

Publication Summary



The Scottish Suicide Information Database Report 2015: Contact with multiple healthcare services prior to death

Publication date – 15 December 2015

About this Release

The last Scottish Suicide Information Database report published by the Information Services Division took a broad look at the characteristics and circumstances of those who died from suicide in Scotland between 2009 and 2012. This report focuses on their contact with six healthcare services prior to death, and compares this with the general population.

Key Points

- A total of 3,013 residents of Scotland died by 'probable suicide' (intentional self-harm or undetermined intent) during the four-year period 2009-2012. For data availability reasons, some points below relate to 2010-2012.
- The majority (70%) of those who died by suicide had some contact with healthcare services in the specified period prior to death, indicating prior medical and/or psychiatric problems.
- The most common form of recorded contact was a mental health drug prescription (59% in the twelve months prior to suicide), the second most common an A&E attendance (26% in the three months prior to suicide).
- People who died by suicide had had significantly more contact with each of the six healthcare services than the general population. In particular, they were 42 times more likely to have had a psychiatric hospital stay in the previous twelve months.
- However, as less than 1% of all psychiatric hospital inpatients died by suicide within the twelve months following their stay, it is difficult to predict from these statistics who is at risk of suicide.
- Females were more likely to contact the six healthcare services prior to suicide (87%) than males (64%). This difference is likely to reflect the generally higher level of contact with healthcare services among females in the wider population, particularly for mental health drug prescriptions.

- People who died from suicide who lived in more deprived areas were significantly more likely to have had prior contact with healthcare services than those from less deprived areas.
- Of the individuals who died from suicide, those from 'very remote rural' areas had a lower level of contact (47%) than those from other types of area (range 62-73%).
- Suicide deaths by poisoning (including from medication) had the highest level of contact with the six healthcare services (82%), while firearm deaths and deaths by hanging, strangulation and suffocation had relatively low contact (47% and 62% respectively).

Background

The Scottish Suicide Information Database project supports epidemiological research, policy-making and preventive activity. The database contains information on all 'probable suicides' registered in Scotland since 1 January 2009, along with demographic details and contacts with particular healthcare services.

This report looks at six healthcare services: mental health drug prescriptions dispensed in the community; A&E attendances; psychiatric hospital outpatient appointments; general hospital inpatient stays for mental health, alcohol, drug or injury related diagnoses; psychiatric hospital inpatient stays; and initial assessments by specialist drug treatment services. For A&E attendances, a three-month period of contact before death was used; for all other services the time period was twelve months.

For some services, contact will be slightly underestimated due to data limitations, and as some datasets are incomplete for 2009, most of the results presented in this report relate to suicides registered between 2010 and 2012.

'Probable suicides' analysed in this report include deaths from 'intentional self-harm' and 'events of undetermined intent'. Intentional self-harm includes cases where it is clear that the person's intention was suicide, and cases where there is evidence that the person died as a result of self-inflicted injuries. 'Events of undetermined intent' are cases where it is not clear whether the death was the result of intentional self-harm, an accident or an assault, but it is considered that most of these deaths are likely to be suicides.

Contact

Chris Black
Senior Information Analyst
Information Services Division
chrisblack@nhs.net
0131 275 7449

Chris Deans
Information Analyst
Information Services Division
chrisdeans@nhs.net
0131 314 1749

Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Scottish Suicide Information Database Report 2015](#) and the downloadable [data tables](#).

More suicide statistics are available on the [Scottish Public Health Observatory website](#).

For detailed information about the classification of probable suicide, see the [National Records of Scotland website](#).

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. Further information [about our statistics](#).