

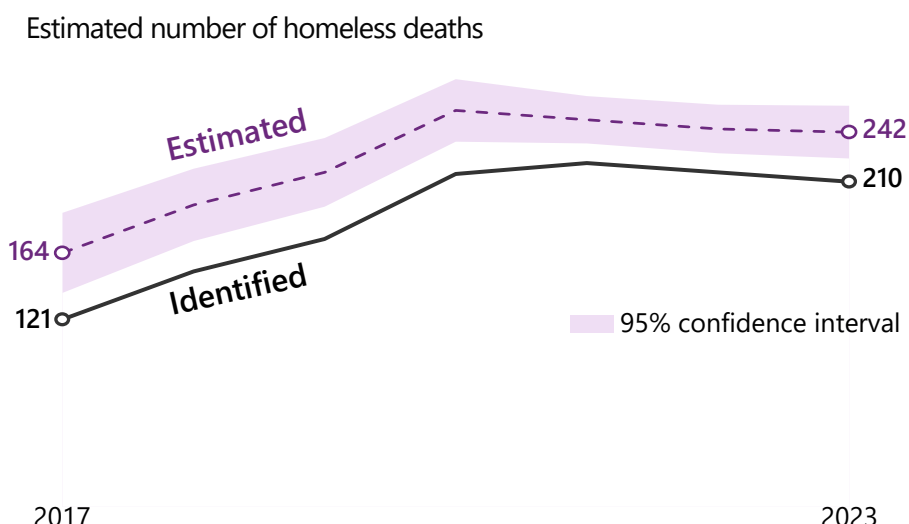
Homeless Deaths 2023

Published on 26 November 2024

This statistical report includes estimates of the number of homeless deaths registered in Scotland during 2023. It includes breakdowns by sex and age-group, council area and cause of death. These are **official statistics in development**. Users should refer to the limitations section of this report before interpreting these statistics.

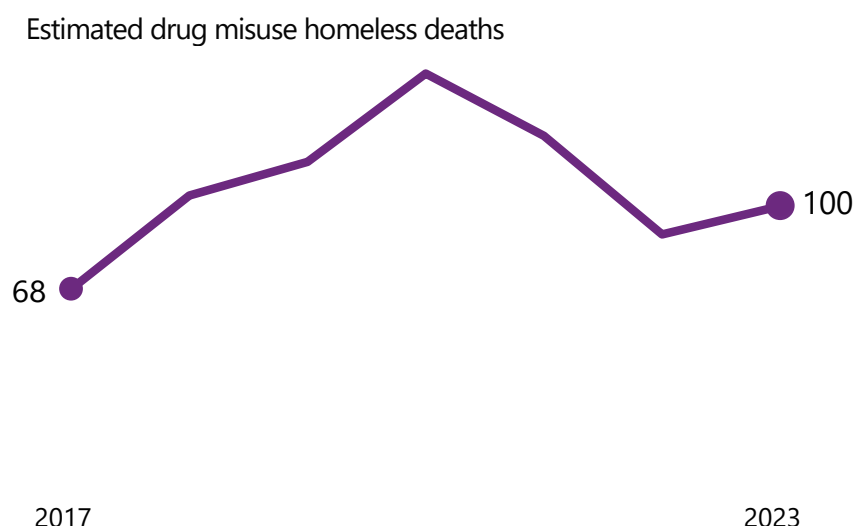
Homeless deaths in 2023 remained at a similar level to the previous year

There were an estimated 242 homeless deaths in Scotland in 2023. This is at a similar level to 2022. Homeless deaths are at a higher level now compared to 2017, when these statistics were first calculated.



Homeless drug misuse deaths increased in 2023

In 2023 there were an estimated 100 homeless deaths due to drug misuse, 41% of all homeless deaths. This follows a similar pattern to the general population which saw an increase in drug misuse deaths in 2023 after a fall in 2022.

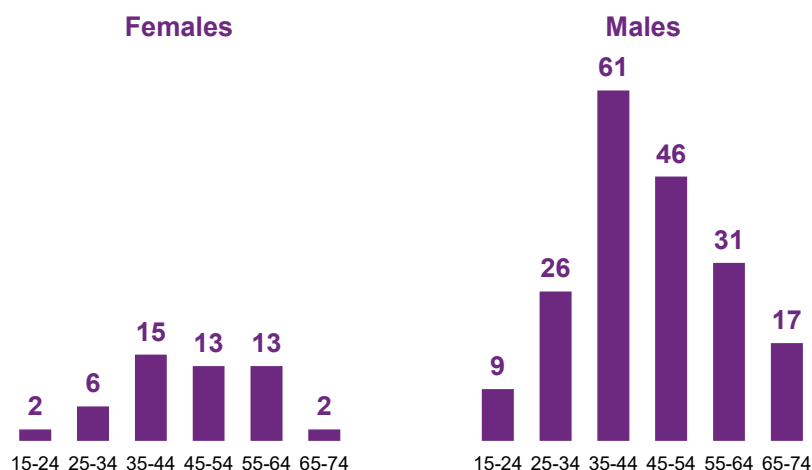


Half of all homeless deaths in 2023 were people aged under 45

Since 2017, between 49% and 65% of homeless deaths have been aged under 45 each year.

Males continued to account for the majority of homeless deaths in 2023, with 79% of deaths being male and 21% female.

Estimated homeless deaths by age group



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1. Main Points

- There were an estimated 242 deaths of people experiencing homelessness registered in Scotland in 2023. This is similar to the level in 2022. Homeless deaths are at a higher level now compared to 2017, when these statistics were first collected.
- Shetland Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar, City of Edinburgh, Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire had the highest rates of homeless deaths per million population (aged 15-74) in 2023. Due to small numbers, local authority figures can fluctuate from year to year. Small numbers of deaths can result in higher rates for areas with small populations.
- 79% of homeless deaths were male and 21% were female in 2023.
- Half (50%) of homeless deaths in 2023 were people aged under 45.
- Drug misuse deaths of people experiencing homelessness increased in the last year from 89 to 100. Drug misuse deaths accounted for two fifths (41%) of all estimated homeless deaths in Scotland in 2023.
- Estimates of homeless deaths in other parts of the UK are not comparable with those for Scotland. [An article](#), jointly published by statistics producers across the UK explains the reasons for this in more detail.

These statistics include people who were in temporary accommodation at the time of their death as well as those who were sleeping rough.

The local authority in these statistics does not necessarily represent deaths of homeless applicants to the area that they died in. Deaths are assigned to a local authority based on the address of usual residence or (if no usual residence is recorded) the place of death.

2. Introduction

This report provides **official statistics in development** on deaths of people experiencing homelessness in Scotland. Figures are provided for deaths registered in 2023, with breakdowns by sex and age group, local authority and cause of death.

[Official Statistics in Development](#) are those that are undergoing development and will be tested with users. They have not yet been assessed against the rigorous quality standards of Accredited Official Statistics. They will remain official statistics in development for a period of evaluation of their suitability and quality, and feedback is invited from users and stakeholders. When interpreting the statistics, users should be aware of their limitations and read the [methodology](#) section for details on how they have been developed.

Deaths of homeless people were identified from death registration records. A statistical method called capture-recapture modelling was used to estimate the likely number of additional deaths which we were unable to identify as homeless using the information available. Figures in this report are shown for both identified deaths and estimated deaths. Refer to the [methodology](#) section for further explanation of the difference between the two figures.

Why do we use a model to estimate homeless deaths?

Homeless deaths are difficult to count and we know that we will miss some based on the sources of information we have. The model we use tries to account for and estimate how many we might have missed. For more details see the [Limitations of these Statistics](#) section.

3. Homeless deaths in Scotland

In 2023, there were an estimated 242 homeless deaths. This is at a similar level to the estimate last year of 244 deaths.

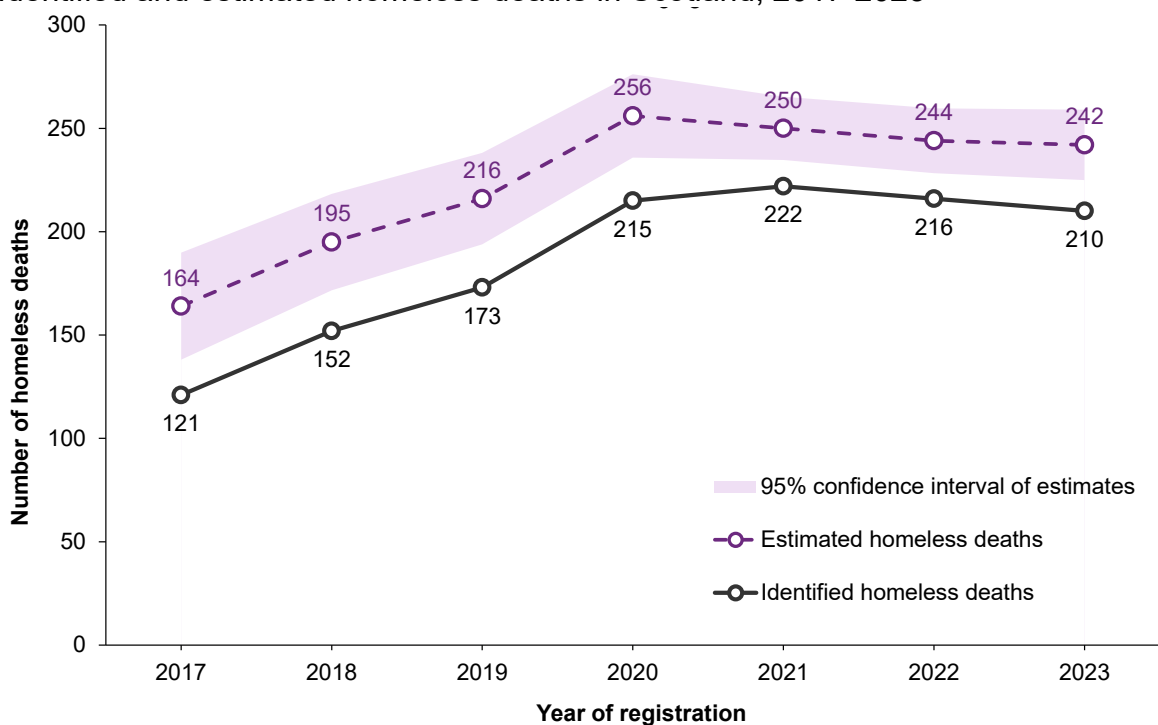
Of the total 242 homeless deaths estimated in 2023:

- 210 were identified from death registration records.
- The additional 32 deaths were estimated using the statistical model.

The 95% confidence interval around the estimated number of deaths was +/- 17. This means the true number of homeless deaths is likely to be within the range of 225 to 259.

Figure 1: Homeless deaths were at a similar level to the previous year

Identified and estimated homeless deaths in Scotland, 2017-2023



Both of the identified and estimated number of homeless deaths were lower in 2023 than in 2022. However, the change over the latest year was not statistically significant as the confidence intervals around these estimates overlap.

Over the last three years, a higher proportion of deaths were identified through our different data sources, and the level of overlap between the data sources was greater. This makes the model more confident in its estimated value. More info about how the model works can be found in the [Methodology](#) section.

4. Homeless deaths by sex and age group

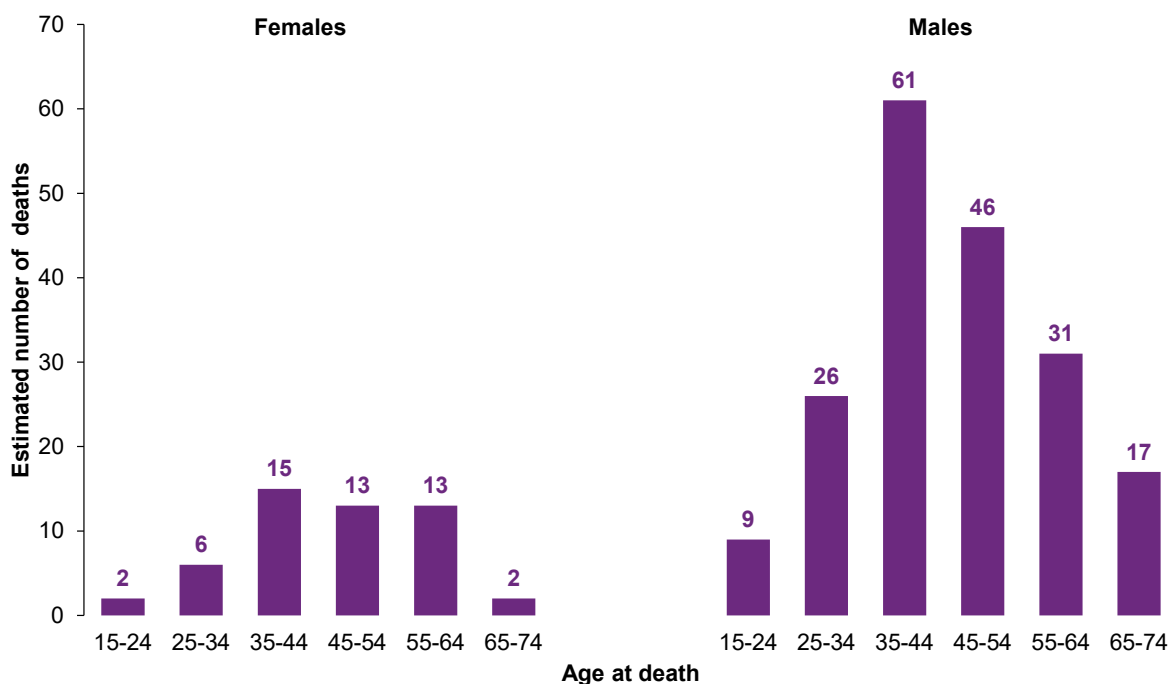
The majority of estimated homeless deaths in 2023 were males.

- 79% were males
- 21% were females

In 2023, around half of all homeless deaths were people aged under 45. The most common age group for both female and male deaths was 35 to 44. The distribution of deaths by age group was similar for both males and females in 2023.

Figure 2: Half of all homeless deaths were people aged under 45

Estimated homeless deaths by sex and age group in Scotland, 2023



5. Homeless deaths by local authority

Shetland Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar, City of Edinburgh, Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire had the highest rates of homeless deaths per million population in 2023.

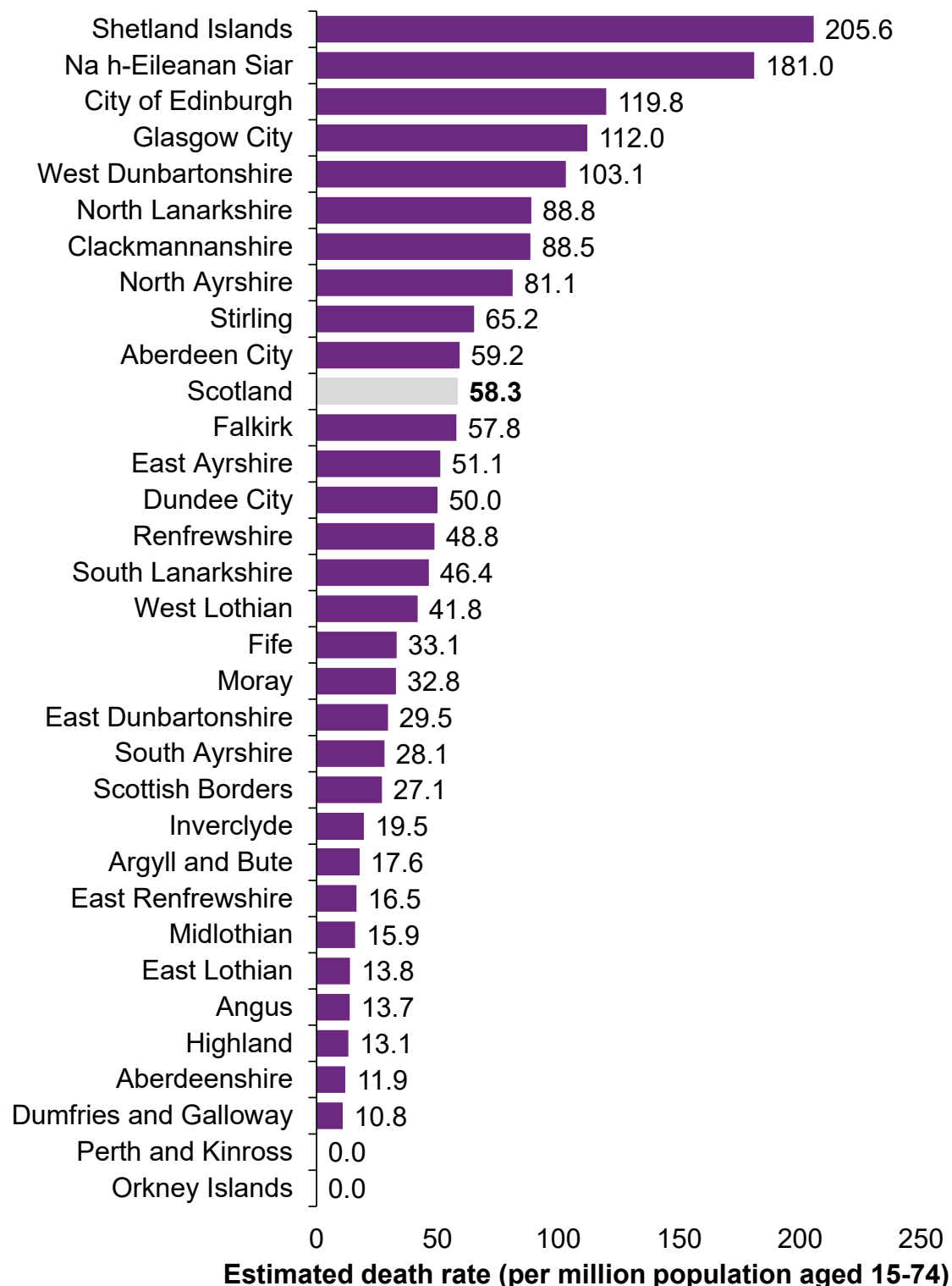
These rates are based on the total population aged 15 to 74 in each local authority, not the population of people experiencing homelessness. These are also not age-standardised mortality rates.

Small numbers of deaths can result in higher rates for areas with small populations. For example, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar both had an estimated 3 deaths in 2023.

Orkney Islands and Perth and Kinross had no identified homeless deaths in 2023.

Figure 3: The rate of homeless deaths varies across Scotland

Estimated homeless death rates by local authority in Scotland, 2023



It is important to note that deaths do not necessarily represent deaths of homeless applicants to the area that they died in. Deaths are assigned to a local authority based on the address of usual residence or (if no usual residence is recorded) the place of death. If a local authority has provided temporary accommodation in a neighbouring area and the resident died while at that address, the death will be assigned to the area that they died in.

6. Homeless deaths by cause

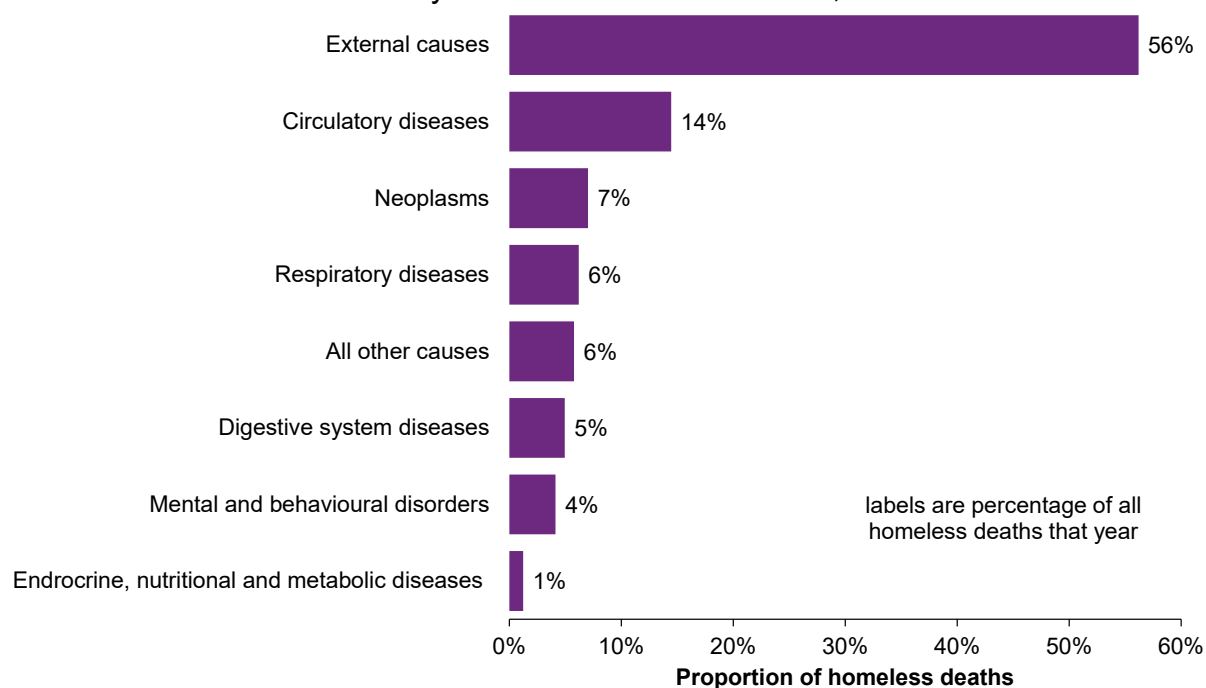
The underlying cause of death can be broken down by ICD-10 chapter¹. The most common cause of homeless deaths in 2023 were:

- External causes of morbidity and mortality (includes most drug misuse deaths, accidents, suicides and assaults): 56% of homeless deaths
- Diseases of the circulatory system (includes heart disease and stroke): 14% of homeless deaths

In comparison, 6% of all deaths in 2023 were due to external causes while 25% were due to diseases of the circulatory system.

The estimated number of homeless deaths from external causes increased from 123 in 2022 to 136 in 2023. This is mainly driven by a rise in homeless deaths due to drug misuse.

Figure 4: More than half of all homeless deaths were due to external causes
Estimated homeless deaths by cause of death in Scotland, 2023



Looking at select causes of death, two fifths of homeless deaths were due to drug misuse (41%, 100 deaths). Probable suicides accounted for 10% and alcohol-specific deaths accounted for 7% of the estimated homeless deaths.

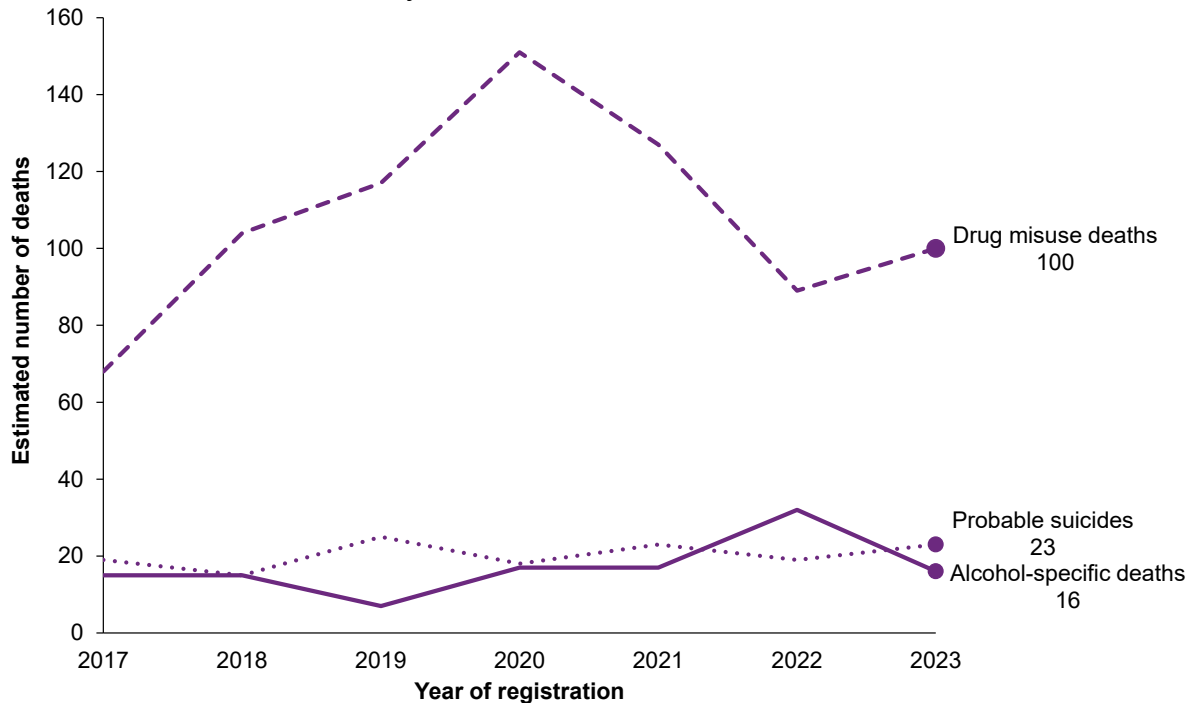
It is important to highlight that there can be overlaps between suicides and drug misuse deaths as a death can be counted as both. For this reason, when interpreting

¹ Causes of death are coded according to International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10).

these statistics, the two categories should not be added together as some deaths may appear in more than one category.

Figure 5: Two fifths of homeless deaths were due to drug misuse in 2023

Estimated homeless deaths by selected cause in Scotland, 2023



7. Comparisons with UK countries

Estimates of homeless deaths in other parts of the UK are not comparable with those for Scotland.

An [article](#) exploring the different sources of data used to estimate homeless deaths across the UK has been jointly produced by NRS, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Homelessness Coherence Team. This concluded that estimates were not produced on a comparable basis across the UK and that they should not be compared.

NRS engage regularly with local authorities in Scotland throughout the process of estimating homeless deaths. Data on temporary accommodation is collected directly from the local authorities and extensive data quality assurance is carried out in partnership. This methodology and process is likely to identify proportionately more homeless deaths than in other parts of the UK, hence why it is concluded that the estimates for Scotland are not comparable with those for the rest of the UK countries.

8. Improvements to methodology

The full methodology for this publication can be found on the [NRS website](#).

In the last three years, in addition to the data we usually receive, we requested extra data from councils to allow us to investigate improvements to the accuracy of our estimates. As well as asking councils for their list of temporary accommodation addresses for us to match to our deaths database, we also asked for details of deaths of homeless people who were known to local authorities.

This new stream of data is currently being used as a quality assurance resource to help us strengthen the confidence we have in each match identified across our five existing data sources. As we continue to improve the methodology, we will look to directly include this sixth source of homeless deaths in our estimation model. We will report on the impact on our estimates of including this additional data source in due course.

9. Limitations of these statistics

These statistics are official statistics in development and represent our best estimate of the number of deaths of people experiencing homelessness, but there are limitations which users should be aware of.

We rely on information which is provided to registrars by the informant when a death is registered. The informant is usually a family member or a friend, but in some cases the informant may be a police officer, a social worker, a funeral director or other person. In these cases, the informant may not have all of the information needed to determine whether the person was homeless at the time of their death. Even when the informant is a family member, they may not have been in touch with the deceased for some time and may be unaware of their circumstances, or they may not wish the fact that their relative was homeless to appear on the death certificate.

Although we have carried out multiple searches of our data sources to identify homeless people, there are a number of groups who we may have missed, or underestimated, in this process.

A small percentage of people present to their local authority as homeless but never take up an offer of homeless accommodation. They may be able to stay with friends or relatives until permanent accommodation is found for them. They are unlikely to be identified in the searches we have carried out.

A number of people who are sleeping rough may not present themselves as homeless to their local authority and are therefore not registered as homeless. If they die while sleeping rough, they may be picked up by our searches but only if the informant provides this information to the registrar when registering the death.

The capture recapture estimation technique we have used attempts to address this undercount, but the method used is known to produce conservative estimates - the actual number of homeless deaths may be higher.

10. Related statistics

[Homelessness in Scotland](#) statistics are published by Scottish Government and updated bi-annually. They contain statistics on homelessness applications, assessments and outcomes. They also provide data on the number of households in temporary accommodation.

[Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, Quarterly Figures](#) are published by National Records of Scotland and contain statistics on deaths for the most recent quarter.

[Vital Events Reference Tables](#) are published by National Records of Scotland and contain annual statistics on deaths.

Deaths from specific causes are published by NRS, including:

- [Drug-related deaths](#)
- [Alcohol-specific deaths](#)
- [Probable suicides](#)
- [Other causes](#)

[Deaths of Homeless people in England and Wales](#) is published by the Office for National Statistics.

11. Notes on statistical publications

Official statistics in development

The statistics in this publication are official statistics in development – formerly called experimental statistics. They are in the testing phase and are not yet fully developed. They have not yet been assessed against the rigorous quality standards of accredited official statistics.

The goal is to develop statistics that can, in due course, be produced to the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc. can be found in the metadata that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

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Preserving the past – We look after Scotland’s national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.

Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the [Statistics](#) section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the [Scotland’s Census](#) website.

We also provide information about [future publications](#) on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government [ScotStat mailing system](#).

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Enquiries and suggestions

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