

SELF-HARM IN IRISH PRISONS 2020-2021

Self-harm in Irish Prisons 2020-2021: Fourth Report from the Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project presents the full findings of the fourth and fifth year of the SADA Project¹ for the years of 2020 and 2021. This forms part of the work of the National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group (NSHPPG) and is supported by the multi-disciplinary teams across the prison estate who play a pivotal role in analysing the incidence and profile of self-harm in prisons. This project uniquely collects information on the level of medical severity and suicidal intent for each episode of self-harm, identifies individual and

context specific factors relating to self-harm and examines patterns of repeat self-harm (both fatal and non-fatal). This data continues to inform policy and practice development in order to enhance the treatment and management of individuals in custody who pose a risk of self-harm and suicide and to protect individuals in their care.

The Health Service Executive's (HSE) National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) assist the IPS with data management, data analysis and reporting.

¹Irish Prison Service (2024). Self-harm in Irish Prisons 2020/2021. Fourth report from the Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project. Irish Prison Service.

In Irish prisons in 2020/2021...

421
EPISODES
of self-harm
involving
217 individuals

RATE

2021
2.6 per 100
prisoners
equates to
1 in every 38

2020
3.6 per 100
prisoners
equates to
1 in every 28

REPETITION



One-third (32.7%)
of individuals engaged in self-harm
more than once in 2020 and 2021

AGE

The rate of self-harm was highest among prisoners aged **18-29 years** in both years

2021
2.3 per 100
equates to
1 in every 43
prisoners

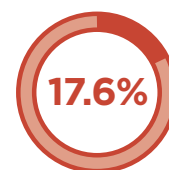
2020
4.9 per 100
equates to
1 in every 20
prisoners

TIME



Half of all self-harm incidents
(45.4%) occurred between
2pm and 8pm

DAY



The number of episodes which
occurred on **Tuesday's (17.6%)**
were above average

METHODS

58.5%

The most common
method of self-harm
recorded was
self-cutting or **scratching**
which was present
in 58.5% of all episodes
in 2020 and 2021
(2 in every 3)

20.8%

The other common
method of self-harm was
attempted hanging
involved in 20.8% of episodes
in 2020 and 2021
(1 in every 5)



The rate of self-harm was twice
as high among prisoners on remand
than those sentenced in both years
3.1 versus 1.5 per 100 in 2021
3.0 versus 1.5 per 100 in 2020

TREATMENT



1 in 7

required hospital outpatient
or accident and emergency
department treatment
in 2020 and 2021



SUICIDAL INTENT

1 in 3

Approximately
one in three (32.3%)
were deemed to
have suicidal intent

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

49.1%

Mental Health

22.7%

Relational

15.5%

Environmental

The majority of factors related to mental health
issues (49.1%), 22.7% and 18.7% to relational
issues and 15.5% to environmental issues