



Information on rates of self-harm

Version 1: Jan 2016

Calculating rates of self-harm/ per 100,000

Crude self-harm rates are calculated by dividing the number of persons who engaged in self-harm (n) by the relevant population figure (p) and multiplying the result by 100,000, i.e.

$$(n/p)*100,000.$$

Example: In 2014, there were 11,126 presentations made by 8,708 persons[#]. The estimated population for Ireland in 2014 was 4,609,500. Therefore, the crude rate of self-harm in 2014 can be calculated as follows:

$$(8708/4609500)*100,000=189 \text{ per } 100,000$$

[#]*Note: self-harm rates should always be calculated based on the number of persons*

A note on small numbers

Calculated rates based on less than **20** events may be an unreliable measure of the underlying rate.

When the numerator is less than 20, the rate is unstable, meaning that a small change in the numerator can lead to a large change in the rate from one year to the next¹. As a result it's very difficult to interpret meaningful differences between regions or sub-groups when small numbers are involved, or to distinguish 'real' changes in rates year on year. As a result, caution should be used when drawing conclusions².

¹ <https://www.stats.indiana.edu/vitals/CalculatingARate.pdf>

² <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/chronic/rates/small.htm>