



**PROCEDURE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF SMALL  
NUMBERS DURING DATA DISSEMINATION**

**CROATIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Zagreb, May 2026**

## Introduction

In accordance with the Official Statistics Act, all producers of official statistics, including the Croatian Institute of Public Health (CIPH), are required to disseminate official statistical data in a form that does not allow the identification of statistical units, either directly or indirectly. The CIPH has, thus, adopted the present Procedure for the Presentation of Small Numbers during Data Dissemination, with a view to preventing direct and/or indirect identification of individuals. Only aggregated data are disseminated. The following guidelines apply to all publications, reports, tables, and other dissemination forms containing publicly available data by the CIPH, and are likewise recommended for use to other institutions within the public health system. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure a balanced level of transparency and accessibility of statistical data, and the protection of individual privacy, in accordance with personal data protection regulations.

These guidelines do not apply to the sharing of individual-level data in response to researchers' requests where an agreement exists between the CIPH and the researcher, or institution, defining the obligations of the researcher.

Small numbers are values of fewer than 5 (<5) observations in a given table cell, resulting from the classification of data into predefined categories. Such data, particularly when combined with other variables, may allow for indirect identification of an individual.

The fundamental principle of these guidelines is to suppress as few data points as possible while presenting as much data as possible, whenever this can be done without compromising privacy.

Data suppression is a privacy protection and data anonymization technique that involves omitting certain sensitive data from datasets, reports, or databases. The main objective of suppression is to prevent the re-identification of individuals, especially when data groups are small or contain unique characteristics that could reveal a person's identity.

In exceptional and justified situations of public health interest, and in connection with CIPH activities, the present guidelines need not apply, as decided upon, on a case-by-case basis, by CIPH experts.

When assessing the need for statistical suppression, consideration should be given to whether the data are published according to the following categories:

- NUTS regions and other organizational forms,
- age,
- sex, and/or
- ICD-10 diagnosis.

**Guideline 1. National Level**

If data are published at the NUTS 1 level, i.e., nationally across the Republic of Croatia (HR)–HR0, data suppression is not required, regardless of the type of data being published.

*Example 1.* The table shows the number of hospitalizations for one region by age group and sex, for the principal diagnosis of intentional self-harm (ICD-10: X60–X84).

Original data					
Region of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Male	0	1	0	1
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Female	1	2	0	3
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Total	1	3	0	4

No data suppression is required.

Dissemination table					
Region of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Male	0	1	0	1
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Female	1	2	0	3
NUTS 1 region (HR)	Total	1	3	0	4

### **Guideline 2. Regional Level**

If data are published at the NUTS 2 level, collectively for all ICD-10 diagnoses, data suppression is not required; that is, data may be published by both sex and age.

If data are published for specific diagnoses or groups of diagnoses, and only by sex or only by age, suppression is also not required.

However, if data are published for specific diagnoses or groups of diagnoses, and broken down by both sex and age, and the value in a cell is less than 5, either age or sex should be suppressed.

*Example 2.* The table shows the number of hospitalizations for one region by age group and sex, for the principal diagnosis of intentional self-harm (ICD-10: X60–X84).

Original data					
Region of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 2 region	Male	0	1	0	1
NUTS 2 region	Female	1	2	0	3
NUTS 2 region	Total	1	3	0	4

Data suppression is required, either by sex or by age.

Dissemination table					
Region of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 2 region	Total	1	3	0	4

or

Dissemination table		
Region of residence	Sex	Total children and youth
NUTS 2 region	Male	1
NUTS 2 region	Female	3
NUTS 2 region	Total	4

**Guideline 3. County Level**

If data are published at the NUTS 3 level, i.e., at the county level, collectively for all ICD-10 diagnoses, data suppression is not required.

If data are published for specific diagnoses or groups of diagnoses, either age or sex should be suppressed if the value in a cell is less than 5.

*Example 3.* The table shows the number of hospitalizations for one county by age group and sex, for the principal diagnosis of intentional self-harm (ICD-10: X60–X84).

Original data					
County of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 3 region (county)	Male	0	1	0	1
NUTS 3 region (county)	Female	1	2	0	3
NUTS 3 region (county)	Total	1	3	0	4

Data suppression is required, either by sex or by age.

Dissemination table					
County of residence	Sex	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total children and youth
NUTS 3 region (county)	Total	1	3	0	4

or

Dissemination table		
County of residence	Sex	Total children and youth
NUTS 3 region (county)	Male	1
NUTS 3 region (county)	Female	3
NUTS 3 region (county)	Total	4

**Guideline 4. Level of local government units, sub-local units, streets, squares, and similar units**

If data are published at a level lower than NUTS 3, regardless of the type of disseminated data, suppression is required whenever the value in a cell is less than five.

*Example 4.* The table shows the number of hospitalizations for one local government unit by age group and sex, for the principal diagnosis of intentional self-harm (ICD-10: X60–X84).

<b>Original data</b>					
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>Total children and youth</b>
<i>Local government unit</i>	Male	2	1	1	4
<i>Local government unit</i>	Female	6	4	5	15
<i>Local government unit</i>	Total	8	5	6	19

Data suppression is required.

<b>Dissemination table</b>					
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>Total children and youth</b>
<i>Local government unit</i>	Total	8	5	6	19

<b>NOT TO BE DISSEMINATED</b>		
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Total children and youth</b>
<i>Local government unit</i>	Male	4
<i>Local government unit</i>	Female	15
<i>Local government unit</i>	Total	19

### **Guideline 5. Data on deceased persons**

If data on deceased persons are published, data suppression is not required, regardless of the type of data being published.

Namely, Recital 27 of the General Data Protection Regulation states that it does not apply to the personal data of deceased persons. Although Member States may provide for rules regarding the processing of personal data of deceased persons, Croatia has not adopted specific rules/regulations governing the processing of personal data of deceased individuals.

*Example 5.* The table shows the number of deceased persons for one region by age group and sex, for the principal diagnosis of intentional self-harm (ICD-10: X60–X84).

<b>Original data</b>					
<b>Region of residence</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>Total children and youth</b>
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Male</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Female</b>	1	2	0	3
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Total</b>	1	3	0	4

No data suppression is required.

<b>Dissemination table</b>					
<b>Region of residence</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>Total children and youth</b>
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Male</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Female</b>	1	2	0	3
<b>NUTS 1/ NUTS 2/ NUTS 3</b>	<b>Total</b>	1	3	0	4