

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.

Find out more at www.shine.ie

Introduction

In Q4 2025, we analysed **713 suicide related media items** published or broadcast in Ireland between **20th October to 9th November 2025**, across print, online, radio, and television.

Of the 713 items analysed **70.7%** (504 items) follow media guidelines. This represents a significant decrease of 16.2% on Q3 2025 where 86.9% (1222 of 1407 items) followed media guidelines. This represents a proportional decline of 18.6%.

When compared to the same quarter in 2024, Q4 2025 represents a low point in Irish media's relationship with the suicide reporting guidelines. Notably, the data suggests improvements are needed in just a small number of areas, rather than issues spread across all coverage of suicide.

For details of Shine's monitoring methodology, contact media@shine.ie

Key findings

- 01 **Online news outlets** had the highest incidences of not following the suicide reporting guidelines, accounting for 70.8% of all harmful content.
- 02 The **lack of helplines** continues to be a concern with over 15% of all suicide-related content analysed this quarter omitting them in instances where they would have been beneficial.
- 03 **Older people** (65+) were significantly under-represented in suicide-related coverage in Q4 (0.1%), despite accounting for one in ten deaths by suicide in Ireland (CSO 2022).
- 04 **Oversimplification**, or an implied singular reason for a suicide, appeared in 100 of the 713 items (14%).
- 05 While **radio** items represent less than 5% of all content referencing suicide, almost half of those items did not follow the guidelines.

What are the most common harmful elements in Q4?

While incidences of following the guidelines declined, harmful content was concentrated around a small number of story types, particularly court reporting and coverage linked to high-profile people.

1 **Oversimplification of the reason for suicide emerged as a major issue**

In total, 100 items (14%) included language which implied an oversimplified or singular reason for suicide.

- 83% appeared online
- 39% linked to court reporting
- 35% involved high-profile people

2 **Missing helplines remains high**

In total, 109 items (15.3%) did not include helplines, when the content warranted signposting vulnerable audiences to sources of support.

- 84.4% appeared online
- 52.3% included the perspective of someone with lived experience of suicide
- 28.4% related to high-profile people
- 8.3% directed audiences to websites instead of helplines
- One major publishing group accounted for 22.2% of all occurrences where helplines were needed and not provided

3 **Content with detailed suicide method was limited and concentrated online**

Only 12 items (1.7%) included detailed method of suicide.

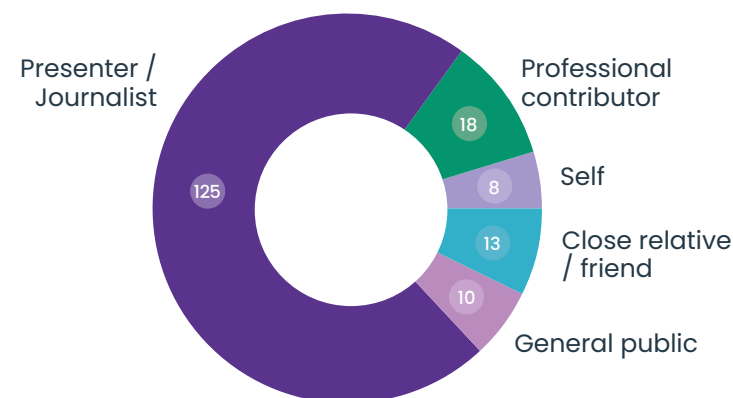
- 91.7% published online
- 75% originated from one national publication
- 12 individual news stories included this detail

4 **Inclusion of graphic imagery was rare**

Only 2 items contained graphic imagery.

- Both were published online
- Both appeared in the same national publication

Sources of Harmful Elements

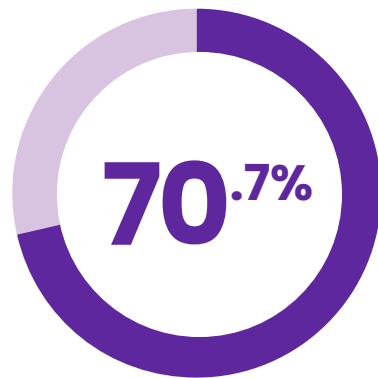


When monitoring, we assess, as much as is possible, the source of harm. This helps us target education interventions with different groups involved in publishing or broadcasting a media item. In Q4, presenters/journalists were the group most likely to be the source of harmful elements.

See the section 'Recommendations' for support in how to reduce harm to audiences at risk.

THE DATA 2025 Q4

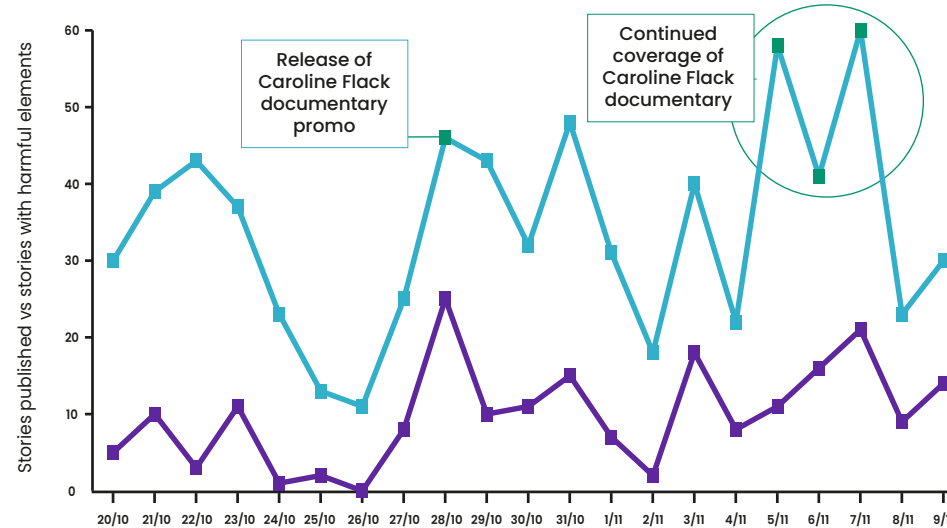
Overview of suicide coverage in Irish media



In Q4 of 713 suicide-related media items across online news, print and broadcast, 504 followed the suicide reporting guidelines (70.7%).

Coverage and volume of harmful elements in Q4

20th Oct – 9th Nov 2025 inclusive

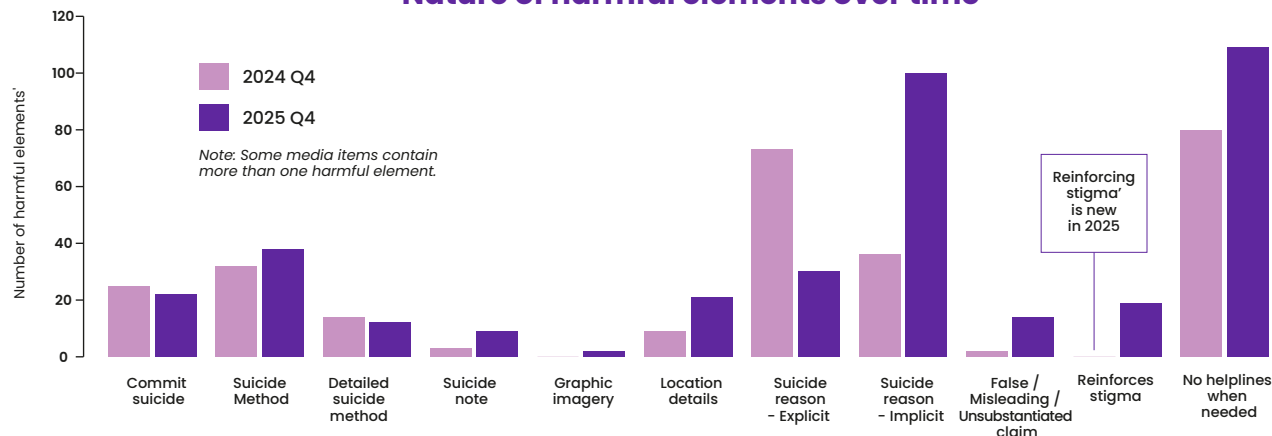


Do peaks in coverage imply peaks in harmful elements?

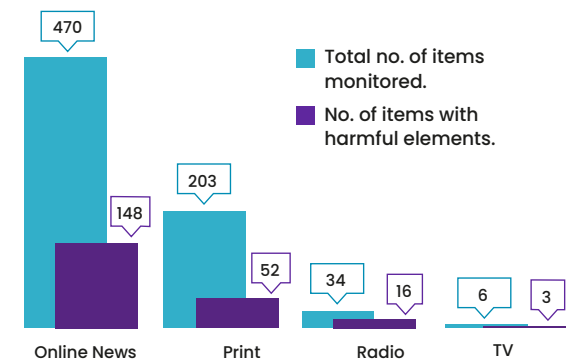
The data suggest that increases in the number of suicide-related stories published do not automatically lead to increases in harmful reporting. Both October 22 and October 29 recorded 43 suicide-related stories, yet the proportion containing harmful elements differed markedly (6.9% vs. 23.2%). The higher rate on October 29 was partly driven by a syndicated article that was republished multiple times and contained an oversimplification of a suicide.

November 7th saw the highest volume of suicide-related content across all platforms. While there was a variety of stories covered, harmful elements appeared just 21 of them.

Nature of harmful elements over time

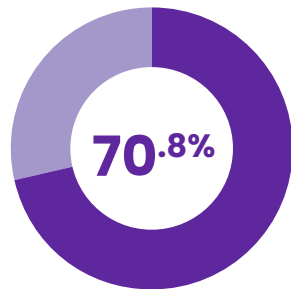


All monitored content and harmful content by platform



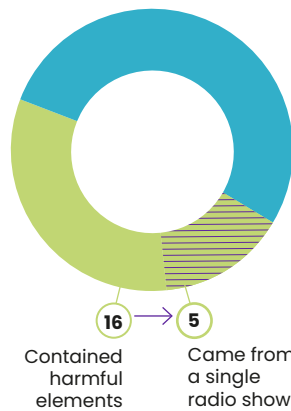
THE DATA 2025 Q4

Online News Coverage in Q4



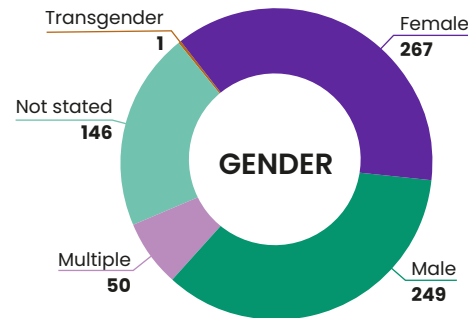
- Online media remained the main source of harmful content, accounting for 70.8% of incidences not following the suicide reporting guidelines (148 items).
- This is consistent with the previous quarter (66.7%; 124 items)

Radio Broadcasts in Q4

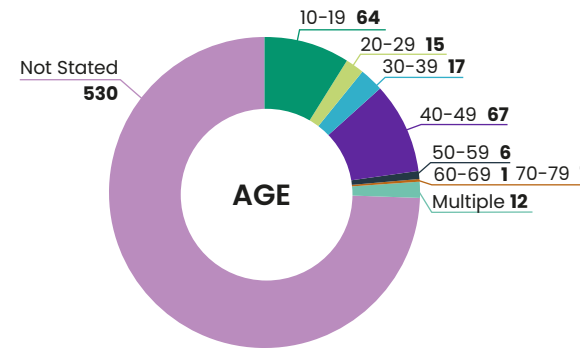


- In Q4 radio broadcasts represent just 4.7% of monitored content (34 of 713 items)
- Almost half (47.1% or 16 items) contained harmful elements. Notably, five of these items (31.3%) come from a single regional radio show.

Gender and Age in Suicide Coverage



- Q4 shows a notably balanced gender split in coverage, with female-related items (267 items / 37.4%) slightly exceeding male-related items (249 items / 34.9%). This differs from national suicide data, which continues to show that men account for most deaths by suicide in Ireland.
- It should also be noted that 20.5% of items do not identify gender. This limits direct comparisons with national suicide statistics.



- In Q4, age is not stated in 74% (530 items) of media coverage.
- Where age is stated, 40 to 49 year-olds appear most frequently (9.3%) – this is slightly lower than national suicide data, which shows this age group accounted for 12.6% of deaths by suicide.

- Stories relating to people aged 10–19 account for 8.8% of monitored items, higher than the approximately 6% of deaths by suicide in this age group nationally.
- Notably, older age groups are minimally represented in Q4. People aged 60 and over account for just 0.1% of monitored coverage. This is despite CSO data showing 10% of deaths by suicide in Ireland occur among people aged 65 and older.
- It should be noted that, while this report analyses demographics represented in 2025 media coverage, comparisons are based on the most recent finalised data available from the [Central Statistics Office \(CSO\)](#), which relates to 2022.

Spotlight

Caroline Flack documentary coverage

Coverage relating to a two-part Caroline Flack documentary series account for 27 items in Q4.

Worryingly, 92.6% of these (25 items), do not follow reporting guidelines, making it one of the most significant sources of harmful content identified in Q4. Reporting spikes occur on 27–28 October and 6 November following the release and circulation of promos for the documentary.

Following Caroline's death in 2020, we monitored and coded an exceptionally high volume of content containing harmful elements. Six years later, some of the reporting around the documentary series highlighted similar challenges.

Harmful reporting implying a singular or over-simplified reason for her suicide appeared in 19 of the 27 items. Reporting that reduces suicide to a singular cause can be harmful to those experiencing similar situations and does not reflect the complexity of suicide.

Helpline information is also largely absent, with 23 of the 27 items failing to include signposting to support services, despite these items including details of her death. Given the high-profile nature of Caroline's death, the inclusion of helplines is particularly important due to the increased risk of audience identifying with a well-known public figure.

It is worth noting that if the coverage relating to the documentary had followed the guidelines, the overall percentage of items in Q4 would have increased from 70.7% to 74.2%.



Recommendations

While we see compliance decline in Q4, the recommendations below focus on areas where targeted support and engagement may have the greatest impact.

01 Improve handling of international and syndicated content

Improve consistency around helpline inclusion – 109 items (15.3%) failed to include helplines when needed. Including a helpline can be a lifeline for audiences experiencing distress.

Always provide a direct phone number so that people of all backgrounds and abilities can access support.

02 Strengthen guidance around simplified suicide reasoning

An oversimplified singular implied reason for a suicide appeared in 100 items (14%), particularly in court and high-profile reporting.

Suicide is complex and audiences should be informed of the many contributing factors involved when a person dies by suicide.

03 Encourage reporting that better reflects national suicide demographics

In Q4, older deaths by suicide are virtually invisible to Irish audiences.

When covering suicide as a theme, try to be inclusive of all age groups, especially given the age groups that traditionally engage with legacy media. It could have a potentially lifesaving impact on your audiences.

04 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, harm-reducing approaches, as well as explore trauma-informed media practices.

To avail of this training, email media@shine.ie.

Shine's media monitoring is made possible with the support of the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention, under Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide and Self-harm, **Connecting for Life 2026–2035.**

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support | advocacy | education
for mental illness

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