

BRIEFING: THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL ON SELF-HARM ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

This evidence brief covers information on days in the year with above average numbers of self-harm presentations to general hospitals in Ireland, based on data from the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland covering the years 2007-2013. The outcomes refer to patterns of days with above average numbers of self-harm presentations occurring in all or most years across this time period.

Between 2007 and 2013, the average number of self-harm presentations daily was 32. During this period, the average number of presentations on the day of a bank holiday was 36, and the average number of presentations on the two days following the day of a bank holiday was 35.

BANK HOLIDAYS SHOW THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SELF-HARM PRESENTATIONS

In terms of similar patterns across all seven years, there were three bank holidays on which the number of self-harm presentations was higher than average in all seven years: New Year's Day, St Patrick's Day, and the August Bank Holiday. Self-harm presentations were also high on the days following these bank holidays.

Across all years, New Year's Day and St. Patrick's Day showed higher numbers of presentations compared to all other public holidays, with a yearly average of 56 and 42, respectively.

OTHER DAYS SHOWING A HIGHER NUMBER OF SELF-HARM PRESENTATIONS

In all seven years, self-harm presentations were higher than average on the day after St Stephens' Day, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. In most of the years, presentations were above average on the May Bank Holiday.

ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT

While rare as a sole method of self-harm, alcohol is often involved in self-harm presentations to Irish hospital emergency departments (EDs), as recorded by the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland. In 2015, a total of 11,189 self-harm presentations were recorded. Overall, alcohol was present in over one-third of these (31%), and more so for men than women (34% vs. 29%).

A significant association was identified between alcohol consumption and bank holidays. Overall, alcohol was involved in 46% of all self-harm presentations on bank holidays compared to 39% on all other days. On these days, alcohol consumption was higher among males than females, 42% and 36% respectively. During public holidays, self-harm presentations had a 17% increase in risk of involving alcohol consumption compared to all other days

Furthermore, alcohol consumption had the highest association with Christmas time, self-harm presentations to hospital on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day had a 34%, 36% and 32% increase in risk of involving alcohol consumption compared to all other days.

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Currently, a paper with additional years' data (2007-2015) has been submitted for consideration to a peer-review journal