



Scottish Public Health Observatory Update

August 2023

A Management Information release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides a Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) update for the Drugs topic area, where the 'Prescribing for Drug Use' page contains new data.

Main points

Drugs: Prescribing for drug use

Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) Drug Prescribing – Community:

- In 2022/23, the number of paid items for OST drugs was 423,814.
- In 2022/23 the dispensing of methadone was equivalent to 10.28 Defined Daily Doses (DDDs) per 1,000 population per day.
- Buprenorphine dispensing (including Buvidal© slow-release formulations) was equivalent to 1.75 DDDs per 1,000 population per day in 2022/23.
- In 2022/23, the dispensing of buprenorphine and naloxone combined (Suboxone) was equivalent to 0.20 DDDs per 1,000 population per day.

Patient Estimates - Community:

- In 2022/23, methadone 1mg/ml solution was prescribed to a minimum of 22,087 people for the treatment of opioid dependence.
- In 2022/23, oral buprenorphine was prescribed to a minimum of 7,254 people for the treatment of opioid dependence.
- In 2022/23-Q4, it was estimated that 2,698 people were prescribed injectable buprenorphine in Scotland.

Annual and Quarterly (12 month rolling) OST Patient Estimates:

Based on data from the Prescribing Information System (PIS) only:

- In 2022/23, OST was prescribed to an estimated minimum of 29,161 people in Scotland.

Based on data from Prescribing Information System (PIS) and Hospital Medicines Utilisation Database (HMUD):

- In 2022/23, including patients supplied with injectable buprenorphine via hospital stock order systems, it is estimated that OST was prescribed to a minimum of 29,942 people in Scotland.

Background

Drugs used for the treatment of opioid dependence include all those in legacy [British National Formulary \(BNF\) subsection 04.10.03](#). Methadone hydrochloride is the most used pharmacological treatment for opioid dependency in Scotland.

The OST Patient Estimates 2022/23 describe the minimum number of individuals prescribed drugs used for the treatment of opioid dependence from legacy [British National Formulary \(BNF\) subsection 04.10.03](#), by their local authority of residence. This includes methadone hydrochloride, buprenorphine, buprenorphine & naloxone and long-acting buprenorphine (including Buvidal© slow-release formulations). Lofexidine hydrochloride and naltrexone hydrochloride (both primarily used for the management of opioid withdrawals) are not included.

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Further information

Data from this publication are available from the [publication page](#) on the ScotPHO website.

The next release of this publication will be Summer 2024.

PHS and Official Statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS 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](#).