

# Publication Summary



## The National Drug Related Deaths Database (Scotland) Report: Analysis of Deaths occurring in 2013

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### About this Release

This is the fifth report from the National Drug Related Deaths Database (NDRDD) for Scotland, presenting information on deaths which occurred in 2013, and trends since 2009. This report analyses a specific cohort of drug-related deaths (on which National Statistics have already been published by National Records of Scotland (NRS)) in greater depth, exploring their context (e.g. social circumstances and previous contact with health and criminal justice services) more widely. This provides insights to inform the development of preventive, harm reduction and therapeutic interventions to reduce drug-related deaths.

### Key Points

- The 448 cases analysed in this report are largely a subset of the 526 drug-related deaths already published by National Records Scotland (NRS) in August 2014.
- As in previous years, three quarters (76%) of those who died were male and half (50%) lived in the most deprived areas of Scotland. The percentage of deaths among individuals aged 35 and over has increased from half of deaths (50%) in 2009 to two-thirds (66%) of deaths in 2013.
- Over a third (36%) of those who died, were a parent or parental figure. 273 Children lost a parent or parental figure to a drug-related death in 2013.
- In the six months prior to death, almost three quarters, (72%) of the 2013 cohort had a medical condition recorded. Almost two thirds (63%) of the cohort had a psychiatric condition recorded (higher than in any previous cohort).
- Over half (53%) had been in contact with a drug treatment service and one quarter (28%) had been admitted to hospital for an acute or psychiatric inpatient stay in the six months before death. Collectively, seven in ten individuals (71%) who died a drug-related death in 2013 had been in contact with a service (drug treatment, hospital, police or prison) which may have identified them as being at risk of drug-related death.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of those who were known to have used drugs also had a history of intravenous (IV) drug use. Almost one third (31%) were prescribed an Opioid Replacement Therapy (ORT) drug at the time of death.
- In almost all cases (97%) multiple drugs were *present* in the body at death and in 68% of cases multiple drugs were deemed to be *implicated* in death, indicating polydrug use.
- In 2013, diazepam was the drug most frequently found to be *present* in the body at death (66%). Heroin was the drug most frequently *implicated* in death (44%). Opioids (methadone, heroin, morphine or buprenorphine) were *implicated* in 76% of cases.

- The percentage of deaths with heroin *present* was similar to the past two years, while the percentage with methadone *present* decreased from 56% in 2011 to 47% in 2013.
- Between 2009 and 2013, there were 203 cases with a 'new' or 'novel' psychoactive substance (NPS) *present* in the body at time of death (108 deaths in 2013).
- Deaths with NPS *present* could be broadly categorised into two types: those featuring Benzodiazepine-type NPS (e.g. Phenazepam) and to a lesser extent Stimulant-type NPS (e.g. PMA/PMMA, Mephedrone). Almost all deaths with NPS *present* had other drugs co-present; typically combinations of NPS, opioids, alcohol and benzodiazepines.
- In addition to the 448 non-intentional drug-related deaths in the 2013 cohort, 37 deaths by suicide were analysed (a further subset of the 526 drug-related deaths (including suicide statistics) published by NRS in 2014). Almost two-thirds (65%) were among males and the mean age of deaths by suicide was six years higher than the main NDRDD cohort.

## Background

Against the recent background of rising numbers of drug related deaths, the NDRDD was established at ISD to collect in-depth information on the demographics and circumstances of individuals who have died a drug-related death in Scotland. The NDRDD case definition of a drug-related death is based on the UK wide definition as reported by the NRS for national reporting and has included confirmed suicides since 2012.

Surveillance of drug-related deaths in a locality is commonly undertaken by local critical incident monitoring groups. The process for identification of a drug-related death varies but will normally include collaboration between members of the critical incident monitoring group, the police and the local Procurator Fiscal. Each area has a Data Collection Co-ordinator who works closely with local critical incident monitoring groups and key partners. Their role is to collate the information on each drug-related death from data sources including police sudden death reports, pathology reports, GP and other clinical notes.

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## Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Full Publication Report](#) or on the [ISD website](#)

### About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up. Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland - and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government Health Department and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

### Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](#) [www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/](http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/)