A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2015

A report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database

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About this release

This release from the Information Services Division presents the information held on the Scottish Suicide Information Database for suicides between 2009 and 2015, with particular focus on socio-demographic characteristics and prior contact with health services.

Main Points

- In Scotland 5,119 individuals died from suicide between 2009 and 2015. The average suicide rate over this period was 15 people per 100,000.
- Three quarters of people who died from suicide were men and almost half of all the individuals were aged between 35 and 54.

Deaths caused by probable suicide – average age-specific rates per 100,000 population, by sex, Scotland, 2009-15

- Suicide deaths were around three times more likely among those living in the most deprived areas than among those in the least deprived areas.
- The most common method of suicide was ‘Hanging, strangulation & suffocation’ which accounted for 46% of all deaths. ‘Poisoning’ (including drug overdose) was the second most common cause of death overall, accounting for 30% of all deaths.
- The majority of individuals (70%) had contact with at least one healthcare service in the 12 months before their death.
• One in four people (26%) had at least one psychiatric inpatient stay or psychiatric outpatient appointment in the 12 months before their death, while 8% had both.

• The most common form of contact individuals had with health services was a mental health drug prescription. Three out of five (59%) people had at least one prescription of this type dispensed within 12 months of death.

Background

Established in 2009, ScotSID provides a central repository for information on all probable suicide deaths in Scotland, in order to support wider research, policy-making and suicide prevention.

Analysed in this report are ‘Probable suicides’ of individuals aged five years and over whose death was recorded in Scotland, including some people who were not resident in Scotland at the time they died. ‘Probable suicides’ includes deaths from 'intentional self-harm' and those deaths where the intent was undetermined. The latter category includes cases where it is not clear whether the death was suicide. However, it is understood that the majority of these undetermined intent deaths are likely to be suicides. For simplicity ‘probable suicides’ are sometimes shortened to ‘suicides’. More information can be found on the National Records of Scotland website.

The healthcare services included in this report are: general acute hospital inpatient/daycase care, psychiatric inpatient discharges, psychiatric outpatient appointments, contact with drug services, mental health drug prescribing in the community, and Accident & Emergency (A&E) attendances.

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Further Information

Further information can be found in the main report: A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2015 and from the accompanying data tables available to download from our web page.

The next release of this publication will be August 2018.

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.