

About

Shine's Media Programme is Ireland's national programme for responsible reporting and representation of mental illness and suicide. Funded through the National Office for Suicide Prevention, our media monitoring can offer media professionals evidence-based insights to support them in telling important and complex mental health stories.

To find out more about this programme, go to www.shine.ie

Introduction

This report analyses media coverage of suicide in Ireland over a three-week period from **January 20 to February 9, 2025**, encompassing **643** media items across print, online news, radio and television.

This represents a 10% decrease in suicide coverage when compared with the same period in 2024, when 718 media items on suicide were recorded. While fewer items were published, the proportion of safe reporting also declined slightly.

In Q1 2025, 80.2% of 643 items followed the guidelines, down from 83.6% in Q1 2024. This represents a decrease of 3.4 percentage points, which is a proportional decline of 4.1% in adherence to the suicide reporting guidelines.

For a detailed breakdown of our media monitoring methodology, get in touch at media@shine.ie

Key findings

Responsible reporting remains strong

Out of 643 media items, 516 (80.2%) contained no harmful elements. Of all content monitored, online news dominated coverage.

A small number of media groups drive most coverage

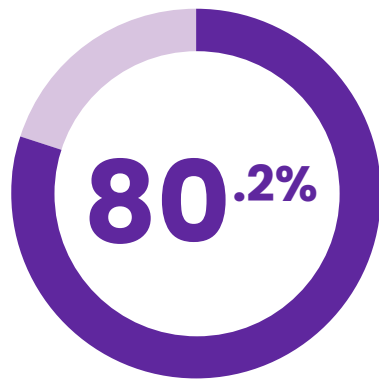
Just three Media Groups produced 62.4% of all the suicide coverage: News Ireland Limited, The Irish Times Group, and Iconic Media Group.

Radio outperforming other platforms in following guidelines

- **Radio:**
90.5% guideline adherence
(38/42 items)
- **Print:**
82.6% guideline adherence
(171/207 items)
- **Online News:**
78.5% guideline adherence
(307/391 items)
- **TV:**
0% guideline adherence
(3/3 items contained harmful elements)

THE DATA 2025 Q1

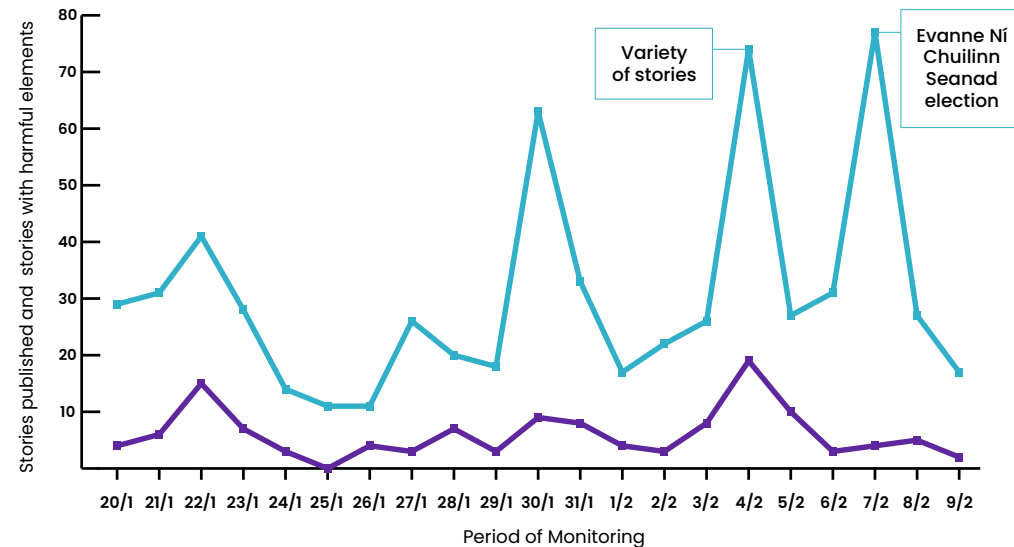
Overview of suicide coverage in Irish media



Of 643 suicide-related media items across online news, print and broadcast, 516 contained no harmful elements (80.2%).

Coverage and volume of harmful elements over monitoring period

20 Jan to 9 Feb inclusive

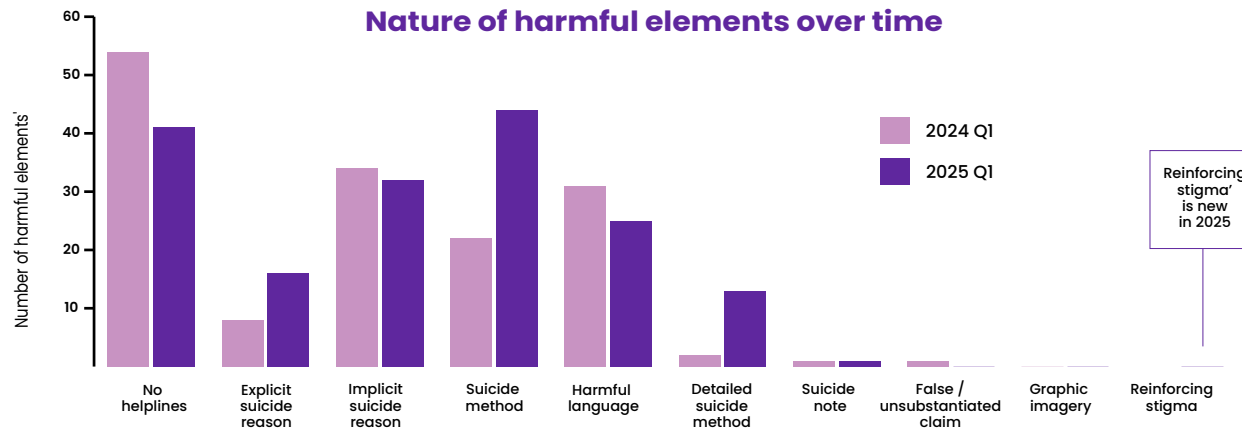


Peaks in coverage do not necessarily imply peaks in harmful elements:

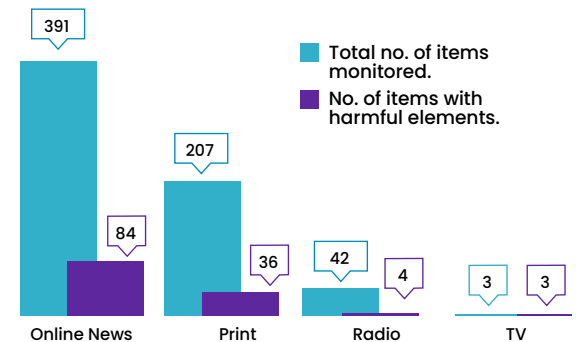
The 4th of February has 74 suicide-related items, 19 of which had harmful content. This includes 6 breaking news items about the bodies of a married couple found dead in their home.

The 7th of February sees the highest volume of suicide coverage in the period, with 77 items, only 4 of which included harmful elements. On this day, there were 54 items about the move from broadcasting to politics of Evanne Ní Chuilinn, with a brief thematic reference to suicide, and no harmful content.

Nature of harmful elements over time



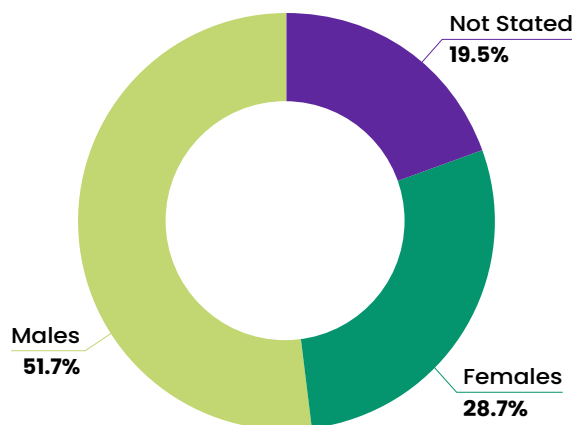
All monitored content and harmful content by platform



Demographics and Suicide Reporting

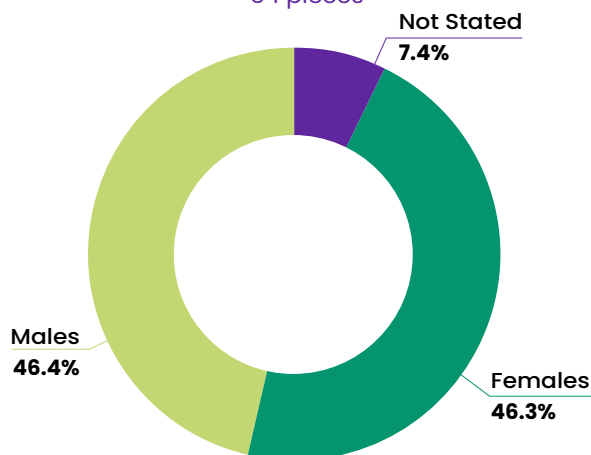
Completed Suicides by Gender

174 pieces



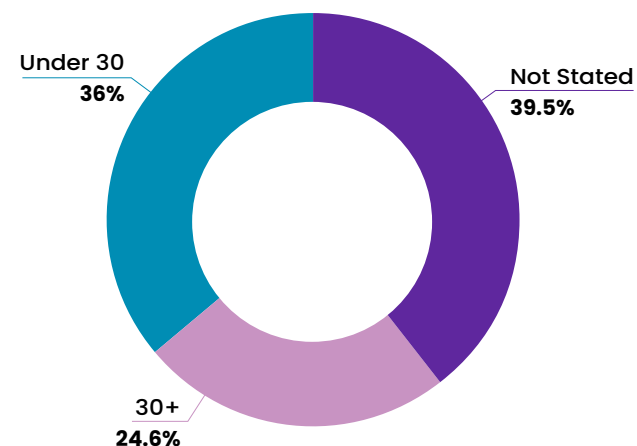
Attempted Suicides by Gender

54 pieces



Suicides Attempted + Completed by Age

228 pieces



Demographics explained

174 items focused on a completed suicide, representing 27.1% of all coverage in Q1 2025.

Of these, 58 items (33.3%) reported on a person under 30 years old. 94 of the 174 items (54%) adhered to guidelines, well below the overall adherence rate of 80.2%.

In media coverage of 'completed' suicides men (51.7%) appeared more frequently in reporting than women (28.7%), reflecting national trends. According to the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), there were **302 suicides in Ireland in 2023, 232 males (76.8%) and 70 females (23.2%)**.

When we combine attempted and completed suicides, a significant finding emerges around age: more than a third of all reports (36%) concerned people under the age of 30.

These figures highlight both the visibility of younger people and men in suicide reporting on completed suicides.

"Not stated" refers to articles where key details such as gender or age are missing. For example, a report might note "four people died by suicide in care last year" without specifying who was affected.

No references to transgender people were recorded this quarter.

Spotlight on Gene Hackman Coverage

The deaths of actor Gene Hackman and his wife Betsy Arakawa were first reported in Irish and UK outlets on 27th February 2025.

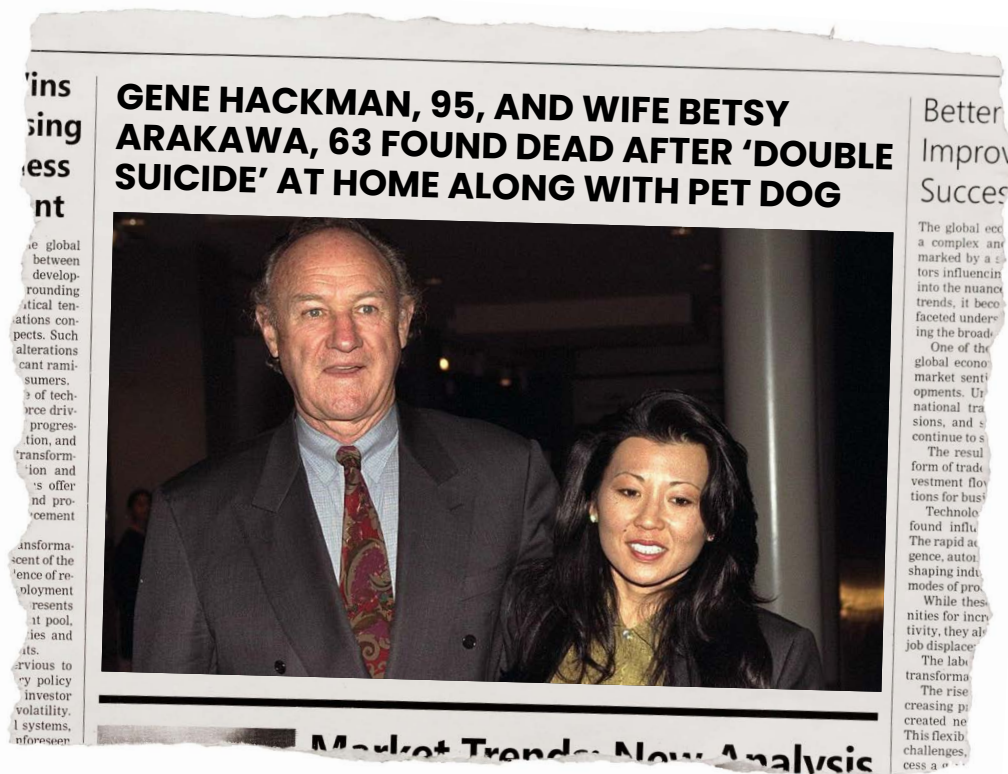
Although this story happened outside of our monitoring window, we activated media monitoring for this potentially critical event. In the initial 48 hours, coverage was speculative, with some reports framing the case as a possible double-suicide or murder-suicide. Once official statements clarified that the deaths were not suicide, the narrative shifted and suicide was no longer reported as a factor. Our monitoring captured 18 Gene Hackman stories that mentioned suicide and analysis is based on this sample.

Speculative framing

While most reports avoided directly stating suicide, repeated references to “pills found scattered near the body” implied self-harm. Several reports also raised unconfirmed claims about the dogs, adding to the speculation.

Ambiguous use of helplines

Of our sample, 5 (27.8%) stories included helplines where they were not necessary. The placement of the helpline created the impression of suicide even though it had not been confirmed. 2 stories that did discuss suicide did not include helplines, representing missed opportunities to provide support information.



Actual headline published by Irish news outlet on February 27th, 2025.

Shift in framing

By March 3–5, official statements began to challenge early “companion suicide” theories. Outlets cited pathologists and police sources to correct earlier assumptions.

Spotlight on Lived Experience

Lived Experience refers to the individual and collective contributions of those with an experience of mental illness or suicide, and/or their supporters. Including Lived Experience is important as it offers an authentic representation of mental health experience.

Of the 643 media items monitored, roughly 1 in 5 (135) included some form of Lived Experience. Most of these, 108 (80%) followed guidelines, which is in line with the rest of the coverage.

- **Items with harmful elements:**
100 of 127 (78.7%) contained no Lived Experience.
- **Items without harmful elements:**
408 of 516 (79.1%) contained no Lived Experience.
- **Overall:**
508 items (79%) had no Lived Experience.

Key Insight

The presence of Lived Experience does not determine whether coverage will follow or breach guidelines. Responsible practice depends on framing and presentation, not inclusion alone.



Recommendations

01 High-Profile Events

the initial coverage of Gene Hackman and Betsy Arakawa's deaths highlights several points for responsible reporting:

Early reports leaned on ambiguity around cause of death.

02 Avoid speculation

Speculating about suicide without confirmed reports is high risk to audiences who are experiencing suicidal ideation, particularly in the case of high-profile individuals.

Until confirmation is available:

- Report only verified facts.
- Highlight the individual's life and contribution.
- Include relevant helplines or mental health supports if mental health was a key concern in that person's life.

03 Prioritise official sources:

Coverage improved once pathologists and police clarified the situation. Information should be based on official statements rather than conjecture.

04 Lived Experience

First-person accounts of suicide or self-harm can make stories more relatable and authentic and provide audiences with valuable insight. Responsible reporting should still be adhered to by implementing media guidelines on all content related to suicide.

05 Continued Training

Media professionals at all levels are encouraged to access freely available training on responsible reporting. In these workshops, we cover contemporary case studies, put the guidelines in context across all platforms, as well as explore trauma-informed media practices.

To access this training, email media@shine.ie.



Shine's media monitoring is made possible with the support of The National Office for Suicide Prevention and is directly linked with Ireland's national strategy for preventing suicide: **Connecting For Life**.

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Connecting for Life