

Main points

- In 2018, there were 2,512 deaths registered as accidental in Scotland, accounting for four per cent of the total deaths for that year. This is an increase of 164 accidental deaths (7%) compared with 2017. These figures are based on the new coding rules that apply in Scotland with effect from 2011 (see the [methodology](#) paper for further details). It is estimated that only 1,536 of these deaths would have been counted as accidental under the old coding rules (43 deaths or 3% fewer than the corresponding estimate for 2017). ([Table 1](#))
- Between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, the number of accidental deaths in Scotland almost halved. Numbers were relatively stable for the next 15 years but since 2012 accidental deaths have increased every year except 2018. These figures are based on the older coding rules to maintain a continuous time series, but the figures based on the new coding rules also show an increase since 2012, including in 2018. ([Chart 1](#))
- The most common cause of accidental death in Scotland in 2018 was accidental poisoning by and exposure to noxious substances (1,146 deaths, 46% of all accidental deaths), closely followed by falls (942 deaths, 38% of all accidental deaths). Transport accidents caused 178 deaths (7 per cent).
- Deaths from transport accidents have fallen in recent years, whilst deaths from falls and accidental poisoning have increased. There were 223 more deaths from accidental poisonings in 2018 than in 2017, an increase of 24%. ([Table 2](#))
- The 85+ group had the largest total number of accidental deaths in 2018 with 24% of all accidental deaths. This was followed by the 40-44, 45-49, 35-39 and 80-84 age groups, each of which accounted for between 8 and 10 per cent of deaths. This reflects the fact that falls occur mostly in the elderly and accidental poisonings in the middle age groups. For the first time, there were no deaths in the age 5-9 category in 2018. ([Table 3](#))
- In 2018, there were 1,511 male deaths due to accidents (60% of all accidental deaths), compared with 1,001 for females.

Notes on methodology changes

There have been methodology and procedural changes which affect the comparability of accidental death statistics over time. Please refer to the [methodology](#) document for more details.