

Management Information

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Suspected drug deaths in Scotland: January to March 2023

1. Background

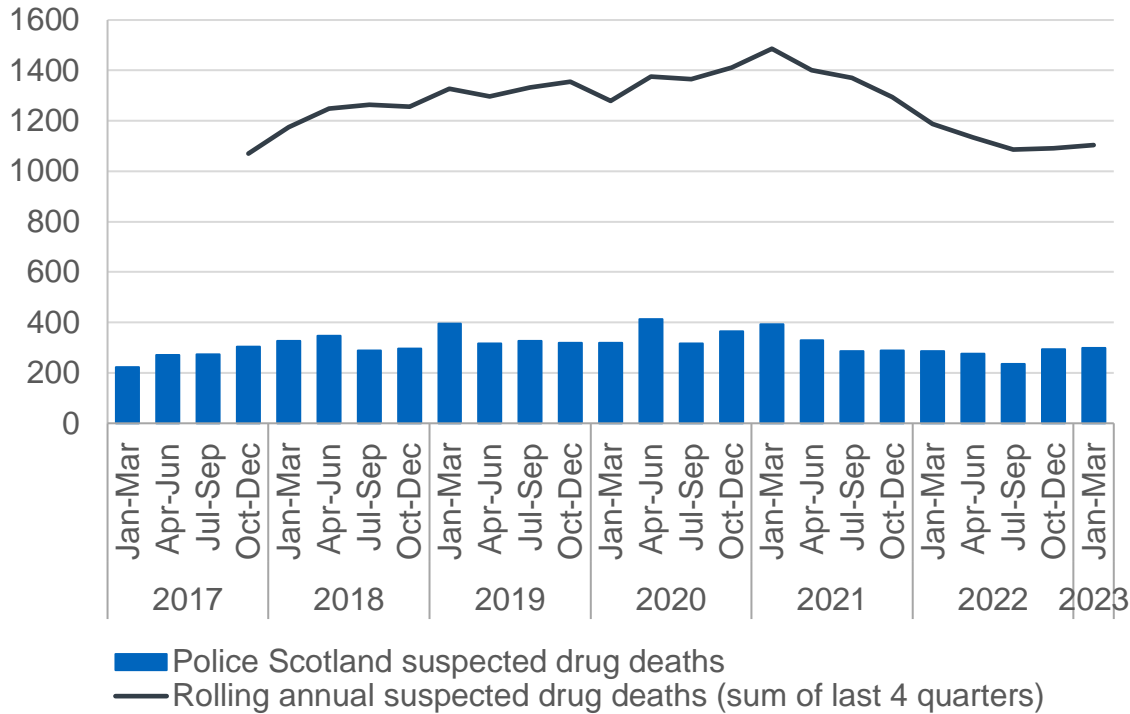
The Scottish Government has a National Mission to reduce drug deaths and improve the lives of those affected by drugs. This quarterly report presents Police Scotland management information to provide an indication of current trends in suspected drug deaths in Scotland.

2. Summary

There were 298 suspected drug deaths between January and March 2023. This was 1% (3) higher than the previous quarter and 5% (13) 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 flattened out over recent quarters.

3. Main points

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



Between January and March 2023:

- There were 298 suspected drug deaths, 5% (13) higher than during the same period of 2022.
- Males accounted for 67% of suspected drug deaths. This compares with 70% between January and March 2022;
- There were 98 suspected drug deaths of females, an increase of 14% (12) compared to the same period in 2022;
- 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 16 suspected drug deaths in the under 25 age group, 7% (1) greater than between January and March 2022;
- The Police Divisions with the greatest number of suspected drug deaths were: Greater Glasgow (68), Edinburgh City (46) and Lanarkshire (34).

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 1,105 suspected drug deaths over the 12 months to March 2023, 7% (82) fewer than the 12 months to March 2022.

More detail on the statistics presented above is available in the workbook presented alongside [this report](#).

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](#).

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 July 2023. In light of this, Scottish Government, together with partners, are considering the future of the 'Suspected drug deaths in Scotland' report.

The next annual drug misuse deaths National Statistics publication from NRS is due to be released in August 2023.

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:

- [Scottish Drugs Forum](#)
- [Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs](#)
- [Know the Score](#)
- [With You](#)

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