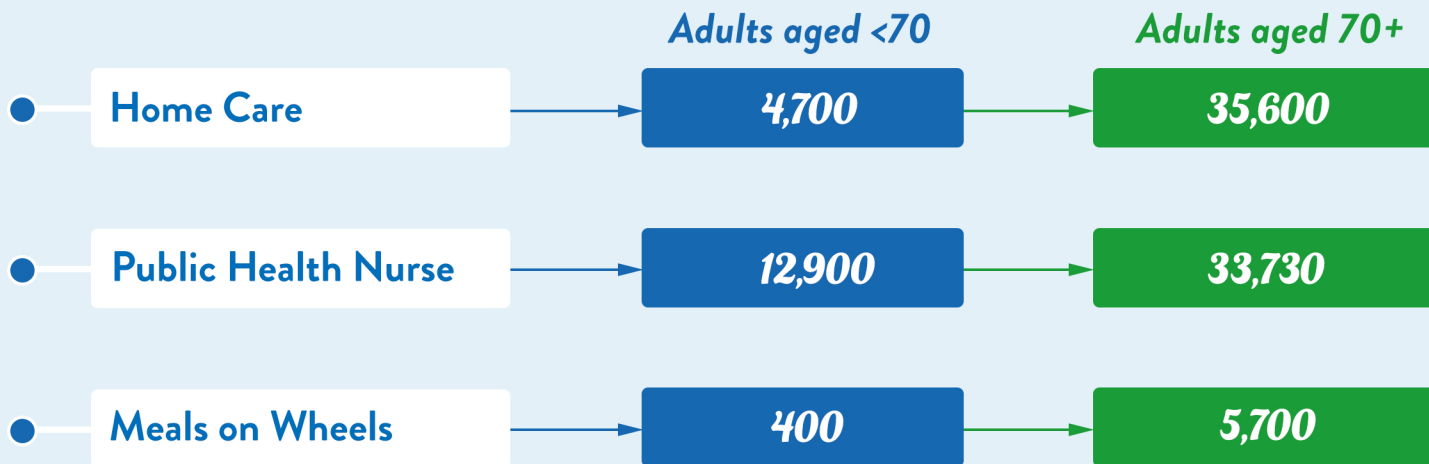
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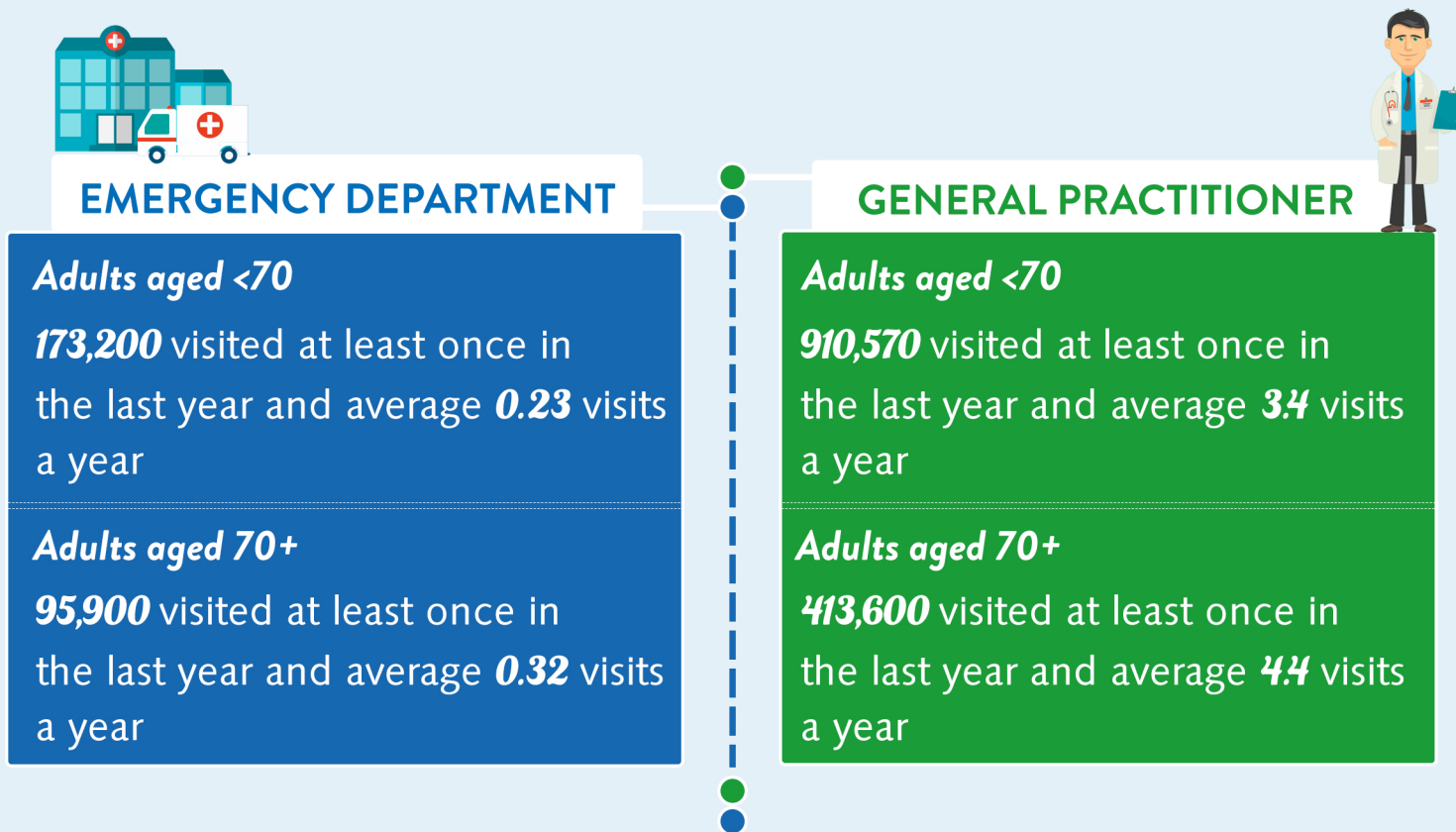
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HEALTH SERVICE UTILISATION BY OLDER ADULTS IN IRELAND

USE OF COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES



USE OF MEDICAL CARE SERVICES



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Executive Summary

Rationale

The purpose of this report is to examine social and health care service utilisation among older adults in the latest available wave (i.e. Wave 5) of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) – both community and hospital services. These data were collected during the 2018 calendar year, and we provide corresponding estimated number of service users by using data from the latest available census in the Republic of Ireland (Census 2016).

We examine these data nationally, and by county and age group (0= aged 50-69, 1= aged ≥ 70). We have selected these age groups in light of the focus of the Irish government on adults aged 70 or more as an at-risk group during the outbreak of COVID-19 in Ireland [1].

Our data show that service use in adults aged 50 and older is low; this is consistent with our previous reports [2], underscoring the fact that the majority aged 50 and over are active and make significant contributions to the social and economic fabric of Irish society. These contributions include, notably in the context of this report, the provision of informal care to their spouses, relatives, friends and neighbours [3].

The prevalence of frailty increases with age, from 11% in adults aged ≥ 50 , to 18.9% of adults aged ≥ 70 , according to the Fried phenotype [4] measure of frailty, and 28.1% of adults aged ≥ 70 who live alone are frail [5]. Frailty and living arrangements often place older adults in need of support from health care services. Frailty places an older adult at increased risk of falls, disability or hospitalisation. Older adults who live alone and experience difficulty in daily activities (e.g. getting out of bed, going to the toilet) will require help from outside their home, such as an informal carer or State-provided home care, or services such as meals on wheels. In our data, only a small proportion of adults aged ≥ 70 received services in their home, for example home care (8.35%), the Public Health Nurse (7.91%), meals on wheels (1.33%) or home care package (1.23%). By contrast, 97% reported having visited the General Practitioner at least once in the previous year.

Finally, while we report increased healthcare utilisation in older adults aged ≥ 70 , we note most of this relationship is explained by the older adults' biological age (e.g. frailty, disability, chronic disease) as opposed to their chronological age [6, 7].

Key Findings

- The most commonly used service by older adults is their General Practitioner (GP). 93% of the population aged ≥ 50 (approximately 1,346,370 people) reported seeing their GP at least once in the previous 12 months, increasing to 97% among adults aged ≥ 70 (approximately 413,630 people). Adults aged ≥ 50 made on average 3.9 visits to their GP in the previous year. This figure changed by age group, to 3.4 visits for adults aged 50 to 69, and 4.4 visits for adults aged ≥ 70 .
- A larger proportion of adults aged ≥ 70 years use home care and the public Health Nurse (PHN) service compared to adults aged ≥ 50 . 4.3% of adults aged ≥ 50 reported having received home care, increasing to 8.3% of adults aged ≥ 70 . Similarly, 4.5% of adults aged ≥ 50 reported having received a visit from the PHN, increasing to 7.9% of adults aged ≥ 70 .
- The most frequently used of State-provided community services in 2018 were optician services, where nationally 14.6% (approx. 211,770) adults aged ≥ 50 utilised this service.
- Speech and language therapy was the least used community service; 0.35% (approx. 4,920) adults aged ≥ 50 utilised this service in 2018.
- 19.7% of adults aged ≥ 50 (approximately 284,810 people) reported visiting the Emergency Department (ED) at least once in the previous 12 months, increasing to 22.5% among adults aged ≥ 70 (approximately 95,890 people). The average number of visits to the ED was 0.27 visits for adults aged ≥ 50 , 0.23 for adults aged between 50 and 69, and 0.32 for adults aged ≥ 70 .
- The average number of overnight hospital admissions was also associated with age; 0.28 for adults aged ≥ 50 , 0.20 for adults aged between 50 and 69, and 0.35 for adults aged ≥ 70 .

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide the estimated rate and number of service users of medical, social and community services, nationally and across each of the twenty-six counties in the Republic of Ireland. We will examine service use within the population aged 50 and over as a whole, and divided into adults aged 50 to 69 and adults aged 70 or more (herein aged ≥ 70). We have chosen these age groups in keeping with Government guidance on cocooning to protect people over 70 years from COVID-19 [1].

A previous TILDA report, prepared in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Ireland, shows how frailty increases with age; 1.7% of adults aged 55–69 are frail, rising to 9.8% of adults aged 70–74 and 21.9% of adults aged 80–84 [5]. The relationship between frailty, comorbidities, disabilities and age explains most of the relationship between age and increased health service utilisation [6, 7].

Nonetheless, in this particular context, it may be helpful for service planners and public health officials to understand how adults aged ≥ 70 use hospital, primary and community care services across Ireland, as they develop strategies involving the deployment of health care workers and facilities to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19.

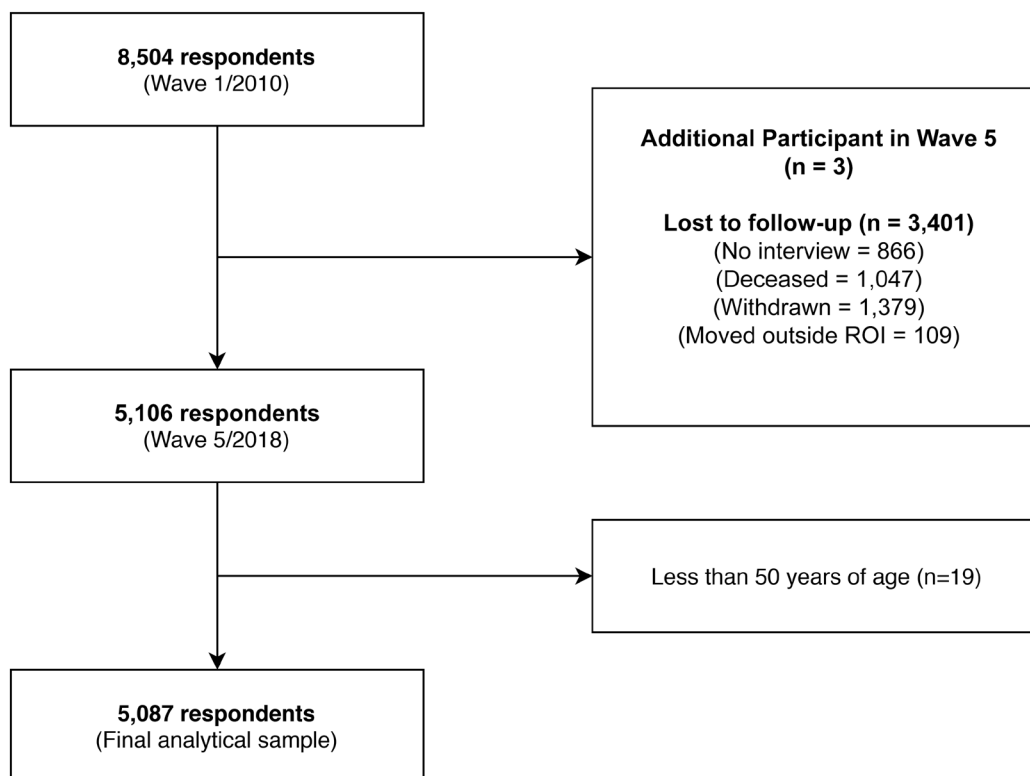
2. Methods

2.1 Sample

In this report, we examine utilisation of services in Wave 5 (2018)¹ of the TILDA study and apply this to CSO data from the latest Census (2016). TILDA data are collected through the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI).

Of the 8,504 participants aged ≥ 50 years in TILDA at the baseline wave in 2009, 3,401 did not participate in Wave 5. 3 participants joined the study in Wave 5². This left a sample of 5,106 participants at Wave 5. We dropped from our analysis any participant aged less than 50 years of age ($n=19$)³. Thus, the analytical sample included $n=5,087$ participants aged ≥ 50 ⁴ at Wave 5 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Study Flowchart



1 Data collection period: 16th January 2018 to 1st January 2019

2 TILDA recruits at level of household, thus all household members are invited to participate in the study. Some people may not participate at wave 1, but may choose to do so at subsequent waves.

3 Note: We kept in our sample participants who indicated they were resident in a nursing home for more than 12 months ($n=48$)

4 The average age of the sample was 69.91 years, with a minimum of 50 years and a maximum of 103 years

2.2 Study Weights

Weights were used in all cases to make estimates relevant to the general population of over 50s in Ireland. In this instance, longitudinal weights which account for participant attrition between Wave 1 and Wave 5 were used. To calculate these weights, the underlying probability of being included in the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) was multiplied by the reciprocal of the probability of participating in all five TILDA waves. This probability was calculated using a logistic regression with the following predictors: age, sex, education level, age, marital status, geographic location, smoking status, health insurance, medications, socio-economic stratum, self-rated health, disabilities, depression, employment status, cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, vision, cognitive status and whether a person has wrist or hip fractures.

2.3 Measures

TILDA participants were asked to state the number of times they visited medical services, including the General Practitioner (GP), the Emergency Department (ED), the outpatient clinic, day case procedures and overnight hospital admissions in the previous twelve months. Those admitted to hospital were further asked to state how many nights they spent in hospital.

TILDA participants were also asked if they had utilised community-based allied health care services in the preceding twelve months – excluding any services for which they had paid anything other than a token or nominal amount. This included a range of social and community services provided by the state: physiotherapy, dietician, hearing, dental, optician, psychological/counselling services, social work services, home care⁵, home care package, community nursing⁶, meals on wheels, day centre care, occupational therapy and respite care.

2.4 Analysis

Firstly, we estimate the weighted percentage of older adults who used community services,

5 Includes home help (a person employed by State to help with household chores such as cleaning and cooking) and personal care (a person employed by the State to assist with bathing, showering, bodily care etc.).

6 “Includes Public Health Nurses, Community Registered General Nurses, Community Mental Health Nurses, Clinical Nurse Specialists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners”

or made at least one visit to their GP, or made at least one visit to the ED. We then apply the weighted percentages from the TILDA study to the Census 2016 data, to estimate the number of older adults in receipt of services (to the nearest 10). See Table 1 for the denominators from Census 2016.

Table 1. Number of adults aged ≥ 50 years (Sources: TILDA Wave 5; CSO Statbank (Census 2016))

	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Total aged 50 years or more	5,087	1,446,460

Secondly, we estimate the weighted percentage of older adults who used community services, or made at least one visit to their GP, or made at least one visit to the ED, by cross tabulating the use of a service with a person's age group.⁷ We then apply the weighted percentages from the TILDA study to the Census 2016 data, to estimate the number of older adults in receipt of services (to the nearest 10) by age group. See Table 2 for the denominators from Census 2016.

Table 2. Number of adults aged ≥ 50 years: by age group (Sources: TILDA Wave 5; CSO Statbank (Census 2016))

	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Aged 50 – 69 years	2,648	1,020,129
Aged 70 years or more	2,439	426,331
Total aged 50 years or more	5,087	1,446,460

Thirdly, we estimate the weighted percentage of older adults who used community services, or made at least one visit to their GP, or made at least one visit to the ED, by cross tabulating the use of a service with a person's age group.⁸ We then apply the weighted percentages from the TILDA study to the Census 2016 data, to estimate the number of older adults in receipt of services (to the nearest 10) by county. See Table 3 for the denominators from Census 2016.

⁷ Some of these services are used rarely; they would result in population estimates based on very low numbers with large confidence intervals. These variables have thus been dropped from the subgroup analysis by county

⁸ Some of these services are used rarely; they would result in population estimates based on very low numbers with large confidence intervals. These variables have thus been dropped from the subgroup analysis by county

Table 3. Number of adults aged ≥ 50 years: by county (Sources: TILDA Wave 5; CSO Statbank (Census 2016))

	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	54	17,078
Cavan	64	23,808
Clare	122	39,764
Cork	527	166,961
Donegal	199	53,478
Dublin	1,218	374,389
Galway	286	78,657
Kerry	231	54,129
Kildare	114	57,361
Kilkenny	104	31,927
Laois	62	23,360
Leitrim	41	11,650
Limerick	224	61,221
Longford	48	12,897
Louth	90	37,239
Mayo	270	48,728
Meath	188	51,942
Monaghan	83	19,337
Offaly	89	24,305
Roscommon	150	23,305
Sligo	95	23,117
Tipperary	211	53,939
Waterford	146	38,331
Westmeath	99	26,635
Wexford	226	49,048
Wicklow	146	43,854
National	5,087	1,446,460

Our results should be interpreted as the rate of service use and an estimated number of people using these services, nationally, by age group and by county. For example, 7.91% (approx. 33,730) of older adults aged ≥ 70 reported using the Public Health Nurse service in the previous twelve months.

Finally, we estimate the weighted average number of visits older adults made to the General Practitioner, the Emergency Department and to outpatient clinics; we also estimate the average number of overnight hospital admissions, day case procedures and

nights spent in hospital in the previous twelve months, nationally, by age group and by county.

Limitations

- It is important to note that in many instances the disaggregation of health service utilisation by age, and by county, resulted in making estimates using very low number of TILDA cases,⁹ and so estimates have very wide confidence intervals and may not be reliable.
- The slight inaccuracies in age estimates, and rounding errors within each age range, mean the sum over age ranges may not equal the total.
- The rate and number of estimated service users may be slightly overestimated due to the differences in the age structure of the TILDA sample at Wave 5 in comparison to the age structure of the older population in Census 2016 (see Appendix).

⁹ TILDA case in this instance refers to a participant who reported having used a service.

3. Results

3.1 Health service utilisation: national estimates

Table 2 below shows the weighted proportion of adults aged ≥ 50 years who used a service in the previous 12 months, and the estimated number of older adults receiving these services in the population.

Table 4. Use of healthcare services in the previous 12 months in the population aged ≥ 50 years (n=1,446,460)

	Total aged ≥ 50 years	
	Weighted %	Population No.
Public health nurse	4.53%	65,530
Occupational therapist	1.17%	16,890
Chiropodist	4.97%	71,910
Physiotherapist	5.94%	85,870
Speech and language therapist	0.34%	4,920
Home care	4.34%	62,780
Meals on wheels	0.68%	9,780
Home care package	0.64%	9,250
Respite	0.36%	5,210
Hearing	2.57%	37,180
Dental	11.18%	161,720
Social worker	0.14%	2,030
Psychological	0.90%	12,590
Day care	0.96%	13,890
Optician	14.64%	211,770
Dietitian	0.88%	12,730
≥ 1 visits to GP	93.08%	1,346,370
≥ 1 visits to ED	19.69%	284,810

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10.

Table 5. Average use of healthcare services in the previous 12 months in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

	Aged ≥50 years
	Mean
General Practitioner	3.88
Emergency Department	0.27
Outpatient clinic	1.67
Day case procedures	0.10
Overnight hospital admissions	0.28
Nights spent in hospital	1.92

3.2 Health service utilisation: by age group

Table 6. Use of healthcare services in the previous 12 months in the population aged ≥ 50 years by age group ($n=1,446,460$)

	Aged 50 - 69 years		Aged ≥ 70 years	
	Weighted %	Population No.	Weighted %	Population No.
Public health nurse	1.26%	12,860	7.91%	33,730
Occupational therapist	0.88%	8,980	1.46%	6,230
Chiroprapist	1.11%	11,330	8.96%	38,200
Physiotherapist	4.56%	46,520	7.36%	31,380
Speech and language therapist	0.22%	2,250	0.47%	2,010
Home care	0.46%	4,700	8.35%	35,600
Meals on wheels	0.04%	440	1.33%	5,680
Home care package	0.06%	620	1.23%	5,250
Respite	0.14%	1,430	0.59%	2,520
Hearing	1.36%	13,780	3.83%	16,330
Dental	10.82%	110,380	11.56%	49,290
Social worker	0.04%	410	0.24%	1,030
Psychological	0.90%	9,190	0.83%	3,540
Day care	0.27%	2,760	1.67%	7,120
Optician	10.84%	110,590	18.56%	79,130
Dietitian	1.01%	10,310	0.74%	3,160
≥ 1 visits to GP	89.26%	910,570	97.02%	413,630
≥ 1 visits to ED	16.98%	173,220	22.49%	95,890

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding and rounding error.

Table 7. Average use of healthcare services by age group in the previous 12 months in the population aged ≥ 50 years ($n=1,446,460$).

	Aged 50 - 69 years	Aged ≥ 70 years
	Mean	Mean
General Practitioner	3.39	4.39
Emergency department	0.23	0.32
Outpatient clinic visits	1.53	1.81
Day case procedures	0.07	0.12
Overnight hospital admissions	0.20	0.35
Nights spent in hospital	1.24	2.64

3.3 Public Health Nurse

Table 8. Use of Public Health Nurse in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Public Health Nurse	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	6.89%	1,180
Cavan	2.27%	540
Clare	0.00%	NA
Cork	5.76%	9,620
Donegal	3.15%	1,690
Dublin	3.13%	11,730
Galway	7.86%	6,190
Kerry	1.97%	1,070
Kildare	4.78%	2,750
Kilkenny	6.77%	2,170
Laois	15.58%	3,640
Leitrim	8.52%	1,000
Limerick	8.18%	5,010
Longford	13.46%	1,740
Louth	5.91%	2,200
Mayo	3.51%	1,720
Meath	0.40%	210
Monaghan	7.60%	1,480
Offaly	7.95%	1,940
Roscommon	8.55%	2,000
Sligo	3.37%	780
Tipperary	1.83%	990
Waterford	1.35%	520
Westmeath	2.11%	570
Wexford	5.62%	2,760
Wicklow	6.79%	2,980
National	4.53%	65,530

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.4 Physiotherapy Services

Table 9. Use of physiotherapy services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Physiotherapy	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	9.88%	1,690
Cavan	6.53%	1,560
Clare	4.26%	1,700
Cork	5.92%	9,880
Donegal	8.65%	4,630
Dublin	5.00%	18,720
Galway	5.36%	4,220
Kerry	4.17%	2,260
Kildare	3.92%	2,250
Kilkenny	10.69%	3,420
Laois	8.53%	2,000
Leitrim	16.75%	1,960
Limerick	3.43%	2,110
Longford	5.62%	730
Louth	10.75%	4,010
Mayo	6.68%	3,260
Meath	5.39%	2,810
Monaghan	9.16%	1,780
Offaly	10.01%	2,440
Roscommon	5.90%	1,380
Sligo	8.49%	1,970
Tipperary	3.97%	2,150
Waterford	1.63%	630
Westmeath	3.58%	960
Wexford	9.71%	4,770
Wicklow	4.98%	2,190
National	5.94%	85,870

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.5 Home Care Services

Table 10. Use of home care services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Home Care	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	9.46%	1,620
Cavan	1.55%	370
Clare	2.61%	1,040
Cork	4.15%	6,930
Donegal	5.55%	2,970
Dublin	2.78%	10,410
Galway	7.10%	5,590
Kerry	0.29%	160
Kildare	0.93%	540
Kilkenny	1.17%	380
Laois	7.20%	1,690
Leitrim	7.04%	820
Limerick	7.72%	4,730
Longford	5.82%	760
Louth	3.97%	1,480
Mayo	2.76%	1,350
Meath	6.02%	3,130
Monaghan	9.48%	1,840
Offaly	3.97%	970
Roscommon	5.39%	1,260
Sligo	2.31%	540
Tipperary	4.74%	2,560
Waterford	4.26%	1,640
Westmeath	5.54%	1,480
Wexford	9.87%	4,850
Wicklow	4.00%	1,760
National	4.43%	62,780

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.6 Optician Services

Table 11. Use of optician services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Optician	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	18.74%	3,210
Cavan	10.94%	2,610
Clare	0.00%	NA
Cork	14.93%	24,930
Donegal	27.33%	14,620
Dublin	10.91%	40,850
Galway	18.22%	14,340
Kerry	17.50%	9,480
Kildare	9.20%	5,280
Kilkenny	15.39%	4,920
Laois	19.43%	4,540
Leitrim	27.59%	3,220
Limerick	10.61%	6,500
Longford	19.11%	2,470
Louth	17.14%	6,390
Mayo	15.90%	7,750
Meath	15.29%	7,950
Monaghan	10.99%	2,130
Offaly	18.66%	4,540
Roscommon	30.92%	7,210
Sligo	21.36%	4,940
Tipperary	12.26%	6,620
Waterford	8.86%	3,400
Westmeath	12.64%	3,370
Wexford	22.93%	11,250
Wicklow	4.94%	2,170
National	14.64%	211,770

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.7 Dental Services

Table 12. Use of dental services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Dental Services	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	12.04%	2,060
Cavan	3.30%	790
Clare	0.00%	NA
Cork	18.35%	30,640
Donegal	11.46%	6,130
Dublin	9.85%	36,900
Galway	8.64%	6,800
Kerry	11.83%	6,410
Kildare	11.11%	6,380
Kilkenny	11.18%	3,570
Laois	12.03%	2,820
Leitrim	17.75%	2,070
Limerick	6.68%	4,100
Longford	14.00%	1,810
Louth	20.55%	7,660
Mayo	11.23%	5,480
Meath	13.39%	6,960
Monaghan	6.06%	1,180
Offaly	13.08%	3,180
Roscommon	14.14%	3,300
Sligo	8.54%	1,980
Tipperary	9.17%	4,950
Waterford	5.99%	2,300
Westmeath	10.13%	2,700
Wexford	18.95%	9,300
Wicklow	5.74%	2,520
National	11.18%	161,720

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.8 Hearing Services

Table 13. Use of hearing services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Optician	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	7.40%	1,270
Cavan	0.00%	NA
Clare	0.00%	NA
Cork	1.90%	3,180
Donegal	4.55%	2,440
Dublin	3.01%	11,260
Galway	1.19%	940
Kerry	2.30%	1,250
Kildare	0.48%	280
Kilkenny	1.02%	330
Laois	1.37%	320
Leitrim	0.00%	NA
Limerick	2.02%	1,240
Longford	8.17%	1,060
Louth	0.44%	170
Mayo	5.14%	2,510
Meath	0.54%	290
Monaghan	0.00%	NA
Offaly	0.00%	NA
Roscommon	6.27%	1,470
Sligo	15.51%	3,590
Tipperary	2.26%	1,220
Waterford	1.27%	490
Westmeath	0.00%	NA
Wexford	1.87%	920
Wicklow	0.68%	300
National	2.57%	37,180

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.9 Chiropody Services

Table 14. Use of chiropody services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

Chiropody	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	9.12%	1,560
Cavan	1.12%	270
Clare	0.00%	NA
Cork	4.62%	7,710
Donegal	9.42%	5,040
Dublin	7.55%	28,280
Galway	3.36%	2,650
Kerry	4.51%	2,450
Kildare	4.09%	2,350
Kilkenny	1.09%	350
Laois	8.74%	2,050
Leitrim	6.80%	800
Limerick	4.82%	2,960
Longford	4.33%	560
Louth	4.04%	1,510
Mayo	1.10%	540
Meath	2.74%	1,430
Monaghan	3.12%	610
Offaly	5.33%	1,300
Roscommon	6.85%	1,600
Sligo	6.49%	1,500
Tipperary	2.25%	1,220
Waterford	1.33%	510
Westmeath	4.54%	1,210
Wexford	1.34%	660
Wicklow	8.38%	3,680
National	4.97%	71,910

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.10 General Practitioner

Table 15. At least 1 visit to the GP in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

≥1 visits to the General Practitioner	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	87.13%	14,890
Cavan	94.43%	22,490
Clare	93.88%	37,340
Cork	93.69%	156,430
Donegal	91.02%	48,680
Dublin	93.01%	348,220
Galway	96.22%	75,690
Kerry	91.04%	49,280
Kildare	93.32%	53,530
Kilkenny	93.56%	29,880
Laois	95.47%	22,310
Leitrim	88.62%	10,330
Limerick	95.15%	58,260
Longford	85.41%	11,020
Louth	84.66%	31,530
Mayo	93.22%	45,430
Meath	92.76%	48,190
Monaghan	92.17%	17,830
Offaly	93.14%	22,640
Roscommon	92.39%	21,540
Sligo	93.64%	21,650
Tipperary	90.61%	48,880
Waterford	94.39%	36,190
Westmeath	96.22%	25,630
Wexford	96.21%	47,190
Wicklow	92.17%	40,430
National	93.08%	1,346,370

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.11 Emergency Department

Table 16. At least 1 visit to the ED in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥50 years (n=1,446,460)

≥1 visits to the Emergency Department	All aged ≥50 years	
	TILDA No.	Census 2016 No.
Carlow	21.28%	3,640
Cavan	24.35%	5,800
Clare	13.12%	5,220
Cork	17.57%	29,340
Donegal	17.53%	9,380
Dublin	23.56%	88,210
Galway	17.87%	14,060
Kerry	11.12%	6,020
Kildare	19.37%	11,120
Kilkenny	13.64%	4,360
Laois	21.21%	4,960
Leitrim	18.44%	2,150
Limerick	18.99%	11,630
Longford	16.51%	2,130
Louth	21.41%	7,980
Mayo	17.59%	8,580
Meath	23.32%	12,120
Monaghan	15.26%	2,960
Offaly	21.19%	5,160
Roscommon	17.55%	4,100
Sligo	20.13%	4,660
Tipperary	20.42%	11,020
Waterford	25.04%	9,600
Westmeath	17.92%	4,780
Wexford	16.92%	8,300
Wicklow	20.35%	8,930
National	19.69%	284,810

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

3.12 Average use of Healthcare Services

Table 17. Average number of uses of healthcare services in the previous 12 months by county in the population aged ≥ 50 years ($n=1,446,460$)

	GP visits (mean)	ED visits (mean)	Outpatient clinic visits (mean)	Day case (mean)	Hospital admissions (mean)	Nights in hospital (mean)
Carlow	5.46	0.23	0.81	0.08	0.25	4.77
Cavan	3.93	0.33	2.44	0.07	0.16	3.02
Clare	4.14	0.19	0.54	0.07	0.26	1.14
Cork	4.24	0.23	1.74	0.09	0.32	1.83
Donegal	3.73	0.28	0.95	0.09	0.25	2.26
Dublin	3.77	0.36	2.50	0.12	0.36	2.61
Galway	4.41	0.22	1.16	0.12	0.25	1.66
Kerry	3.72	0.15	1.16	0.10	0.23	1.17
Kildare	2.87	0.20	2.61	0.08	0.26	0.74
Kilkenny	3.69	0.16	1.33	0.08	0.30	1.91
Laois	3.63	0.36	2.19	0.04	0.27	0.96
Leitrim	4.19	0.33	0.99	0.13	0.56	8.91
Limerick	4.80	0.25	1.35	0.15	0.30	2.16
Longford	3.22	0.17	1.11	0.12	0.23	2.20
Louth	3.23	0.34	1.44	0.09	0.32	1.12
Mayo	4.23	0.22	1.34	0.12	0.19	1.59
Meath	3.59	0.39	1.74	0.08	0.20	1.74
Monaghan	3.04	0.19	1.29	0.13	0.26	1.14
Offaly	3.53	0.37	1.04	0.07	0.27	3.61
Roscommon	4.39	0.25	1.40	0.11	0.18	1.07
Sligo	2.87	0.21	0.38	0.06	0.20	0.66
Tipperary	3.68	0.27	1.70	0.05	0.21	1.08
Waterford	4.15	0.29	1.48	0.08	0.22	0.83
Westmeath	3.57	0.23	0.89	0.12	0.17	0.49
Wexford	3.87	0.19	1.22	0.07	0.20	1.36
Wicklow	3.07	0.32	1.67	0.12	0.23	1.82

Note: Data from Wave 5 (2018) TILDA weighted to account for population, rounded to nearest 10. Totals may vary due to rounding.

4. Summary

Our data show that community service use in adults aged ≥ 50 is low; this is consistent with our previous reports, underscoring the fact that the majority of adults aged ≥ 50 and older are active and make significant contributions to the social and economic fabric of Irish society, for example providing essential informal care.

Our data also show the significant reach of general practice in Ireland, with the majority of older adults reporting having visited their GP at least once in the previous twelve months. From the perspective of the older population, it is essential general practice remains accessible to older adults during the COVID-19 outbreak.

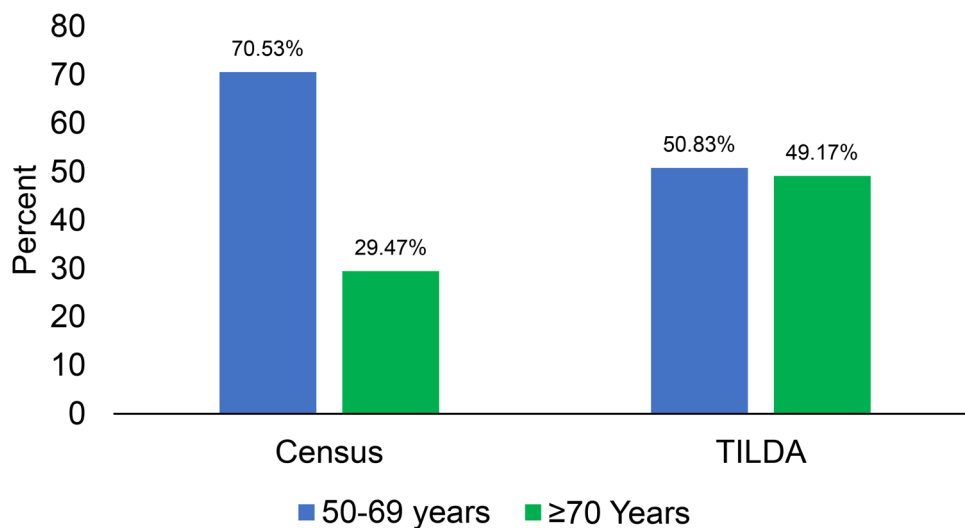
We found 19.7% of adults aged ≥ 50 reported visiting the ED at least once in the previous year, rising to 22.5% for adults aged ≥ 70 . We do not have data on reasons for attendance; however, it is important to ensure that older adults present in a timely manner to the ED, so that early prevention for stroke, heart and infections continues, and patients receive the early interventions which deliver better outcomes during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Finally, while only a small proportion of older adults aged ≥ 70 access the Public Health Nurse or home care, these services are likely to play a vital role for those cocooning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

5. Appendix

In order to understand these data we must be mindful of the differences between the TILDA and Census data. Notably, the weighted age structure of the older population in the TILDA study differs from that of the Census population (see Figure 2). TILDA is a longitudinal cohort study which follows the cohort of community-dwelling older adults aged ≥ 50 years from 2009 onwards, while the Census is a survey capturing the entire population of Ireland in a given year.

Figure 2. Age distribution of the Census (2016) data and TILDA data (2018)



This means the national estimates from the TILDA data are likely to overestimate service use among the population aged 50 and over. Similarly, it is likely the data for the age group 50-69 years are an overestimate, as this group mostly comprises adults aged 57-69 years, as a result of the ageing of the TILDA cohort. Despite these limitations, it is important to remember that TILDA remains the only source of data to examine service use, across the whole system of care and by peoples' socioeconomic characteristics, in Ireland.

6. References

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