

WAID Scotland 2021 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

Overall water-related fatalities

In 2021, there were 105 water-related fatalities in Scotland. This shows a clear increase in overall water-related fatalities in comparison to previous years (see Figure 1). Figure 1 also breaks down water-related fatalities by cause.

Accident and natural causes have increased whilst suicides (suspected) have decreased (see Figure 1). 'Not recorded' has remained relatively steady but has decreased slightly in 2021. Scotland has historically had a relatively high number of not recorded water-related fatalities due to the way in which data is captured. It is anticipated that data recording will improve due to the Introduction of the [Drowning and Incident Review](#) (DIR) in 2022. It should also be noted that this data may change as further verification of records occurs over the following months.

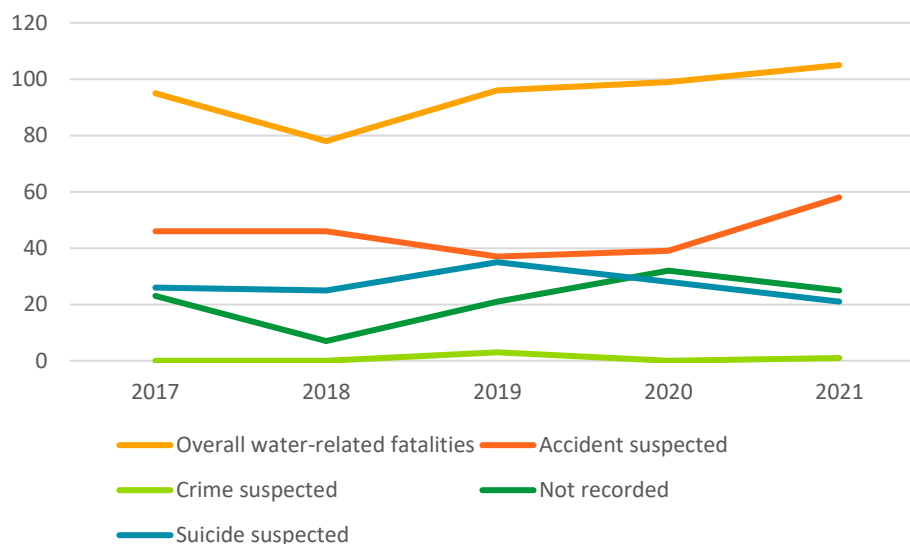


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by year, 2017 - 2021

[Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy](#) (SDPS) uses a three year average (years 2013 – 2015) establishing that there are 50 accidental drowning 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 (years 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 2021 figures show that overall water-related fatalities have increased and are above the SDPS baseline average and also 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
2017	95
2018	78
2019	96
2020	99
2021	105

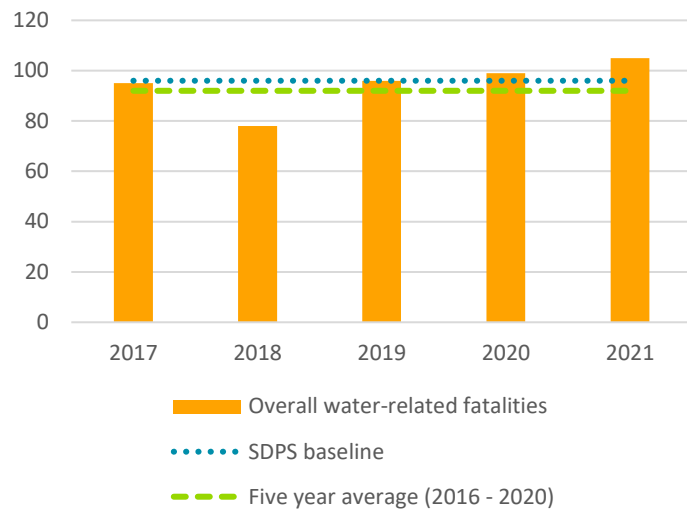


Figure 2: Overall fatalities by SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015), Interim review five year average (2016 -2020), 2021 data

Suicide suspected fatalities

In 2021, there were 21 suicide suspected fatalities at or near water in Scotland. This is a decrease from previous years.

Year	Suicide suspected fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015 average)	29
Interim review five year average (2016 – 2020)	27
2017	26
2018	25
2019	35
2020	28
2021	21

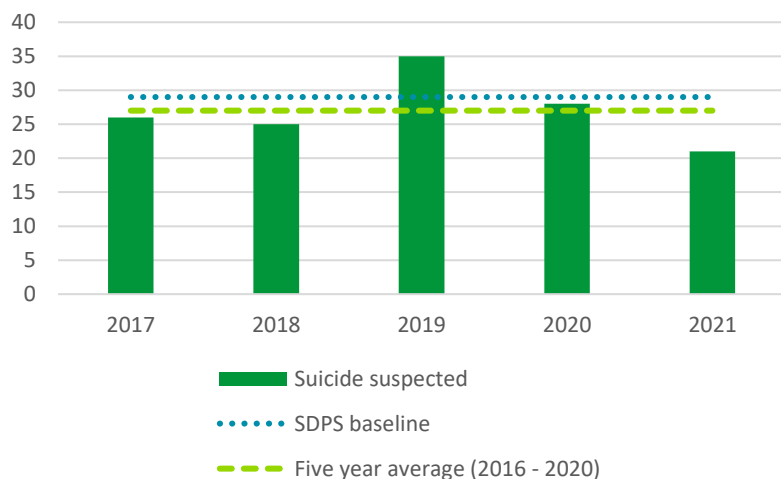


Figure 3: Suicide suspected fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015) and Interim review five year average (2016 -2020)

Accidental fatalities

In 2021, there were 58 accidental fatalities¹ in Scotland. Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy uses a three year average (years 2013 – 2015) establishing that there are 50 accidental drowning fatalities each year in Scotland. The 2021 figures therefore **show a 16 per cent increase in accidental fatalities** in comparison to the baseline (see Figure 4). Accidental fatalities are at their highest point in the last five years.

Year	Accidental fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015 average)	50
Interim review five year average (2016 – 2020)	44
2017	46
2018	46
2019	37
2020	39
2021	58

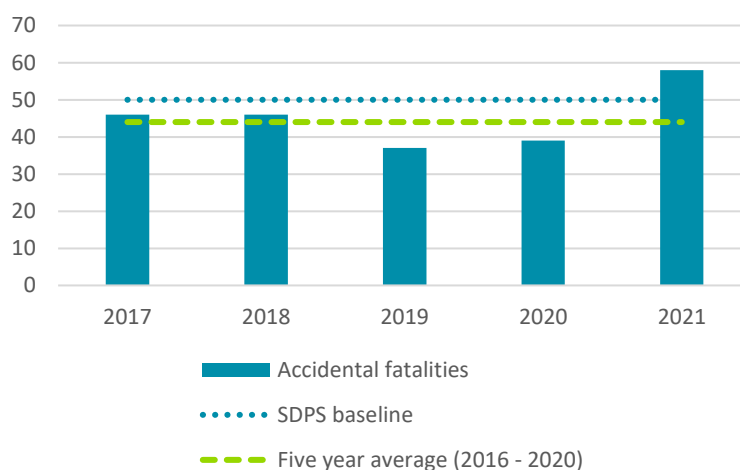


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015) and Interim review five year average (2016 -2020)

Key points

In 2021:

- There were 58 accidental fatalities and a further 21 suicides suspected
- 81% of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 60 -69 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 5)
- 67% of accidental fatalities happened at **inland waters** (see Figure 6). This is a change from last year’s data which showed that 79% of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters
- Recreational activities accounted for 47% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 7)
- 14 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol (24%)
- The rate of accidental drowning has steadily been coming down since 2016 (0.96 per 100,000). However, the drowning rate has increased as of 2021 (see Figure 8)
- When considering rates, males aged 60 – 69 were the highest group (see Figure 9)

¹ Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

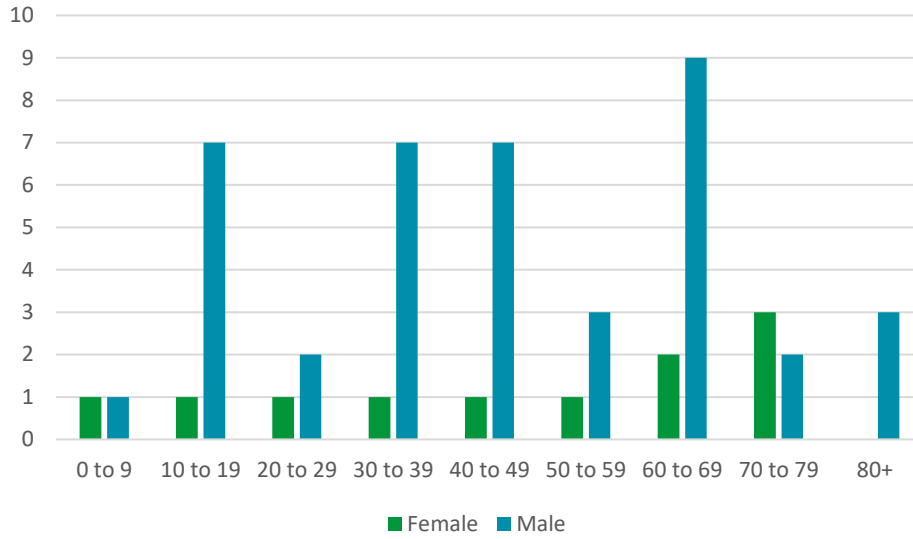


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by age. N=52, 6 not recorded

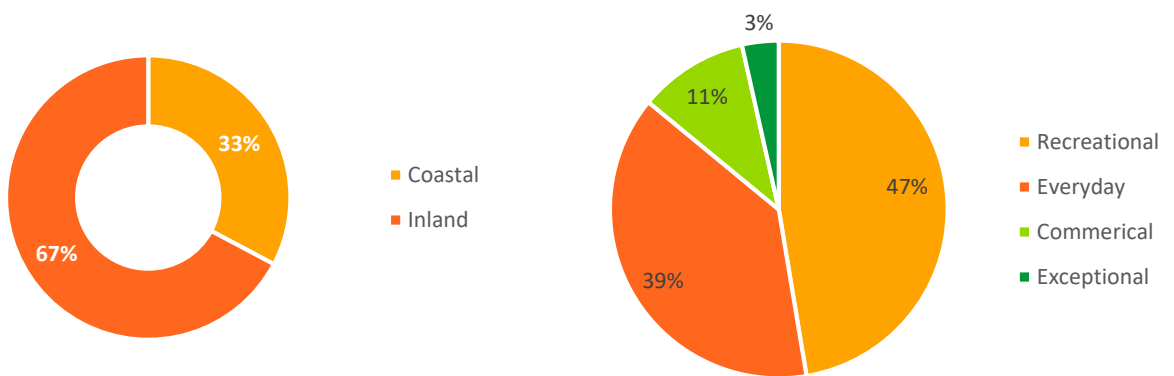


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by location. N=58

Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by activity. N=57, 1 excluded

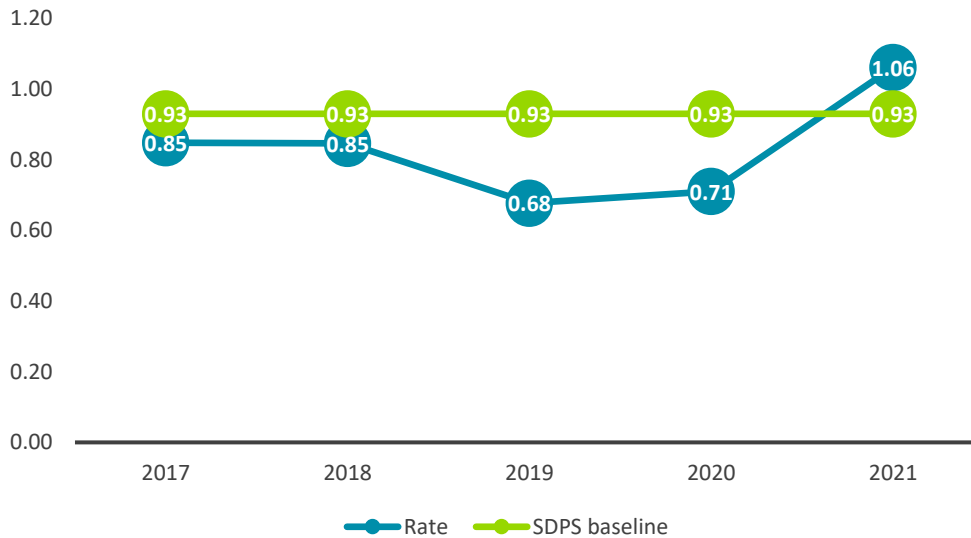


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by year and rate - 2017 – 2020 and SDPS average (2013 – 2015). Rate based on NRS figures per 100,000

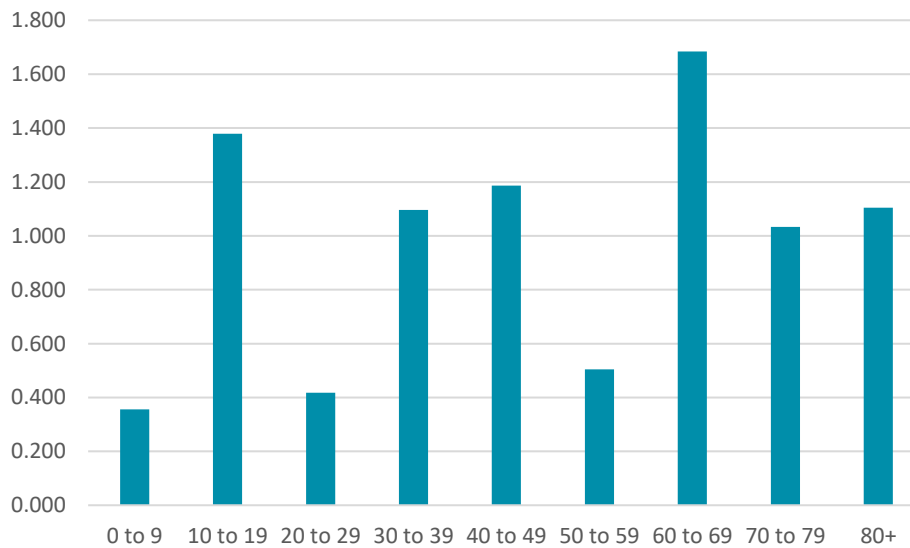


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by age and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000. N= 52, 6 = not recorded)

Notes: Accidental fatalities refers to accidental causes and natural water-related causes. This data analysis is based upon on 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 ONS figures for the previous mid-year, published online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland> . Baseline rates are based on mid-year 2015 data.