

# A 2020 Vision of Blood Borne Viruses and Risk Behaviour in Male Irish Prisoners: A Single Centre Experience



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## INTRODUCTION

- There is a high prevalence of blood borne viruses (BBVs) in the prison population. Knowledge of the prevalence of BBVs and risk factors guides future strategies and responses.
- A 2017 study in Mountjoy Prison showed an estimated untreated chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) seroprevalence of 13.7%, rising to 79.7% in those with a history of intravenous drug use (IDU).

## AIMS

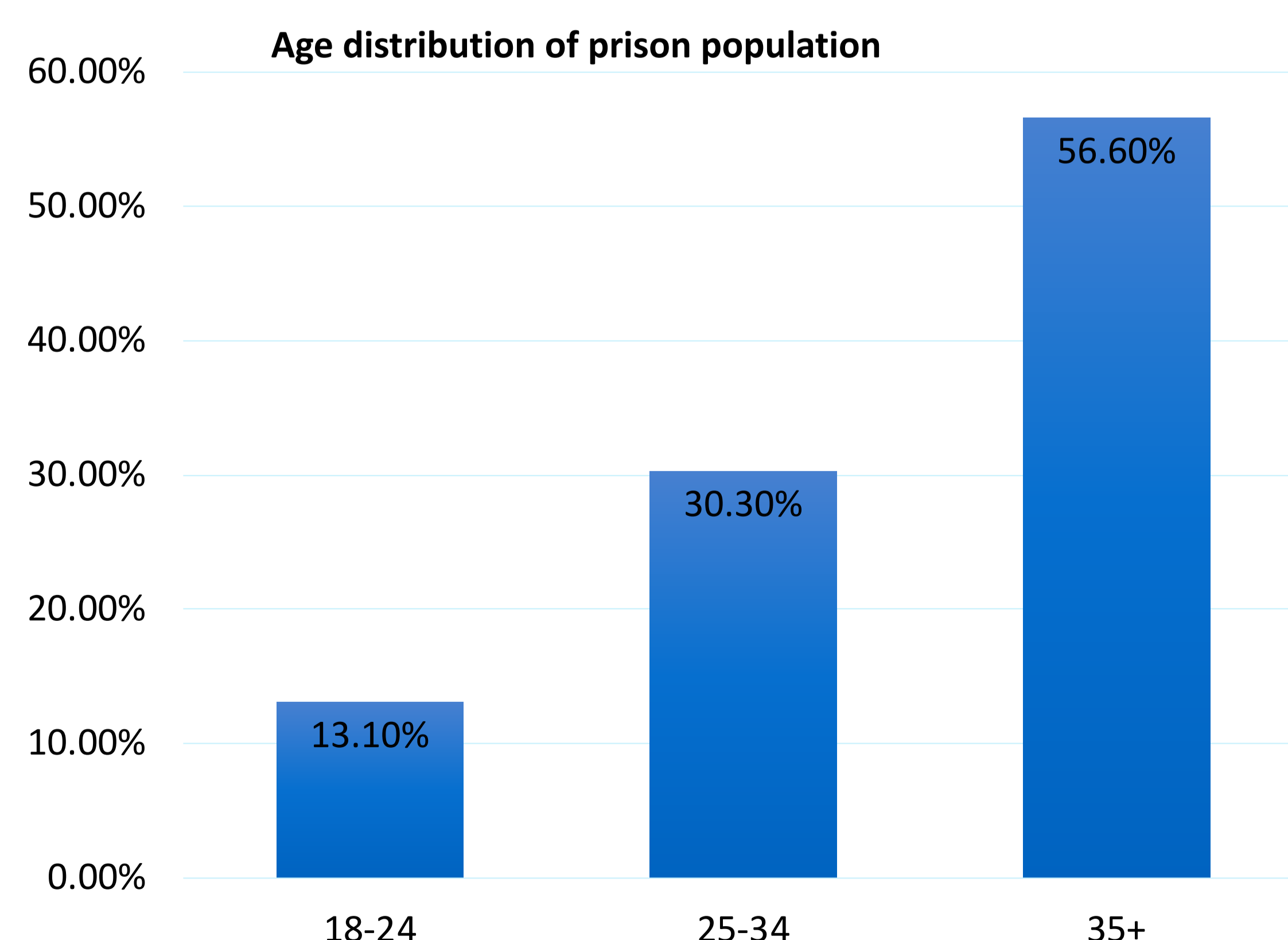
- To establish the prevalence and risk factors for BBVs in the Midlands Prison (a medium security prison for adult males and committal prison for counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath.)

## METHODS

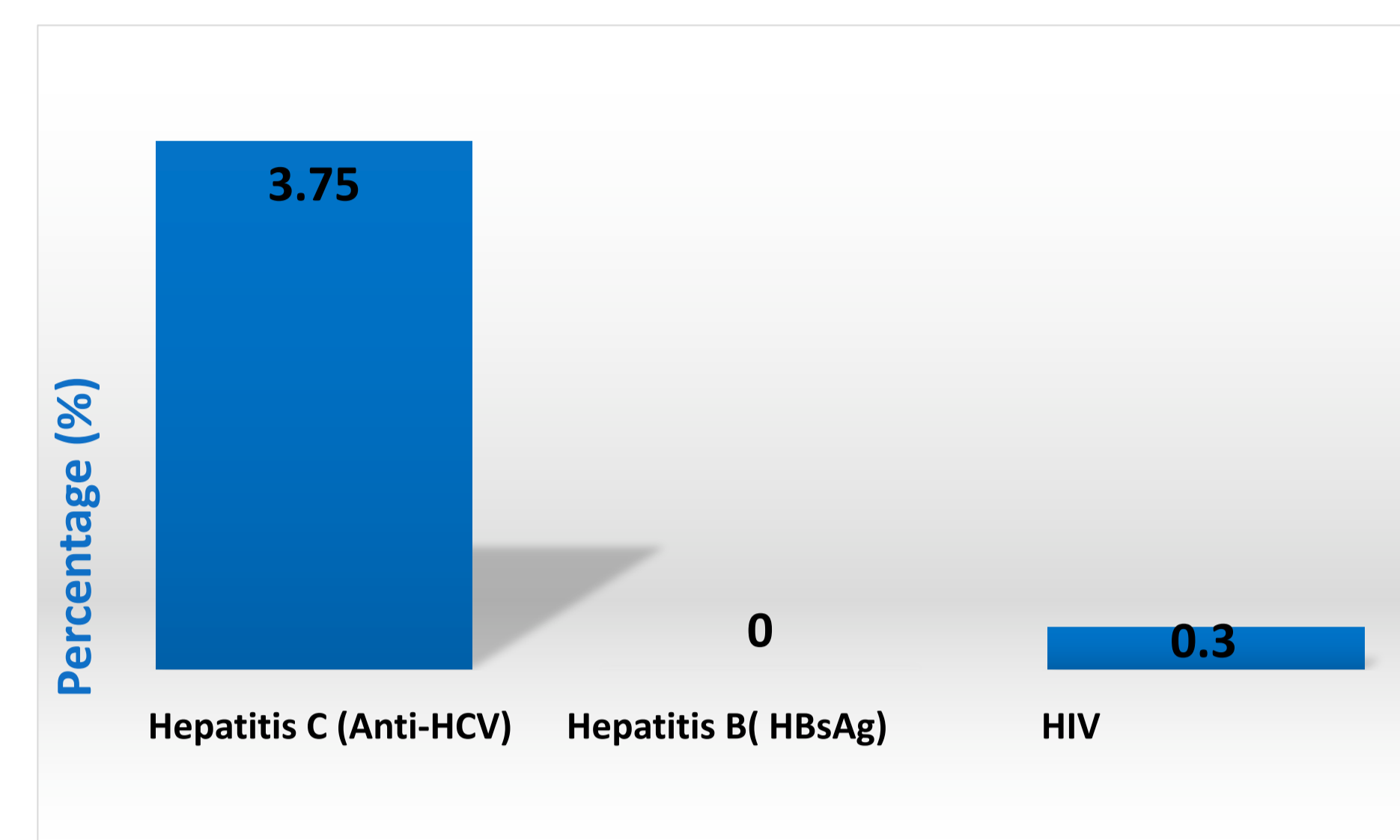
- We conducted a single- centre study using a patient self-administered questionnaire and serological testing for HCV, hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HIV.

## RESULTS

- 320 prisoners completed the questionnaire and agreed to serological testing
- Mean age was 40.48 years, age range 18-85.



## Prevalence of blood borne viruses (BBVs)



## Risk taking characteristics of the prison population

Risk Factors in the general prison population (n=320)	Percentage
Unprotected sex	57.50%
Tattoos out of prison	43.40%
Snorting	40.90%
Tattoos in prison	12.50%
Skin popping	12.19%
History of IDU	11.25%
Sharing razors	10.63%
History of blood transfusion	8.13%
Dental work abroad	8.13%
Surgery abroad	5.31%
Family history of hepatitis	2.50%

## Seroprevalence of HCV among various risk behaviours (n=320)

Risk Behaviour	Total	HVC+	%
History of IVDU	36	11	30.6
History of snorting drugs	131	9	29
Tattoos in prison	40	6	15
Skin popping	39	5	12.8
Family history of hepatitis	8	1	12.5
Unprotected sex	184	9	4.89
History of blood transfusions	26	1	3.85
Dental work abroad	26	1	3.85
Tattoos out of prison	139	8	3.35
Surgery abroad	17	0	0
Sharing razors	34	0	0

## CONCLUSIONS

- The prevalence of HCV in our prison study is much lower than previously reported. This is likely a reflection of the prison population, type of prisoner and geographic location. Positivity bias also may explain the low rates of HCV. Nevertheless, the main risk factor for HCV is IDU mirroring previous studies. HCV was the most frequent infection isolated and therefore still needs treatment prioritisation.