

About this publication	Description
Publication title	Drug-related Deaths in Scotland
Description	Numbers of drug-related deaths, broken down by cause of death, selected drugs reported, age and sex. Includes tables for NHS Board and Local Authority (Council) areas.
Theme	Population and Migration
Topic	Population and Migration
Format	Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) document, tables and charts also available as Excel workbooks and Comma Separated Value (CSV) files.
Data source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical certificate of the cause of death</li> <li>• Other information provided to the Registrar when a death is registered</li> <li>• Pathologists' findings, reported on form ME4</li> <li>• Any additional information provided by, for example, the Procurators Fiscal.</li> </ul> <p>The publication also uses the mid-year population estimates, and estimates of the numbers of problem drug users that are produced by the Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland.</p>
Date that data is acquired	Throughout the calendar year, and (normally) in the first four or so months of the following calendar year.
Publication Release date	July (normally)
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death registration records - received throughout the year, nowadays a day or so after registration</li> <li>• Pathologists' findings - may be received several months afterwards (Note: the statistical dataset is closed in the middle of the next calendar year, so the statistics cannot take account of any information that has not been received by then).</li> </ul>
Continuity of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no breaks in the series for the total number of drug-related deaths for 1996 onwards.</li> <li>• Break in the series of figures for 'drugs reported' between 2007 and 2008, due to the introduction of a new version of the form which is completed by pathologists, as explained in the publication.</li> <li>• A number of World Health Organisation updates to the rules for identifying the underlying cause of death were implemented at the start of 2011, as explained in the publication. However, estimates are provided on the basis of the old coding rules, so that one can see the changes between 2010 and 2011, and the longer-term trends, without a break in the series.</li> <li>• There may be other differences between years and/or between areas in the way in which the underlying information was produced, for example, due to technical advances or changes in substances for which tests are conducted. <a href="#">Further information</a> can be found in the relevant publication via the National Records of Scotland (NRS) website.</li> </ul>

<p>Revisions statement</p>	<p>Because NRS normally ‘freezes’ its statistical database for the calendar year after around four months of the following year, there are no revisions due to late returns or corrections to the records which are held in NRS’s death statistics database.</p> <p>Any revisions due to changes in the way in which the information was subsequently processed (for example to identify which deaths should be counted as ‘drug-related’ for the purpose of these statistics) will be mentioned in the publication and (unless their effects are small) the accompanying news release.</p> <p>Revisions and corrections to previously published statistics are dealt with in accordance with the Scottish Government (SG) Statistician Group corporate policy statement on revisions and corrections - a copy of which is available on the <a href="#">Scottish Government</a> website.</p>
<p>Concepts and definitions</p>	<p>In the publication, Annex A explains the definition of drug-related deaths used for these statistics, and information about other aspects of the figures is given in the relevant sections of the publication. Annex E describes the basis of the publication’s figures for so-called New Psychoactive Substances (which include some so-called ‘legal highs’). Annex F covers the basis of the consistent series of drug-related death numbers. Annex H sets out which benzodiazepines are classified as ‘prescribable’ drugs and which as ‘street’ drugs.</p>
<p>Relevance and key uses of the statistics</p>	<p>Some examples of the importance of these statistics were given by the National Forum on Drug-related Deaths in Scotland(NFDRD)*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The drug death statistics published each year in the report are fundamental to the work of the National Forum.’ - Jane Jay (Chair) in her Foreword to the National Forum’s <a href="#">Annual Report for 2008-09</a> (available on the SG website).</li> <li>• The National Forum’s Annual Report for 2009-10 recommended that this publication should provide further information (refer to paragraph B10 onwards of Annex B of this publication, which describe what was done in consequence).</li> <li>• ‘These 2011 drug death figures also generated considerable interest in the Scottish Parliament. A parliamentary debate was held in November 2012, on the national drugs ‘strategy the Road to Recovery’ led by the Minister.’ - from the Introduction to the National Forum’s <a href="#">Annual Report for 2011-12</a> (available on the SG website), which also had a 3-page section entitled ‘Forum’s response to the NRS Drug-Related Deaths in Scotland 2011 Statistics’.</li> </ul> <p>The statistics are also used by SG, and by NHS Boards and other bodies working to reduce the number of drug-related deaths.</p> <p>* Note: the NFDRD and some other bodies were replaced by the Partnership for Action on Drugs in Scotland, which was established in January 2016, which was subsequently superseded by the Drug Deaths Task force, which was announced in July 2019.</p>
<p>Accuracy</p>	<p>It is believed that there is very little error in the overall total figure, since few if any deaths are not registered, and the information which is available about each death should be sufficient to determine whether it should be counted as ‘drug-related’. However, there may be differences, over time and between areas, in the extent to which particular drugs are reported because for example, the range of substances for which tests are conducted may change, and practice may differ between pathologists. Other bodies may use other definitions of ‘drug-related’ deaths, Annex B of the publication gives some examples.</p>

Completeness:	The published statistics cover Scotland as a whole, and provide figures for each NHS Board and local authority.
Comparability	Annex B provides examples of comparisons with other definitions and with the figures used by the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency and one Police Force. Annex G uses figures from a European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) report to compare Scotland's drug-death rate with those reported by EU countries (Note: the EMCDDA reports have stated that "caution is required ... due to issues of coding, coverage and under-reporting in some countries"). Annex G also uses the normally-published figures to compare Scotland's drug-death rate with that of the UK as a whole.
Accessibility	It is the policy of NRS to make its website and products accessible according to published guidelines. More information is available in the <a href="#">Accessibility</a> section of the NRS website.
Coherence and clarity	The statistics are provided in Excel, CSV and PDF formats. They are designed to be consistent and incorporate comparable historical data where appropriate.  Coherence: the statistics in different tables have been on the same standard basis for a number of years. Clarity: they are accompanied by impartial commentary and background information about their basis.
Value type and unit of measure	Most of the statistics are simply the numbers of drug-related deaths broken down in various ways (for example, by age and sex). Some other types of figure are provided (for example, the lower quartile, median and upper quartile of age at death; rates per 1,000 population and per 1,000 problem drug users).
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Assessed by UK Statistics Authority, report can be found within the <a href="#">UK Statistic Authority - Assessments</a> section on the NRS website
Help email	<a href="mailto:statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk">statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk</a>
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