

Management Information

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Suspected drug deaths in Scotland: July to September 2023

1. Background

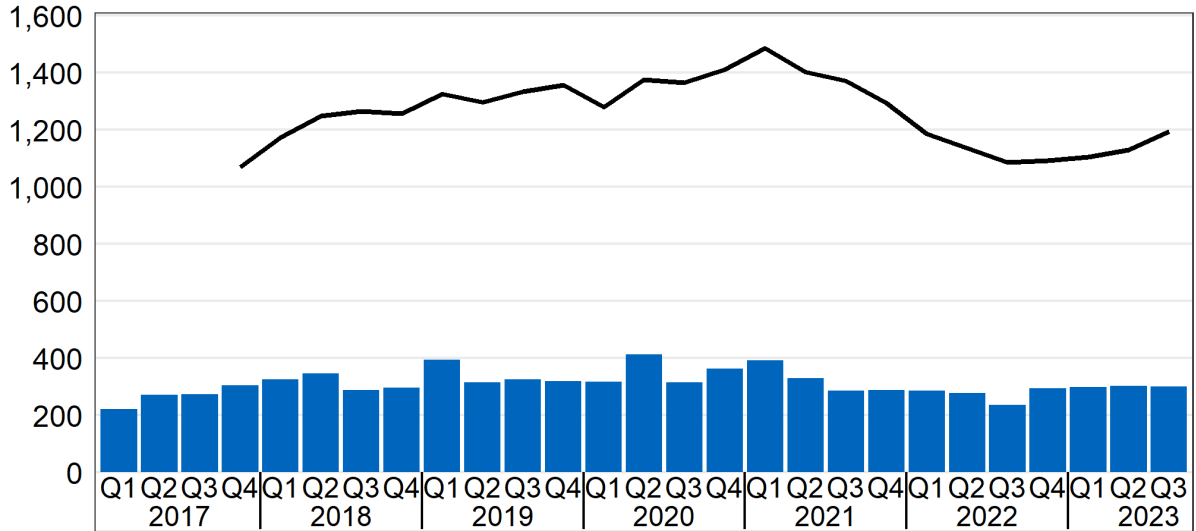
The Scottish Government has a National Mission to reduce drug deaths and improve the lives of those affected by drugs. This quarterly report presents Police Scotland management information to provide an indication of current trends in suspected drug deaths in Scotland.

2. Summary

There were 900 suspected drug deaths during the first nine months of 2023, 13% (103) more than during the same period of 2022. After following a downward trend from early 2021 to late 2022, the rolling 12-month total of suspected drug deaths has increased over recent quarters.

3. Main Points

Figure 1: Number of Police Scotland suspected drug deaths by quarter and year, January 2017 to September 2023



Note: Q1 is January to March, Q2 is April to June, etc
Source: Police Scotland

■ Police Scotland suspected drug deaths — Rolling annual suspected drug deaths (sum of last 4 quarters)

Between January and September 2023:

- There were 900 suspected drug deaths, 13% (103) more than during the same period of 2022;
- There were 645 suspected drug deaths of males (72%). This is an increase of 16% (89) compared to the same period in 2022 when there were 556 such deaths;
- There were 255 suspected drug deaths of females (28%). This is an increase of 6% (14) compared to the same period in 2022 when there were 241 such deaths;
- A majority (66%) of suspected drug deaths were of people aged between 35 and 54. This is broadly in line with previous quarters;
- There were 46 suspected drug deaths in the under 25 age group (5%). This is 7% (3) more than between January and September 2022 when there were 43 such deaths;
- The Police Divisions with the greatest number of suspected drug deaths were: Greater Glasgow (231), Lanarkshire (108) and Edinburgh City (99).

For the calendar quarter July to September 2023:

- There were 300 suspected drug deaths during the period, 1% (2) fewer than between April and June 2023 and 28% (65) more than during the same calendar quarter in the previous year (July to September 2022).

Note that numbers of suspected drug deaths fluctuate from quarter to quarter. Care should be taken not to interpret movements between individual calendar quarters as indicative of any long term trend.

There were 1,195 suspected drug deaths over the 12 months to September 2023, 10% (110) more than over the 12 months to September 2022.

More detail on the statistics presented above is available in the workbook provided here <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/9781835217054/documents/>

4. Methodology

The data in this report is operational information from Police Scotland who compile figures on the basis of reports from police officers attending scenes of death. This is management information and not subject to the same level of validation and quality assurance as Official Statistics. Accredited Official Statistics on drug deaths in Scotland are published annually by [National Records of Scotland](#).

More information on definitions, data sources, methodology and interpretation of the data, including the historical relationship between suspected drug death figures and drug misuse death statistics, can be found in the [Methodology Annex](#).

5. Next update

Public Health Scotland (PHS) compile a [Rapid Action Drug Alerts and Response \(RADAR\) quarterly report](#) of drug-related indicators in order to inform action to prevent drug harms and deaths. In January 2023, PHS added suspected drug deaths to their set of RADAR indicators, presenting weekly data on suspected drug deaths from Police Scotland. PHS will now publish data on this indicator quarterly, with the next publication due for release in January 2024. In light of this, Scottish Government, together with partners, is considering the future of the 'Suspected drug deaths in Scotland' report.

6. Accessing help and support for problem drug use

If you or anyone you know is affected by drug use, support is available via the following organisations:

- [The Scottish Drug Services Directory](#)
- [Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs](#)
- [Know the Score](#)
- [With You](#)

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