

Main points

Introduction

[Table 1](#) shows the annual totals for 1996 to 2019 along with the numbers for the quarters in which the deaths were registered.

Information about the three bases on which figures for MRSA deaths have been produced is given in a note which is available in the [Death Certificates and Coding the Causes of Death](#) section of this website.

Deaths for which MRSA was the underlying cause

- In 2019, there was one death for which MRSA was the underlying cause, one fewer than in 2018.
- Registrations of deaths for which MRSA was the underlying cause tended to increase, year by year (with a couple of exceptions), up to 2007, when there were 56 such deaths, then fell in most of the years thereafter to 4 in 2013. The latest six years' figures have been in the range from 1 (in 2016 and 2019) to 6 (in 2014 and 2015), well below the level seen from 2000 to 2008 (between 35 and 56 each year). The small changes in recent years might represent 'random' year-to-year fluctuations (for more on which, please refer to the 'quarterly numbers' section, below).

Deaths to which MRSA contributed, without being the underlying cause

- There were 14 deaths in 2019 for which MRSA was a contributory factor, compared with 22 in 2018 (a decrease of 8). In 2019, MRSA was a contributory factor for fewer deaths than in all but one of the previous 23 years for which these figures are available. The other low annual totals were 11 such deaths in 2017, 25 in 2015, 28 in 1996, and 29 in 2014.
- The number of deaths for which MRSA was a contributory factor rose in every year up to 2005, when there were 174 such deaths. From 2007 the annual totals fell quite sharply to 43 in 2011. The following four years showed a gradual decline from 43 in 2011 to 25 in 2015. Since then there have been between 11 and 30 such deaths each year.

Deaths for which MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate (either as the underlying cause or as a contributory factor)

- In 2019, there was a total of 15 deaths for which MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate (either as the underlying cause of death or as a contributory factor), nine fewer than in 2018. The 2019 figure is the second lowest number of such deaths in any of the previous 23 years for which these figures are available. The other lowest annual numbers have been 14 such deaths in 2017, 24 in 2018, 31 in 2015 and 2016, 34 in 1996, 35 in 2014 and 36 in 2013).
- The total number of deaths for which MRSA was mentioned (either as the underlying cause of death or as a contributory factor) rose in every year up to 2007, when there were 230 such deaths, then fell quite sharply to 62 in 2011 before declining further to 14 in 2017. In 2018 the total increased to 24 before falling again to 15 in 2019.

Quarterly numbers of deaths for which MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate (either as the underlying cause or as a contributory factor)

- On a quarterly basis, the number of deaths for which MRSA was mentioned (either as the underlying cause of death or as a contributory factor) was highest at 81 in the first quarter of 2007. For the four-year period, 2013 to 2016, there were an average of about 8 such deaths per quarter, and the scale of the fluctuations around this is such that they could well be the result of “random” statistical quarter-to-quarter variability. Since then the average has been around 5 deaths per quarter.
- The highest quarterly figures since the middle of 2012 were 14 in the second quarter of 2015 and 12 in the first quarters of 2013 and 2018; the lowest were 0 in the third quarter of 2017, 1 in the fourth quarter of 2017 and 2 in the fourth quarter of 2019. Information on statistics based on small numbers can be found in the [Fluctuations in and possible unreliability of death statistics](#) page on this website.

MRSA deaths by NHS Board and by place of death

- [Table 2](#) contains breakdowns by NHS Board of residence and [Table 3](#) shows the place of death, where MRSA was the underlying cause of death.
- [Tables 4 and 5](#) contain similar breakdowns to [Tables 2 and 3](#) respectively, for all deaths where MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate (either as the underlying cause or as a contributory factor).