



81pc of those taking their own lives here are male

150 suicides in Meath over a 10-year period

A TOTAL of 150 people took their own lives in Meath in the 10 years to the end of 2006, according to figures released by the Central Statistics Office.

Of these, 121 (81pc) were male.

The number of suicides in the county peaked at 22 in 2004, falling to 13 the following year and 10 in 2006, the latest year for which figures are available.

The equivalent figures for neighbouring counties over the same 10-year period were 90 in Westmeath, 85 in Cavan and 115 in Louth.

The figure of 150 suicides in Meath over the 10 years to 2006 is considerably higher than the previous decade's total of 81.

However, official figures on suicide are generally recognised as being highly susceptible to social norms and the different interpretations used by coroners.

Specifically, the apparent rise in suicide over the above 20-year period can at least partially be explained in terms of a greater willingness by coroners to record verdicts of suicide.

Previously, coroners were often reluctant to record deaths as suicides in order to spare the feelings of bereaved families.

However, many observers believe that the real figure for suicides is considerably higher, as coroners will often direct juries to return verdicts which simply recall the medical facts of death, unless there is incontrovertible evidence of intent.

The national figures show that suicide affects rural communities at least as much as those in urban areas, as illustrated by the very high numbers taking their own lives in 2006 in Mayo (43) and Cork county (48).

A number of initiatives have been undertaken in recent years by the Government and health boards to tackle the problem, particularly as it affects men below the age of 35.

Earlier this year, a conference on suicide awareness was held at Scoil Mhuire in Trim,

financed by the proceeds of an annual truckers' convoy through south Meath.