

Management Information

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Suspected drug deaths in Scotland: April to June 2023

1. Background

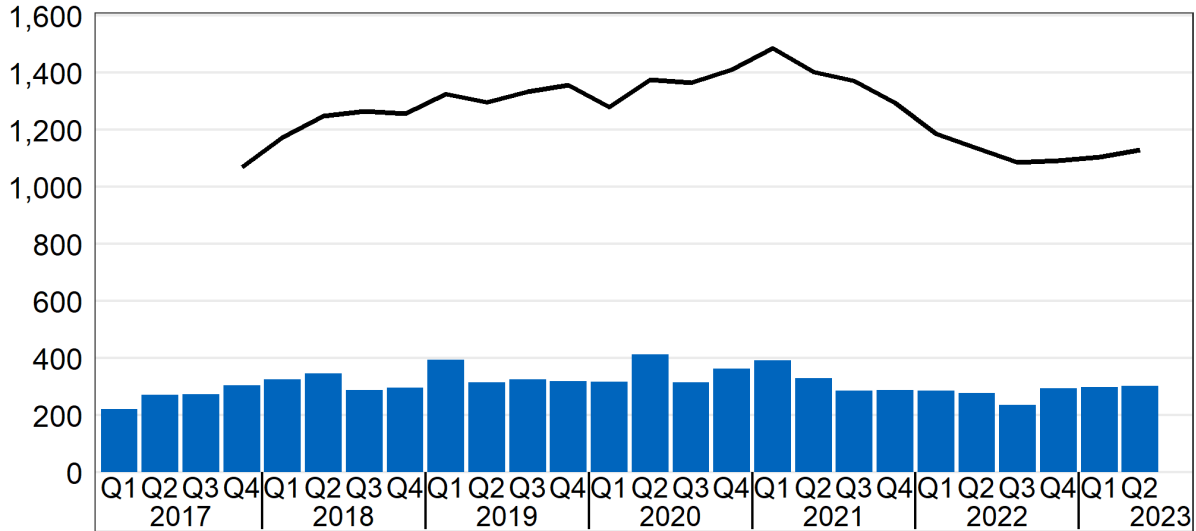
The Scottish Government has a National Mission to reduce drug deaths and improve the lives of those affected by drugs. This quarterly report presents Police Scotland management information to provide an indication of current trends in suspected drug deaths in Scotland.

2. Summary

There were 600 suspected drug deaths during the first six months of 2023. This was 7% (38) higher than during the same period of 2022. After following a downward trend since early 2021, the rolling 12-month total number of suspected drug deaths has increased slightly in recent quarters.

3. Main points

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

- There were 600 suspected drug deaths, 7% (38) higher than during the same period of 2022.
- Males accounted for 72% of suspected drug deaths. This compares with 69% between January and June 2022.
- There were 171 suspected drug deaths of females, 1% (2) fewer than between January and June 2022.
- A majority (67%) of suspected drug deaths were of people aged between 35 and 54 years. This is broadly in line with previous quarters.
- There were 26 suspected drug deaths in the under 25 age group, 16% (5) fewer than between January and June 2022.
- The Police Divisions with the greatest number of suspected drug deaths were: Greater Glasgow (143), Lanarkshire (76) and Edinburgh City (73).

For the calendar quarter April to June 2023:

- There were 302 suspected drug deaths during the period, 1% (4) more than the previous calendar quarter (January to March 2023) and 9% (25) more than during the same calendar quarter in the previous year (April to June 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 1,130 suspected drug deaths over the 12 months to June 2023, 0.4% (5) fewer than over the 12 months to June 2022.

More detail on the statistics presented above is available in the workbook presented alongside this report <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/9781835213094/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. National 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 <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/9781835213094/documents/>.

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 October 2023. 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](#)

Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Population Health Analysis Unit
Health & Social Care Analysis
E-mail: HSCAnalysisHub@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:
Office of the Chief Statistician
E-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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Edinburgh
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