

Probable suicides

2022

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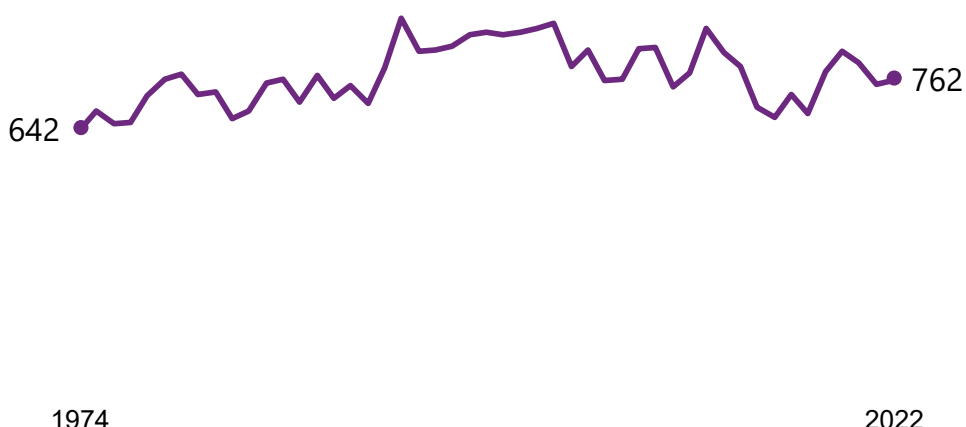


This statistical report details information on the number of deaths that were registered in Scotland in 2022 which were probable suicides. It also includes breakdowns by sex, age, cause of death, deprivation and method.

Small increase in number of suicides in 2022 to 762 deaths

The number of probable suicides has risen slightly in 2022, up by 9 deaths from 2021. Previously, there were increases in suicides in both 2018 and 2019. The number of suicides then fell in both 2020 and 2021.

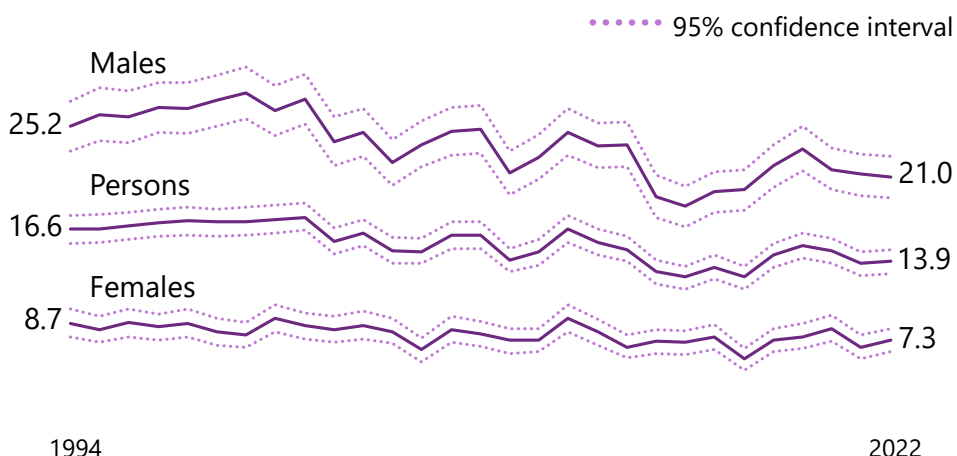
Number of deaths



Suicide rates in Scotland remain similar to 2021

The mortality rate for suicides has remained at a similar level to 2021. This applies to people overall as well as both males and females.

Age standardised mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 people)



Average age of suicide deaths increased in latest year

The average age for suicide deaths dropped to their lowest levels in 2000 with a rate of 41.9. Since 2000, the average age of suicide deaths have generally risen with a sharp increase of 8% in the last 4 years.

Average age at death (years)



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1. Key Findings

- In 2022 there were 762 probable suicides in Scotland, an increase of 9 (1%) on the previous year.
- Female suicide deaths increased by 18 to 206 deaths in 2022, while male suicides decreased by 9 to 556 deaths in the latest year.
- The rate of suicide mortality in males was 2.9 times as high as the rate for females. Rates have been consistently higher for males throughout time, ranging from 2.6 to 3.6 times as high since the series began.
- The rate of suicide mortality in the most deprived areas in Scotland was 2.6 times as high as in the least deprived areas in Scotland. This is higher than the deprivation gap of 1.8 times for all causes of death.
- Over half of all probable suicide deaths in 2022 were due to hangings, strangulations or suffocations. Around 1 in every 5 probable suicides were due to poisonings.

How are probable suicides defined?

Deaths with an underlying cause of one of the following ICD-10 categories are counted as probable suicides:

- X60-84 Intentional self-harm
- Y10-34 Events of undetermined intent
- Y87.0 Sequelae of intentional self-harm
- Y87.2 Sequelae of events of undetermined intent

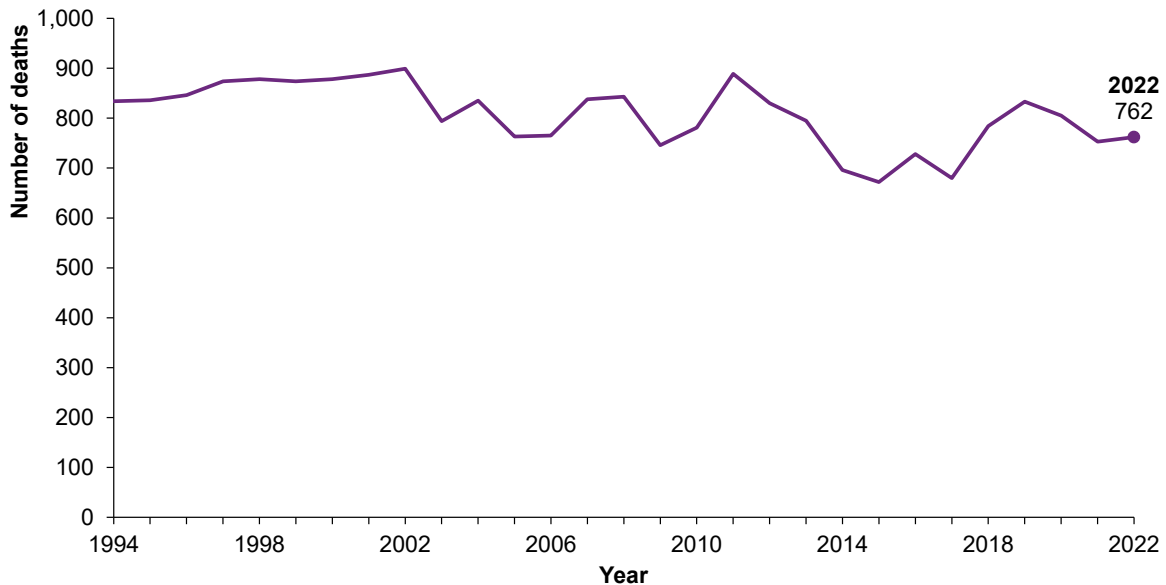
The terms probable suicide and suicide are used interchangeably throughout this report.

Note: Sequelae refers to death occurring one year or more after the originating event.

2. Probable suicide deaths in Scotland

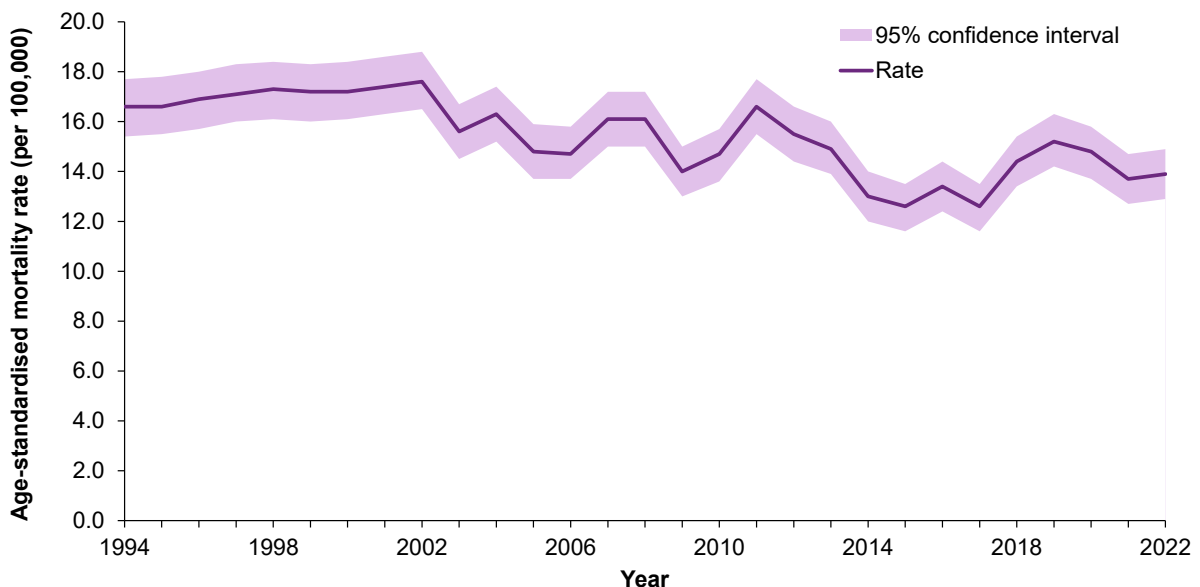
In 2022, there were 762 probable suicide deaths in Scotland, an increase of 9 (1%) on the previous year. ([Figure 1a](#))

Figure 1a: Number of probable suicide deaths, 1994-2022



The rate of mortality from suicides in Scotland was 13.9 per 100,000 people in 2022 ([Figure 1b](#)). This is similar to the rate of 13.7 per 100,000 people in 2021 (the increase is not statistically significant).

Figure 1b: Age standardised mortality rate for probable suicide deaths, 1994-2022



What are age-standardised rates?

Age-standardised mortality rates are a better measure of mortality than numbers of deaths, as they account for the population size and age structure and provide more reliable comparisons between groups or over time.

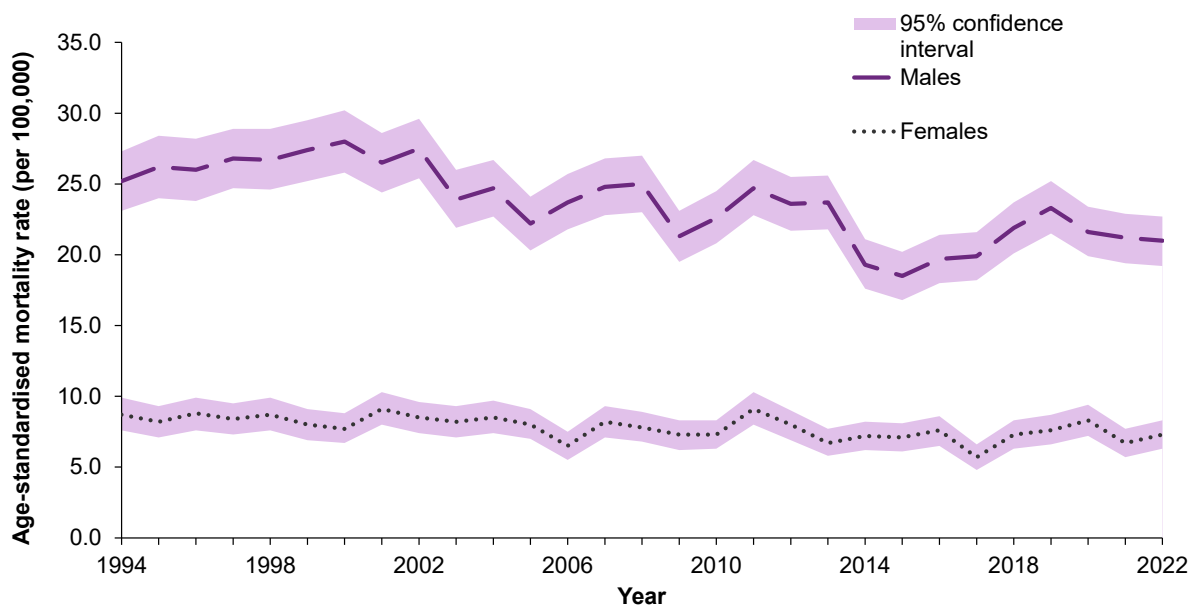
More information on the calculation of [age-standardised mortality rates](#) is available on our website.

3. Probable suicide deaths by age and sex

In 2022, suicide deaths among females increased by 18 (10%) to 206. There were 556 male suicide deaths, down by 9 (2%) on the previous year.

The mortality rate for suicides in 2022 was 2.9 times as high for males as it was for females. The rate for males has been consistently higher than females, ranging from 2.6 to 3.6 times as high since the series began in 1994 ([Figure 2](#)).

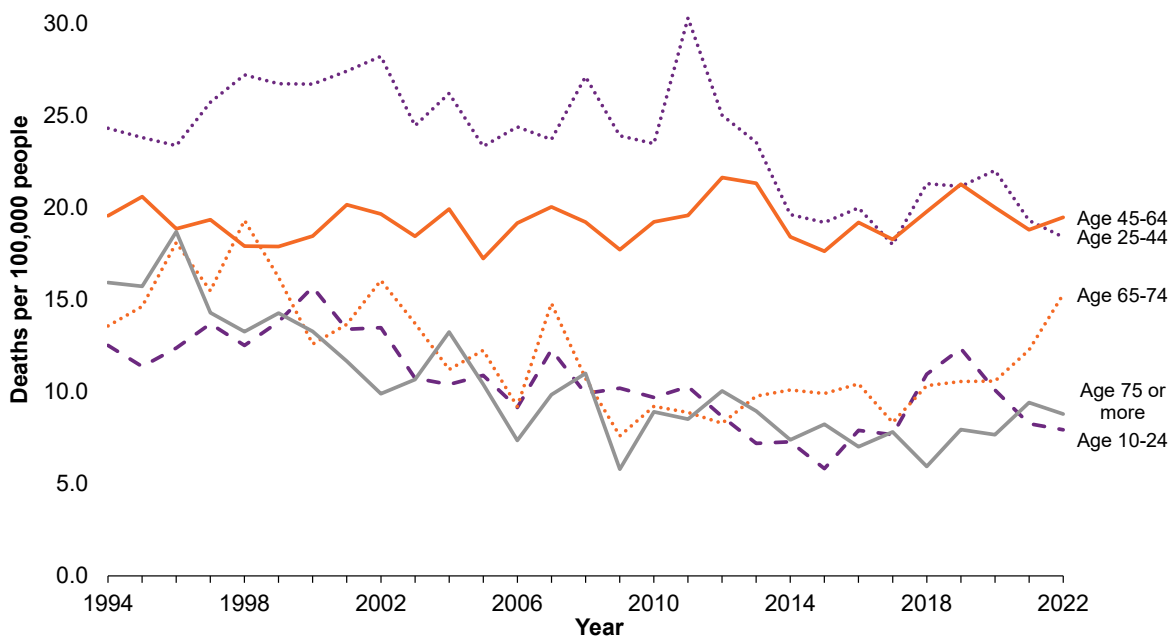
Figure 2: Age-standardised mortality rate for probable suicide deaths, by sex, 1994-2022



The age-specific rate of suicides in Scotland is highest at age 25-44 and age 45-64. The rate at age 25-44 is at a lower level now than at its peak in 2011. The rate for age 45-64 has been fairly consistent over time. In comparison, the age-specific rate of suicides in age 65-74 has increased in each of the last five years ([Figure 3](#)).

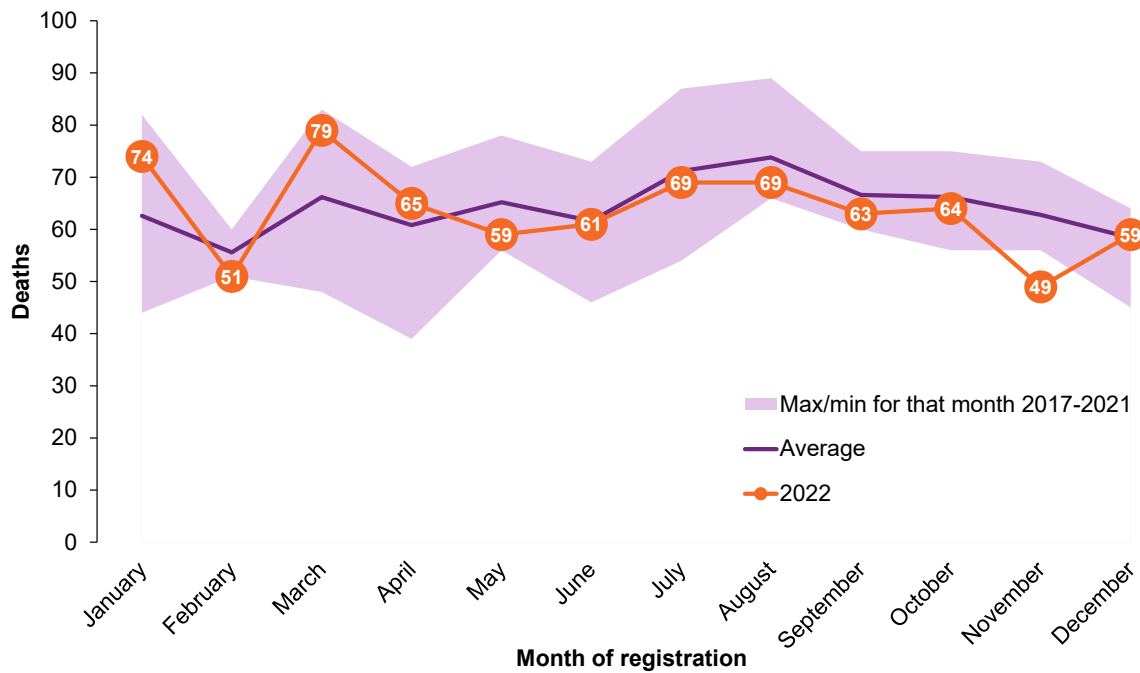
Since 2000, the average age of death for suicides has generally increased, from a low of 41.9 years in 2000 to 48.2 years in 2022.

Figure 3: Age-specific mortality rates of probable suicide deaths by age group, 1994-2022



Probable suicide deaths in Scotland were above the monthly average of the last five years in January, March and April of 2022. In comparison, the number of suicide deaths in November 2022 was lower than any of the previous five Novembers ([Figure 4](#)).

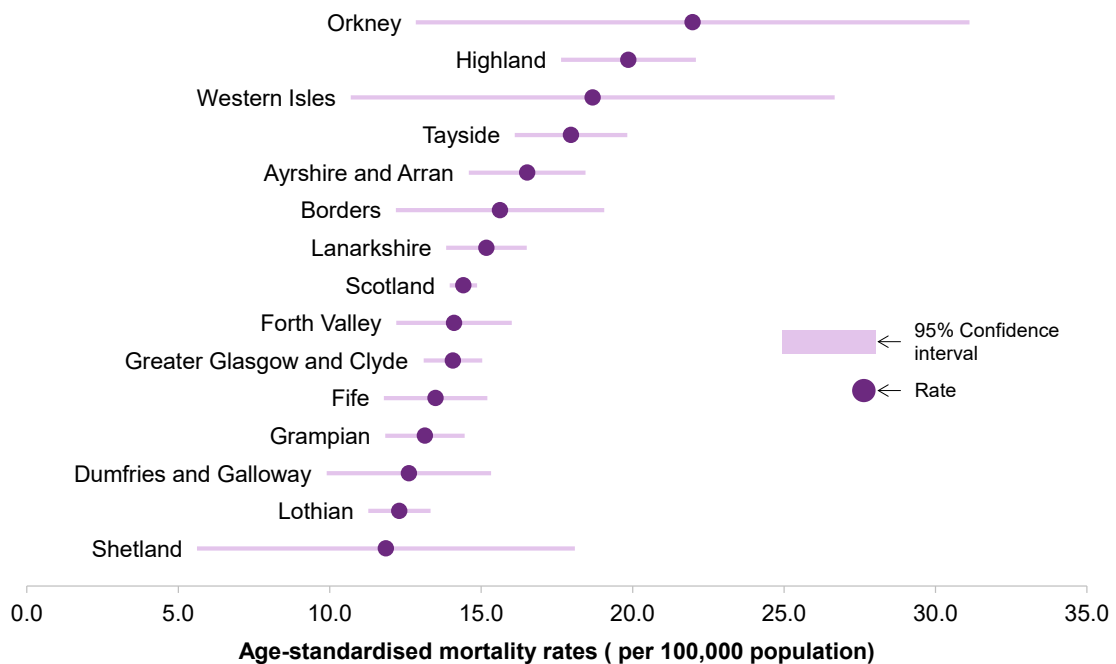
Figure 4: Probable suicide deaths by month of registration



4. Probable suicide deaths in Scottish areas

The rate of suicide mortality was higher than the Scottish average in Highland, Tayside and Ayrshire and Arran at health board level between 2018 and 2022 ([Figure 5](#)). The rates were also high in Orkney and Western Isles, but the confidence intervals on these estimates are very wide due to the relatively smaller populations in these areas.

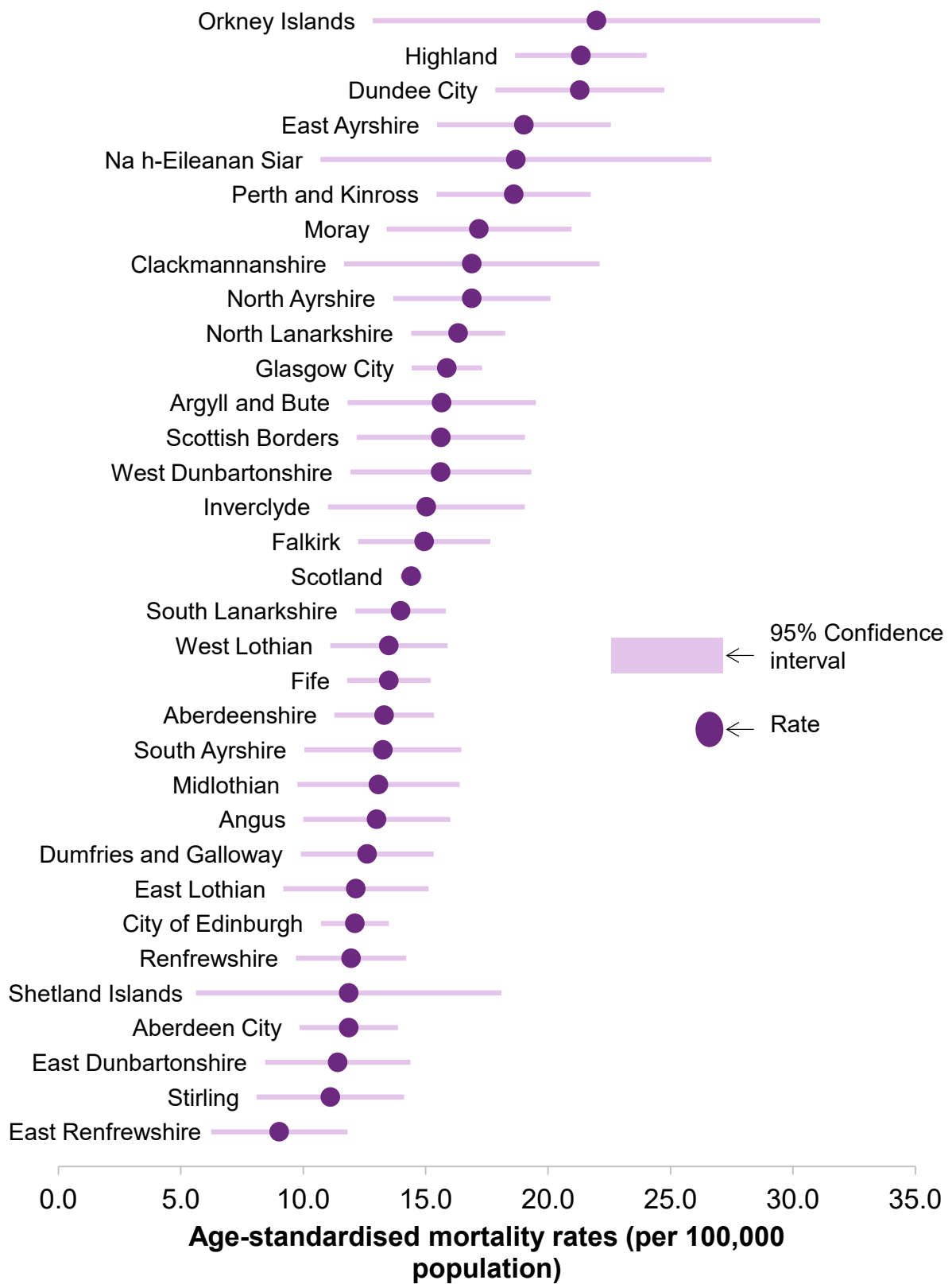
Figure 5: Age-standardised mortality rates of probable suicide deaths by NHS board area, 2018-2022 average



At council level, the rate was higher (statistically significant) than the Scottish average in Highland, Dundee City, East Ayrshire and Perth and Kinross ([Figure 6](#)).

Orkney Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar also had high rates, but the confidence intervals on these estimates are very wide due to the relatively smaller populations in these areas (the difference not statistically significant). Both areas have been above the Scottish average several times over recent years, so while it is not a statistically significant difference there is some consistency in the trend.

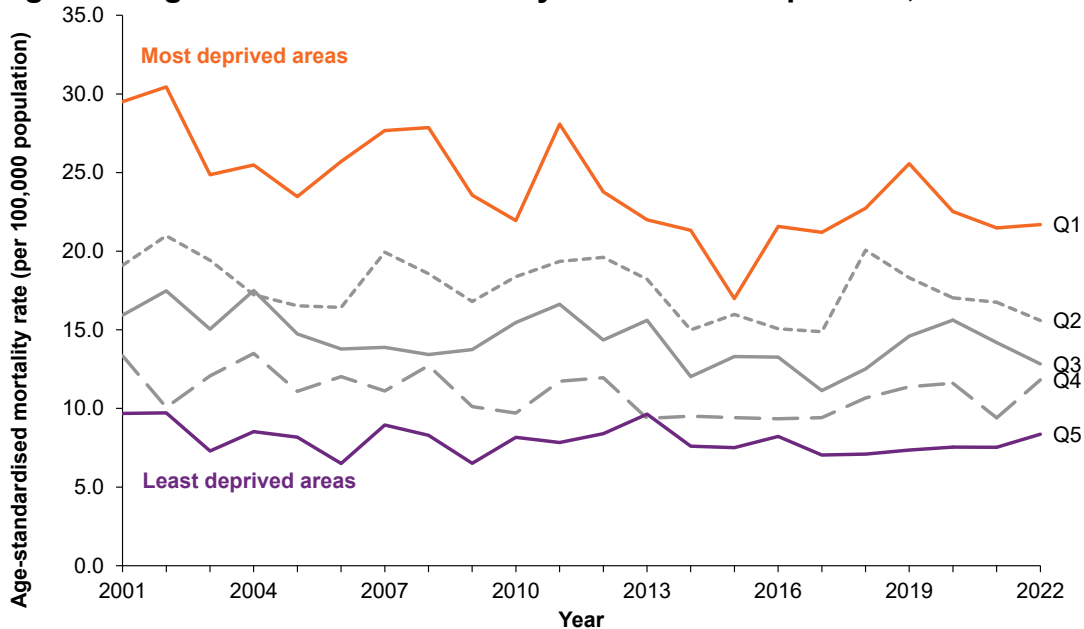
Figure 6: Age-standardised mortality rates of suicide deaths by council area, 2018-2022 average



5. Probable suicides by multiple deprivation and urban rural

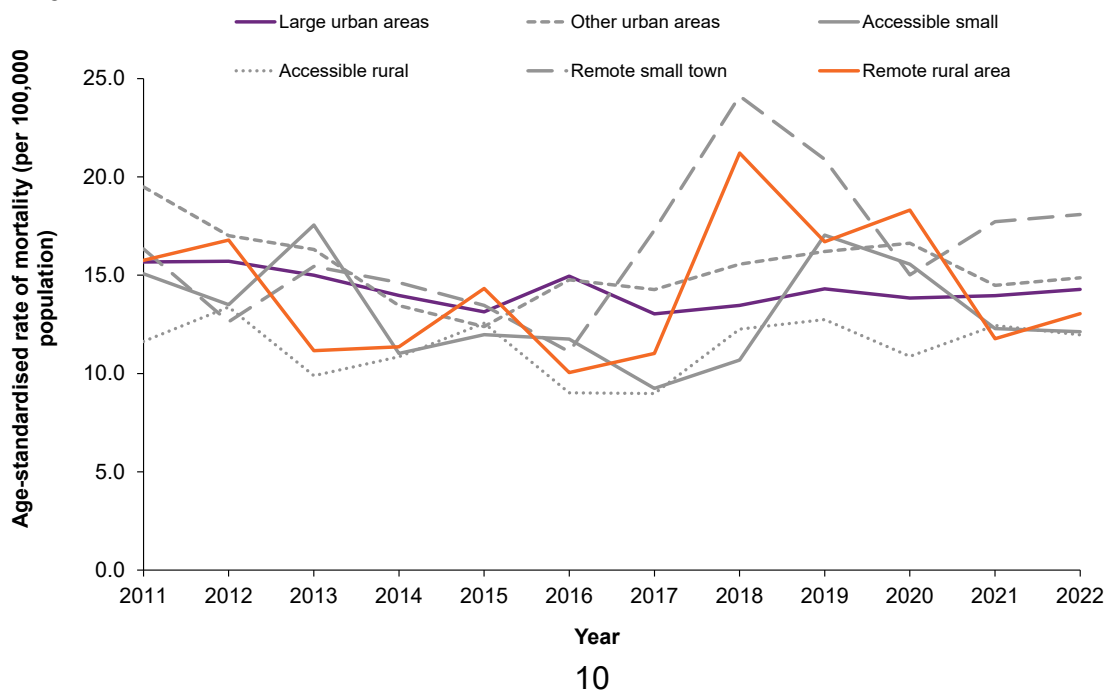
The rate of suicide mortality in the most deprived areas in Scotland was 2.6 times as high as in the least deprived areas in Scotland. This compares to a difference of 1.8 times for all causes of death. This difference in mortality rate by deprivation has been fairly stable since 2001 ([Figure 7](#)).

Figure 7: Age-standardised mortality rates in SIMD quintiles, 2001-2022



Looking at the rates for urban and rural areas produces a less clear pattern ([Figure 8](#)). There does not appear to be a strong relationship between urban or rural locations and suicide mortality rates.

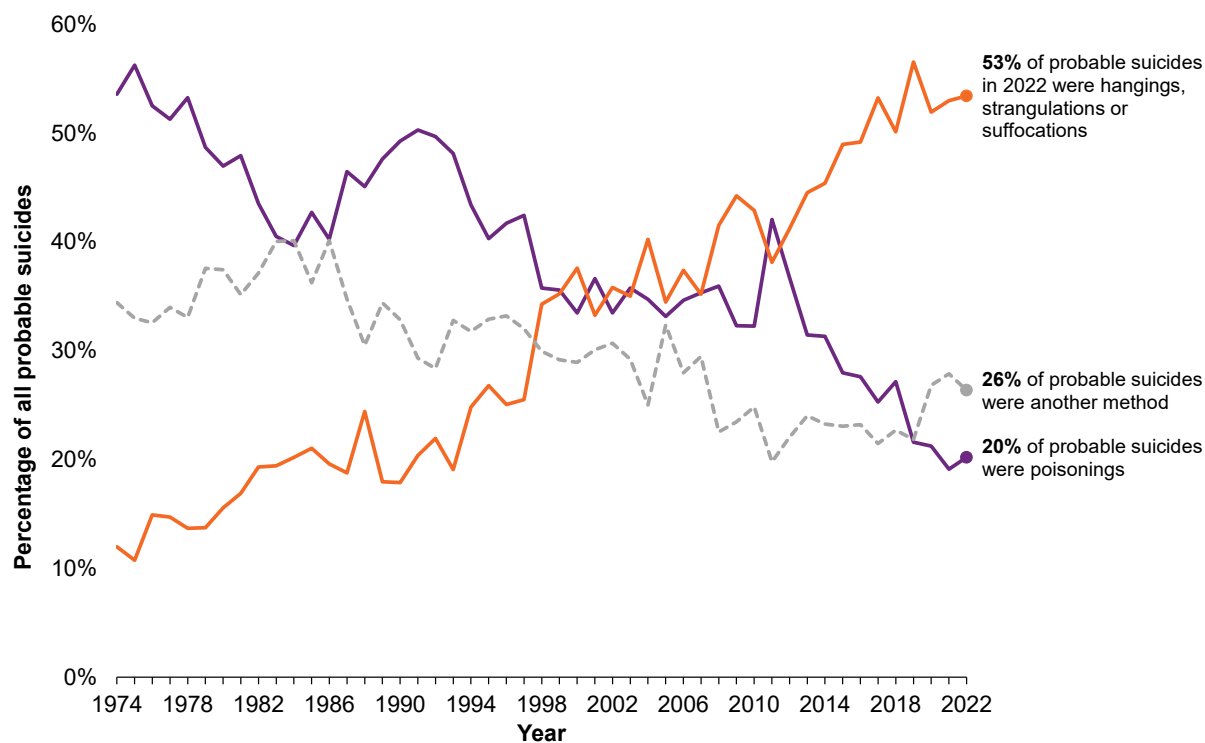
Figure 8: Age-standardised mortality rates by urban rural classification, 2011-2022



6. Method of suicide

Over half of all probable suicide deaths in 2022 were due to hangings, strangulations or suffocations. Around 1 in every 5 suicides were due to poisonings. This trend has changed over time. Poisoning was the most common cause of suicide between 1974 and the end of the 20th century ([Figure 9](#)).

Figure 9: Method of suicide (percentage of all probable suicides), 1974-2022



7. Suicides in the UK

Comparable suicide statistics for the rest of the UK for 2022 are yet to be released. Based on 2021 data, Scotland had the second highest rate of suicide deaths of all countries in the UK (13.7 deaths per 100,000 population) after Northern Ireland (14.3 deaths per 100,000). Wales (12.7 deaths per 100,000) and England (10.5 deaths per 100,000) had the two lowest rates of suicides of all countries in the UK.

Probable suicide death statistics in the rest of the UK are produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Links to the latest versions of these are available below.

- [Suicide deaths: England and Wales \(ONS\)](#)
- [Suicide deaths: Northern Ireland \(NISRA\)](#)

8. Other information

If you are a journalist covering these statistics in the media, please consider following the [guidelines issued by Samaritans](#) on the reporting of suicide.

If you are struggling to cope, help is available.

[NHS inform has a list of resources](#) available to anyone, with many of these available 24 hours a day.

Samaritans can be called for free on 116 123 (UK and Republic of Ireland) or contacted via email at jo@samaritans.org. Visit the [Samaritans website](#) for more information.

9. Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (available on the [UKSA](#) website).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is National Records of Scotland's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc. can be found in the metadata that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

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Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the [Statistics](#) section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the [Scotland's Census](#) website.

We also provide information about [future publications](#) on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government [ScotStat website](#).

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Enquiries and suggestions

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