

WAID Scotland 2023 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

This report details the 2023 release of water-related fatality data.

Overall water-related fatalities

In 2023, there were 94 water-related fatalities in Scotland. This shows a decrease in overall water-related fatalities in comparison to previous years (see Figure 1). Figure 1 also breaks down water-related fatalities by cause.

Accidental and natural causes have decreased, whilst suicides (suspected) have increased (see Figure 1). 'Not recorded' has reduced significantly since the introduction of the **Drowning and Incident Review** (DIR) in May 2023 which has impacted the other outcomes. For further information on DIR and how this links with WAID data, see the notes page.

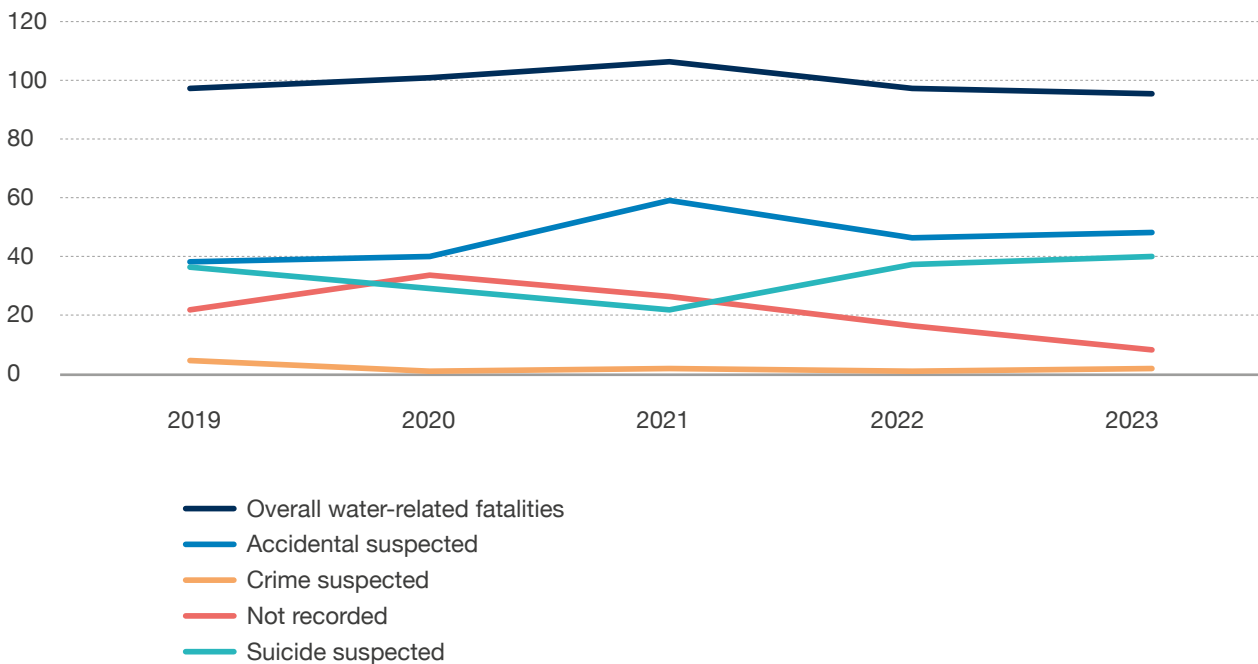


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by year, 2019-2023

Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) uses a three-year average (2013-2015), establishing that there are 50 accidental water-related fatalities each year and a further 29 suicides (suspected). Including crime and 'not recorded' fatalities, this constitutes 96 overall water-related fatalities on average per year.

Additionally, the **Interim Review of SDPS** provided a five year average (2016-2020) in order to ascertain any changes to the baseline. It established that since the implementation of SDPS, there were an average of 92 overall water-related fatalities per year. This includes 44 accidental fatalities and 27 suspected suicide fatalities.

The 2023 figures show that overall water-related fatalities have reduced in comparison to the SDPS baseline but still remain above the Interim Review's five-year average (see Figure 2).

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013-2015 average)	96
Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)	92
2019	96
2020	99
2021	105
2022	96
2023	94

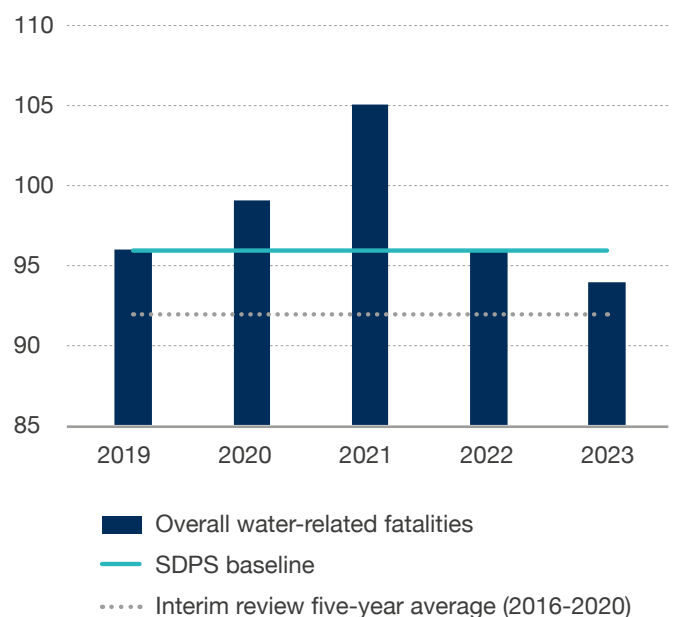


Figure 2: Overall fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)

Accidental fatalities

In 2023, there were 47 accidental fatalities¹ in Scotland. SDPS uses a three-year average (years 2013-2015) establishing that there are 50 accidental water-related fatalities each year in Scotland. The 2023 figures show a 6 per cent decrease with the baseline (see figure 3). This is also in a backdrop of a reduction of ‘not recorded’ outcomes in 2023 due to the introduction of the Drowning and Incident Review (DIR).

Year	Accidental fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013-2015 average)	50
Interim review five year average (2016-2020)	44
2019	37
2020	39
2021	58
2022	45
2023	47

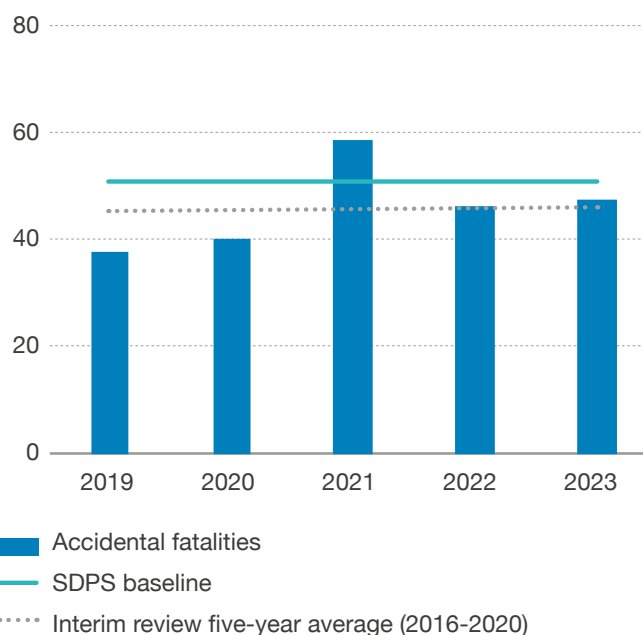


Figure 3: Accidental fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)

¹ Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

Key points

In 2023:

- There were 47 accidental fatalities and a further 39 suicides suspected.
- 86% of accidental fatalities were male.
- Males aged 60-69 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 4).
- 64% of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters (see Figure 5). This is consistent with previous years.
- Everyday activities accounted for 59% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 6). This is contrast to previous years in which recreational activities accounted for the most fatalities.
- 3 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of alcohol (6%).
- With the exception of 2021, the rate of accidental water-related fatalities has been coming down since 2016 (0.96 per 100,000). The rate last year was 0.86 per 100,000 (see Figure 7).
- When considering population rate, males aged 60-69 were the highest group (see Figure 8).
- February, June, September, October and December were the months with the most accidental fatalities (see Figure 9).

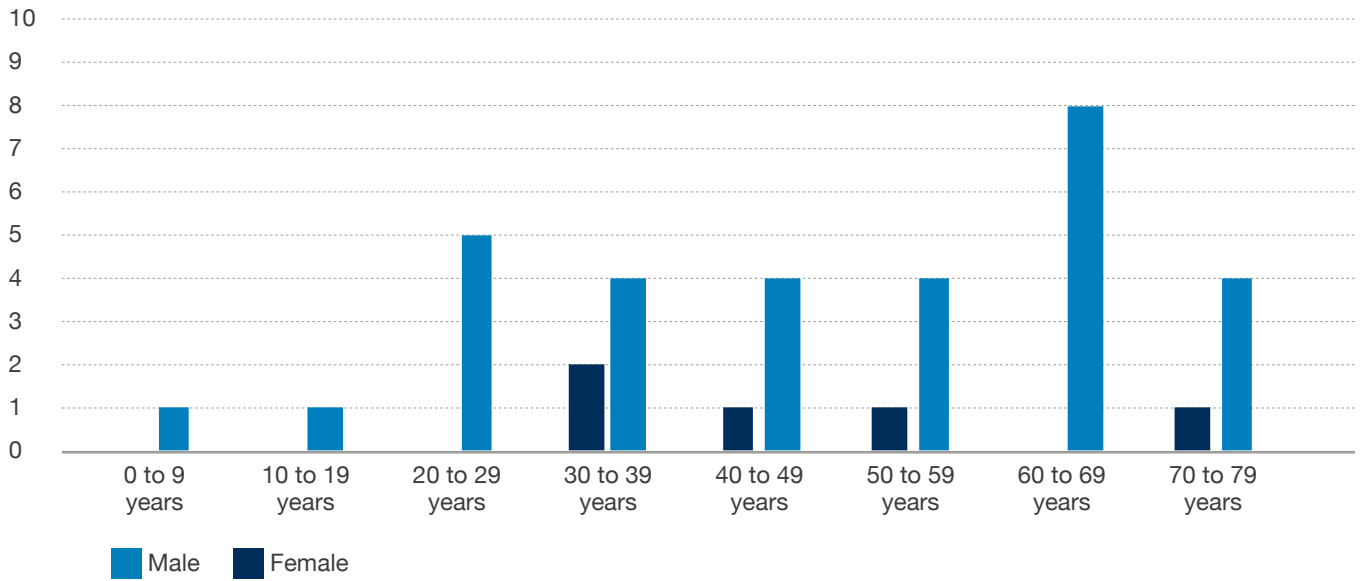


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by age. N=36, 11 not recorded

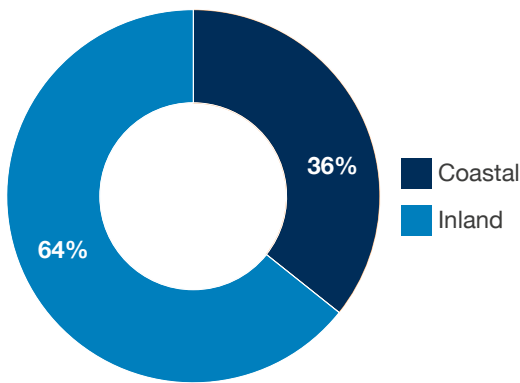


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by location. N=42, 5 excluded

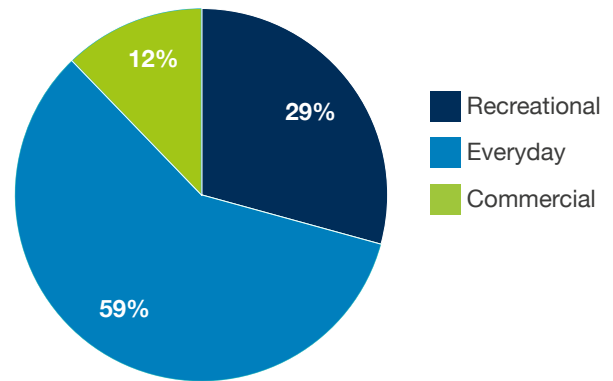


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by activity. N=42, 5 excluded

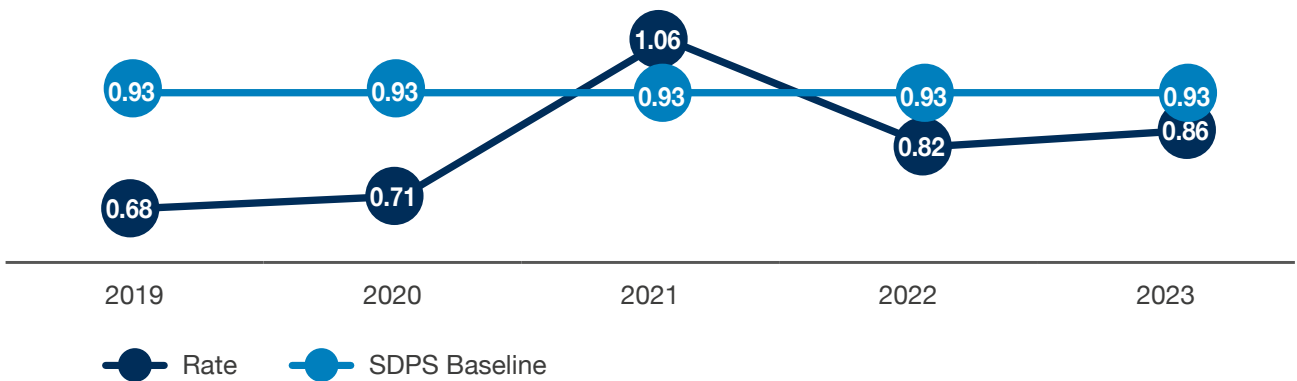


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by year and rate – 2019-2023 and SDPS average (2013-2015). Rate based on NRS figures per 100,000

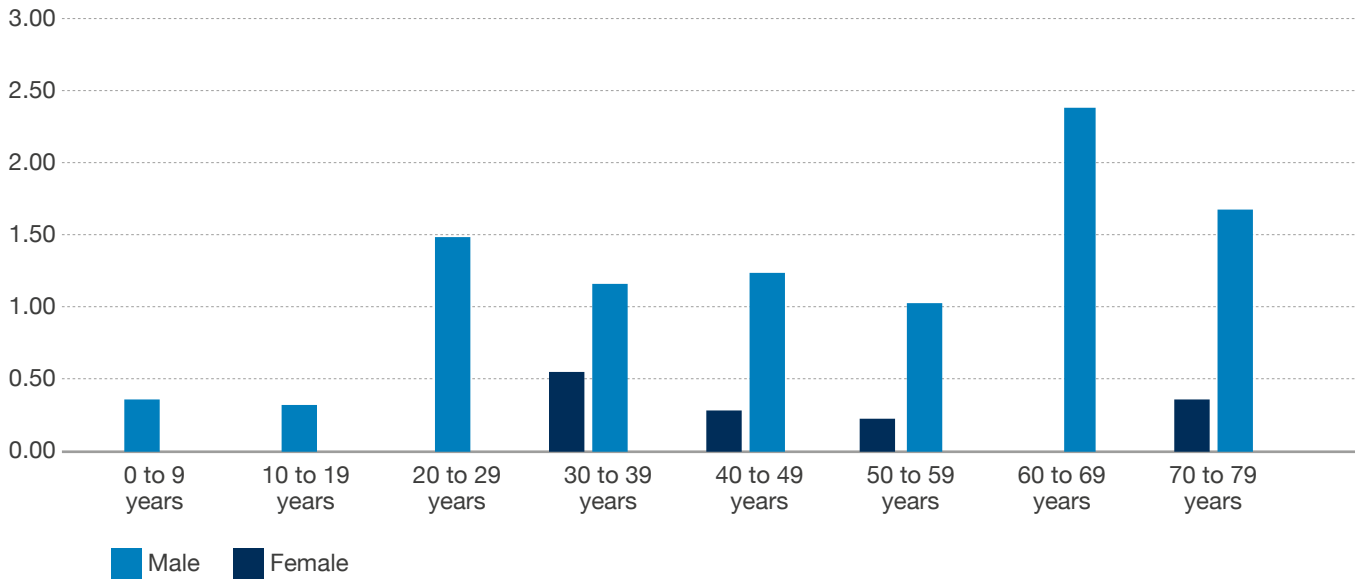


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000. N=6, 11 not recorded)

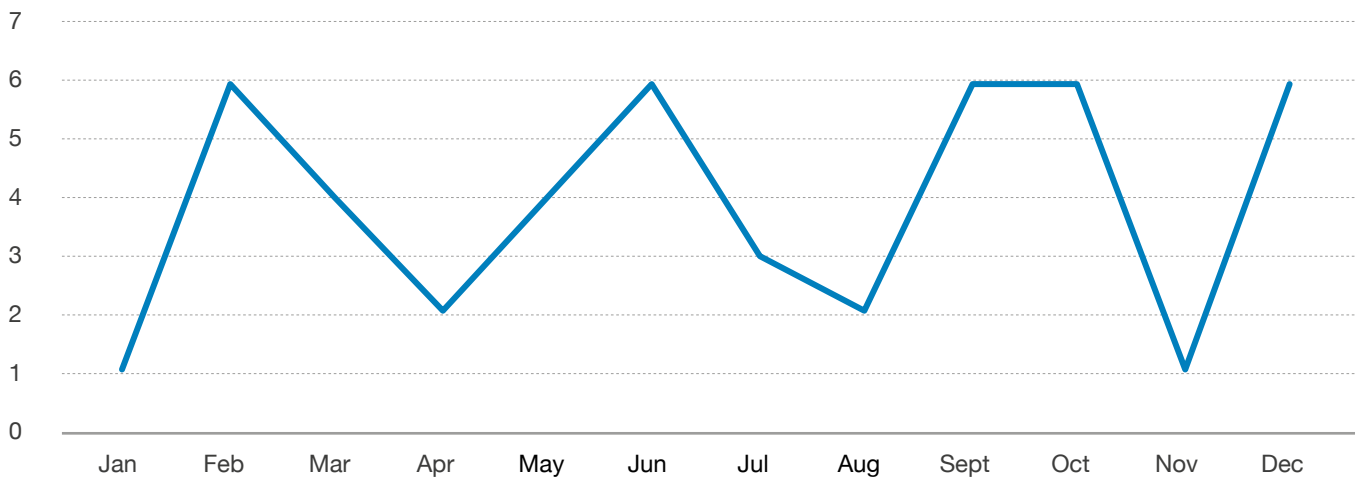


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by month, N=47

Suicide suspected fatalities

In 2023, there were 39 suicide suspected fatalities at or near water in Scotland. This is an increase from previous years.

Year	Suicide suspected fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013-2015 average)	29
Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)	27
2019	35
2020	28
2021	21
2022	36
2023	39

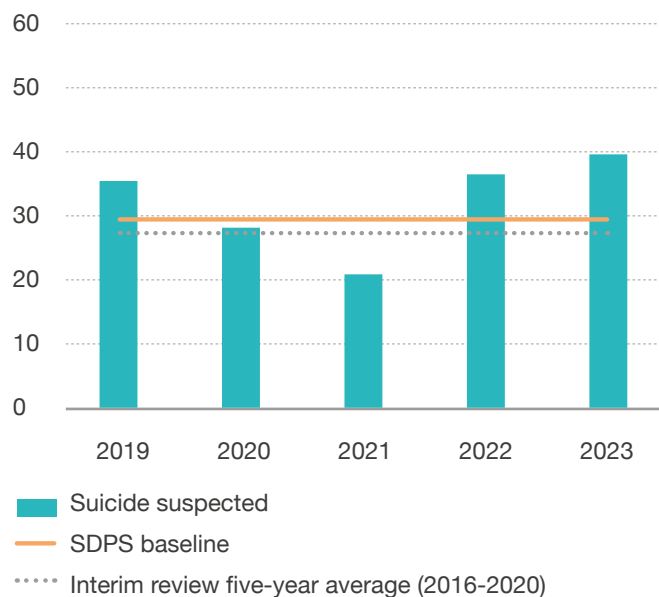


Figure 10: Suicide suspected fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five year average (2016-2020)

Notes

Accidental fatalities refers to accidental causes and natural water-related causes. This data analysis is based upon the official releases of WAID data as found online www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid/reports.asp. It should be noted that the core data providers continue to improve verification and completeness of records starting in 2012 which results in an improved record set.

All rates for population figures are based on NRS figures for the previous mid-year, published online www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimate. Baseline rates are based on mid-year 2015 data.

Figures 5 and 6 exclude domestic fatalities.

Scene and Outcome Review data from the DIR process has been amalgamated with WAID Data.

Due to the way in which the DIR process works, WAID data and SOR/DIR data may not always show the same number of fatalities. This is because SOR data is verified by the Procurator Fiscal before a DIR meeting commences. Unlike WAID, on occasions when no body is recovered, the Procurator Fiscal does not classify this as a fatality.

The DIR process classifies this as a 'potential fatality' or a 'missing person' and is not included in the SOR/DIR data set. Should evidence emerge where the Procurator Fiscal is able to determine a fatality, SOR/DIR data is updated accordingly.