

FOI DoF/2024-0576

Request

Please provide data for the number of deaths due to male circumcision in each of the last 20 years. If possible, please provide the age of the individual, year of death, and detail whether the circumcision was therapeutic (for medical reasons) or non-therapeutic (for cultural or religious reasons). If it is not possible to provide an individual's age, please disclose whether they were under or over 18.

Response

I can confirm that the department holds some of the information requested.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) produces statistics based on the cause of death information recorded on death certificates and collected by the General Register Office (GRO) during the death registration process. NISRA collates data on registrations of death.

I can confirm that NISRA holds the information for part of the request. For deaths occurring in the 20 years between 1 January 2005 and 31 December 2024, there was **one** death where circumcision was mentioned in the text. The one death was a male over the age of 18. However, NISRA does not hold the information to determine whether this was for medical or other reasons.

Final registration data for 2005 to 2023 and provisional registration data for 2024, which has been coded for cause of death using the WHO maintained ICD-10 framework, was used for this request. An ICD-10 code relevant to male circumcision is Z41.2, which relates to both therapeutic and ritual male circumcision. However, ICD-10 Z codes are not intended by WHO for routine use in mortality coding and cannot be used as the underlying cause of death. For this reason, we have extracted death registrations where the underlying cause of death was Y83 (surgical operation and other surgical procedures as the cause of abnormal reaction or complication) and then searched the cause of death and coroners' text of those cases to identify records where 'circumcision' was recorded.

Please note, these figures may not account for all deaths where circumcision was a factor as the procedure may not be specified in the cause of death text portion of the death registration.

NISRA is unable to confirm the exact age and year of death of the individual, for statistical disclosure reasons, in order to comply with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics (T6.4) and legal obligations within the

Statistics and Registration Service Act (SRSA, 2007) and the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976. This data is therefore exempt under FOI Exemption 44(1)(a) (disclosure is prohibited by other legislation) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as these legislations prohibit the unauthorised disclosure of identifiable information for the purposes of producing statistical analysis. In this case, the disclosure of the exact age and year of death would allow identification of the individual.