A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2011-2017

A report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database
An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division presents the information held on the Scottish Suicide Information Database for suicides between 2011 and 2017, with particular focus on socio-demographic characteristics and prior contact with health services.

Main Points

- During the period 2011-2017, 5,286 individuals aged 5+ years died from suicide in Scotland. The average annual suicide rate over this period was 14 per 100,000 people aged 5+.

- Just under three-quarters of those who died by suicide (73%) were male.

- Almost half (47%) of those who died by suicide were aged 35-54 at the time of death.

Deaths caused by suicide\(^1\) - rate\(^2\) per 100,000 population by gender, Scotland 2011-2017

- Suicide deaths were approximately three times more likely among those living in the most deprived areas than among those living in the least deprived areas.

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Source: NRS

\(^1\) ScotSID cohort excludes <5 year olds. Cohort is based on new WHO coding rules to ensure consistency across 2011-17.

\(^2\) Rates have been calculated using the number of deaths divided by the estimated population for the relevant ageband/gender/year group. The rate per 100,000 population is displayed.
• ‘Hanging, strangulation & suffocation’ was the most common method of suicide while ‘Poisoning’ (including drug overdose) was the second most common cause of death.

• Nearly three-quarters of people (73%) had contact with at least one of six healthcare services prior to their death (the services were general acute hospital inpatient/daycare care, psychiatric inpatient discharges, psychiatric outpatient appointments, contact with drug services, mental health drug prescribing in the community, and Accident & Emergency (A&E) attendances).

• Three-fifths (62%) had at least one mental health drug prescription dispensed in the 12 months prior to death. This was the most common form of contact with healthcare services.

• 84% of individuals who died by suicide in Scotland between 2011 and 2017 were born in Scotland, 10% were from the rest of the UK and the remaining 6% were born outwith the UK.

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’. To ensure consistency across the time period, all analysis was based on the new WHO coding rules. More information can be found on the National Records of Scotland website.

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Further Information
Further information can be found in the main report: A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2011-2017 and from the accompanying data tables available to download from our web page.

The next release of this publication will be November 2019.

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 Statistics. Further information about our statistics.