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**PQ Ref 38754/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the deaths by suicide in 2020, by month; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**PQ Ref 38755/20**

**To ask the Minister for Health the average rate of suicide per 100,000 population by county of residence of the deceased in 2020.**

Dear Deputy,

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has been requested to respond to your two questions above.

**Background**

In Ireland, the decision as to whether someone has died by suicide is a *legal* determination made by Coroners, *not* a medical decision by doctors or the HSE.

Death due to intentional self-harm is classified as an unnatural death and therefore, must be referred to the Coroner for investigation. This investigation can take a protracted length of time to complete for various reasons (such as getting medical reports, health and safety reports, engineer's report, the involvement of the Director of Public Prosecutions etc.) and this delays the registration of such deaths.

Thereafter, data is published by the Central Statistics Office. You are welcome to contact the CSO (which is an independent Office) directly with additional queries.

Data from the CSO is delivered in three stages (and is all publicly available on [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie));

1. Provided firstly by year of registration – “provisional”
2. Revised later, by year of occurrence – “official”
3. Revised later again, to include “late registrations”.

## 2020 Data

At present provisional data is available from the CSO, for Q1 and Q2 2020. In these quarterly releases, information on deaths by intentional self-harm is not provided by county, or month.

- Q1\_2020 (72 deaths due to intentional self-harm)
  - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vs/vitalstatisticsfirstquarter2020/>
- Q2\_2020 (25 deaths due to intentional self-harm)
  - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vs/vitalstatisticssecondquarter2020/>

Note the CSO have given the following caveat to Q2 information: “*The number of deaths registered in Quarter 2 2020 that were assigned an Underlying Cause of Death of intentional self-harm was 25, this is less than a quarter (24.0%) of the number assigned the same Underlying Cause of Death code of intentional self-harm in the same quarter of 2019. All unnatural deaths, which includes deaths from intentional self-harm must be referred to the Coroner's Office. However, the Coroner's Court did not hold public hearings as a consequence of the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this would impact on the number of deaths registered and subsequently assigned an Underlying Cause of Death of intentional self-harm.*”

I trust this information is useful for you. I note we have responded to a similar question from you in October (24934/20) and I would be happy to discuss with you at your convenience the role and function of NOSP, the implementation of Connecting for Life (our national strategy to reduce suicide) and how suicide statistics are gathered, published and utilised.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Meehan

HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Strategy and Planning

Head of National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)