

The National Drug-Related Deaths Database (Scotland) Report: Analysis of Deaths occurring in 2014

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About this release

This report from Information Services Division on the National Drug-Related Deaths Database for Scotland, presents information on deaths which occurred in 2014, and trends since 2009. This report analyses drug-related deaths, exploring social circumstances and previous contact with health and criminal justice services. This provides insights to inform the development of preventive, harm reduction and therapeutic interventions to reduce drug-related deaths. This year's report includes additional sections focusing on deaths related to Novel Psychoactive Substances, deaths among females and deaths by suicide (involving controlled drugs).

Main points

The National Drug-Related Deaths Database includes 622 deaths which occurred in 2014, of which 575 were classed as non-intentional. The report and the following points focus on these non-intentional deaths:

- Around three quarters (76%) of drug-related deaths were among males. The average age of individuals increased from 34 in 2009 to 39 in 2014, reflecting the ageing profile of problem drug users.
- Female drug-related deaths increased by 54% from 2009 to 2014, in comparison with a 28% increase among males.
- Around half (53%) of those who died lived in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland, similar to previous years.
- 37% (196) of those who died were a parent or carer to a child. 310 children lost a parent or carer to a drug-related death.
- 70% of those who died had recently 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.
- Three out of four individuals had opioids (methadone, heroin, morphine or buprenorphine) implicated in their death.
- Heroin/morphine was the drug most commonly implicated in death, increasing from 40% in 2011 to 52% in 2014. Deaths where methadone was implicated in death fell from 54% to 36% over the same time period.
- Unlike previous years, the number of deaths related to Novel Psychoactive Substances increased only slightly in 2014 (112).

Background

Against the recent background of rising numbers of drug-related deaths, the National Drug-Related Deaths Database 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 definition of a drug-related death is based on the UK-wide definition used by National Records of Scotland for national reporting and has included confirmed suicides since 2012.

The 622 drug-related deaths reported by the National Drug-Related Deaths Database are largely a subset of the 613 deaths registered in 2014, on which summary statistics were previously published by National Records of Scotland.

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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Find out more

Further information can be found in the [National Drug-Related Deaths Database \(Scotland\) Report](#).

Other ISD publications on drug and alcohol misuse can be found at the [ISD website](#).

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) provides information on various aspects of drug misuse in Scotland: [ScotPHO drug misuse section](#).

ISD and 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. [Find out more about our statistics](#).