

WAID Scotland 2022 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

This report details the 2022 release of water-related fatality data. An interactive version of this report can be found online [here](#).

Overall water-related fatalities

In 2022, there were 96 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.

The number of water-related fatalities by accidental and natural causes have decreased whilst suicides (suspected) have increased (see Figure 1). The classification 'Not recorded' has remained relatively steady but has decreased due to ongoing work with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Scotland historically has 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 following the introduction of the **Drowning and Incident Review (DIR)** in May 2023. It should also be noted that this data may change as further verification of records occurs over the following months.

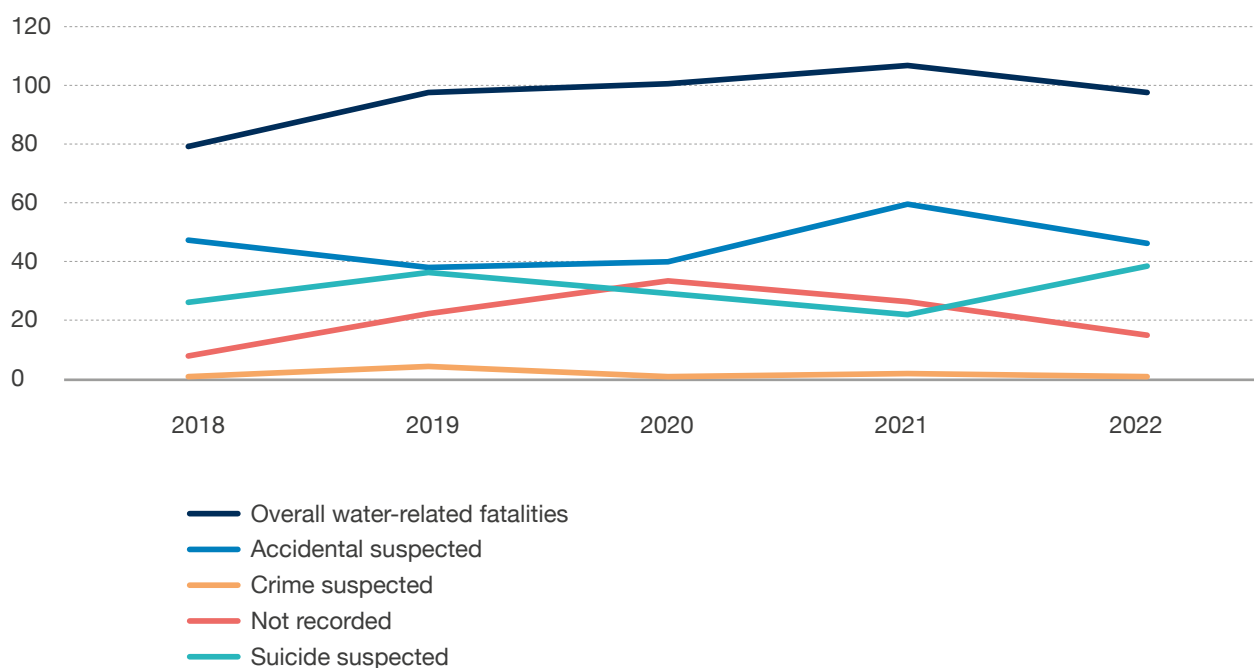


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by year, 2018-2022

Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) uses a three-year average (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 (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 2022 figures show that overall water-related fatalities are consistent with the SDPS baseline but 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
2018	78
2019	96
2020	99
2021	105
2022	96

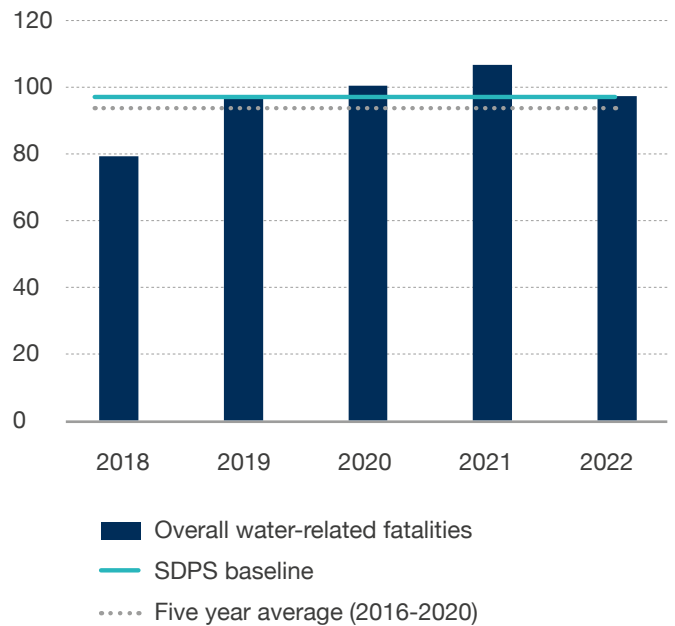


Figure 2: Overall fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)

Accidental fatalities

In 2022, there were 45 accidental fatalities¹ in Scotland. Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy uses a three-year average (2013-2015), establishing that there are 50 accidental drowning fatalities each year in Scotland. The 2022 figures show a 10 per cent decrease from the baseline (see figure 3). 2022 figures also show a 22 per cent decrease from 2021, which saw the highest level of water-related accidental fatalities in recent years.

Year	Accidental fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013-2015 average)	50
Interim review five year average (2016-2020)	44
2018	46
2019	37
2020	39
2021	58
2022	45

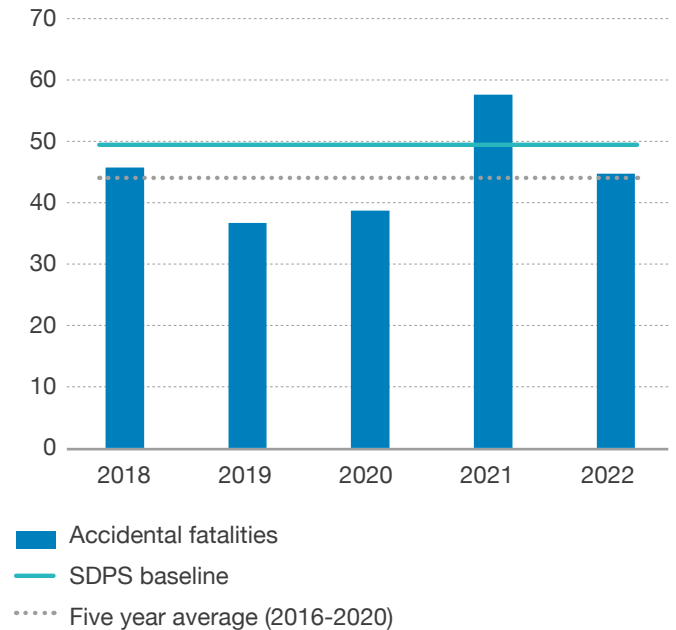


Figure 3: Accidental fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)

¹ Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

Key points

In Scotland in 2022:

- There were 45 water-related accidental fatalities and a further 37 suicides suspected
- 90% of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 50-59 were the group that represented the highest level of accidental fatalities (see Figure 4)
- 62% of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters (see Figure 5). This is consistent with previous years which has seen a shift from coastal to inland fatalities.
- Water-based recreational activities accounted for 51% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 6)
- 8 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol (18%)
- July, August and November were the months with the most accidental fatalities (see Figure 7). Both July and August 2022 had periods of classified heatwaves² (three and six days, respectively)
- With the exception of 2021, the rate of accidental drowning has been steadily reducing since 2016 (0.96 per 100,000). The rate last year was 0.82 per 100,000 (see Figure 8)
- Males aged 50-59 and 80+ were the groups accounting for the highest rates of accidental drowning (see Figure 9)

² A threshold-based meteorological definition. For Scotland: at least 3 days of above 25C.

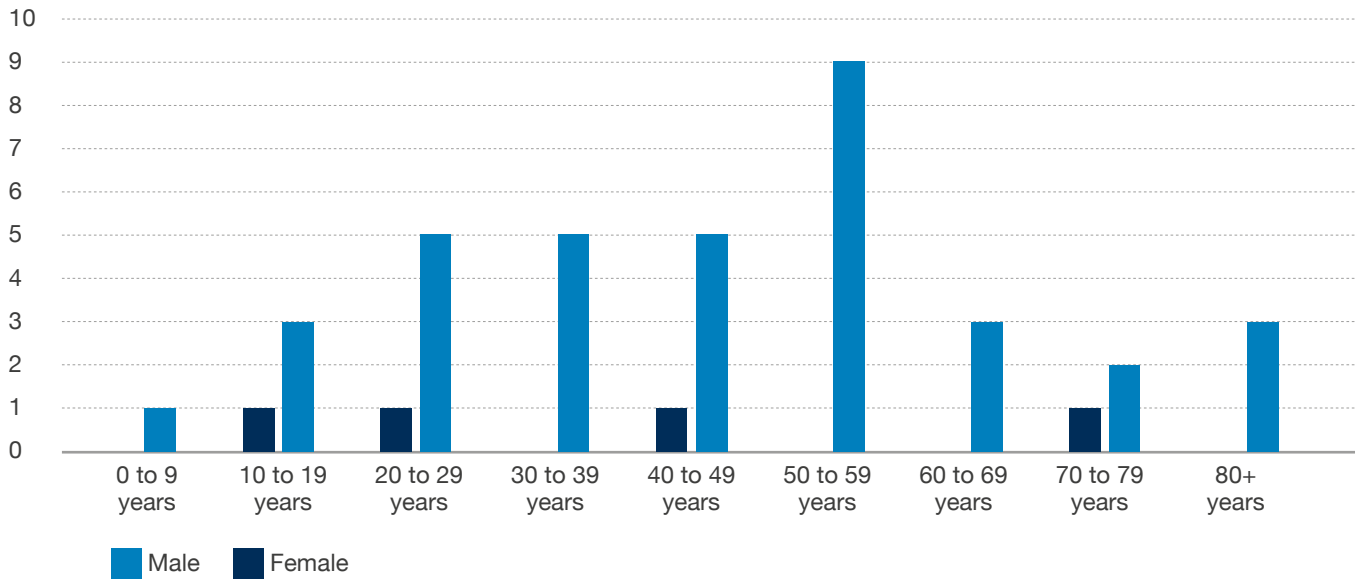


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by age. N=40, 5 not recorded

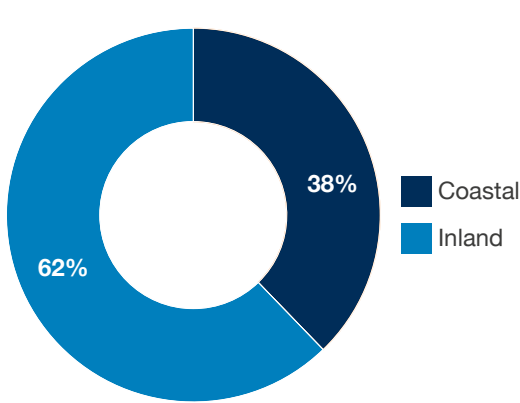


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by location. N=45

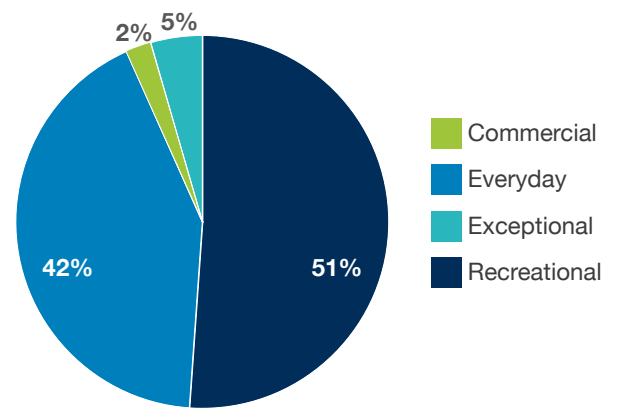


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by activity. N=45

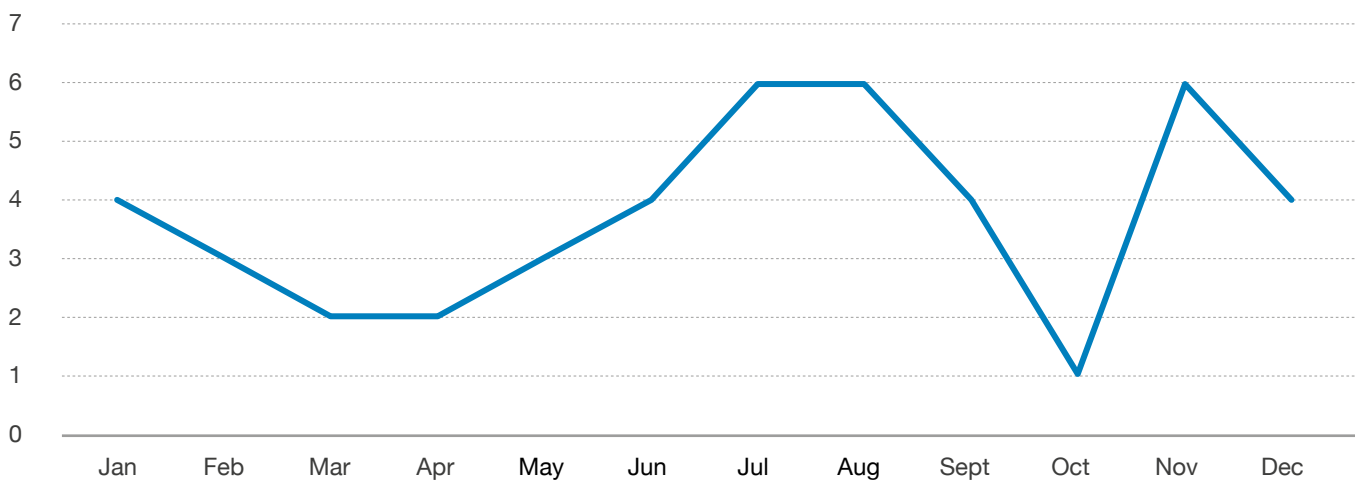


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by month, n=45

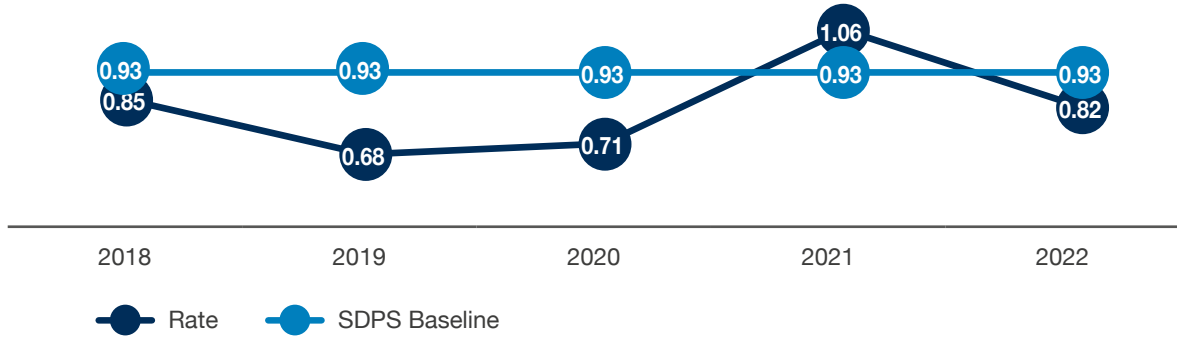


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by year and rate – 2018-2022 and SDPS average (2013-2015). Rate based on NRS figures per 100,000

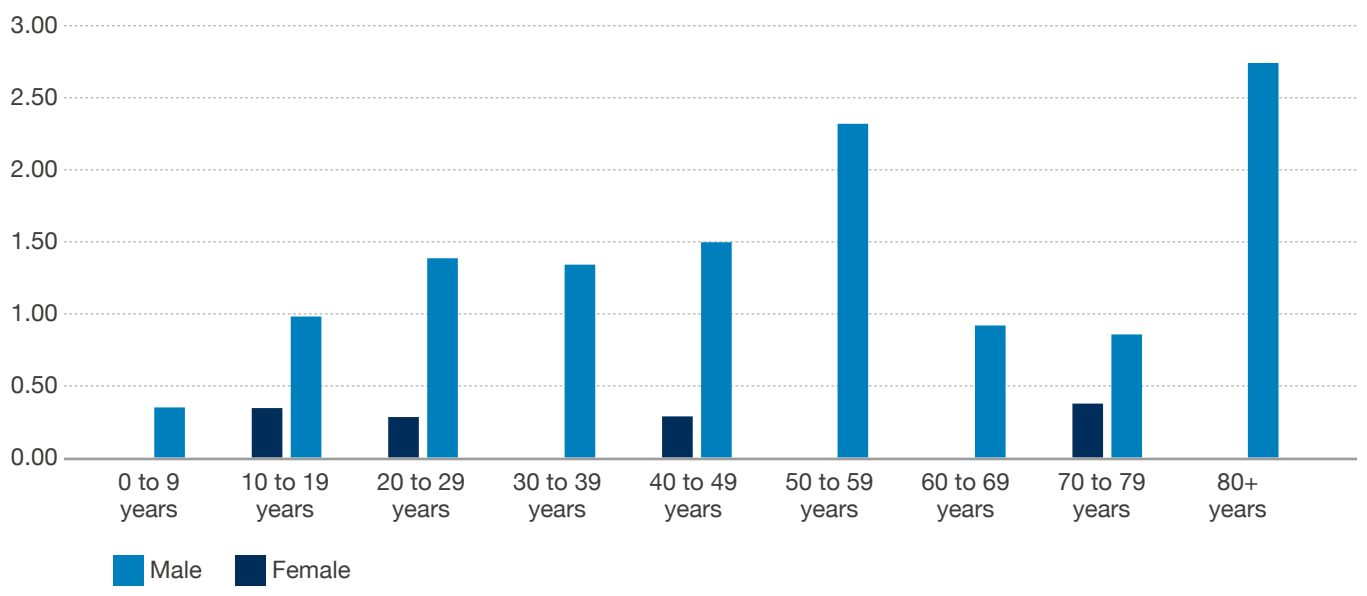


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000). N= 40, 5 = not recorded

Suicide suspected fatalities

In 2022, there were 37 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
2018	25
2019	35
2020	28
2021	21
2022	37

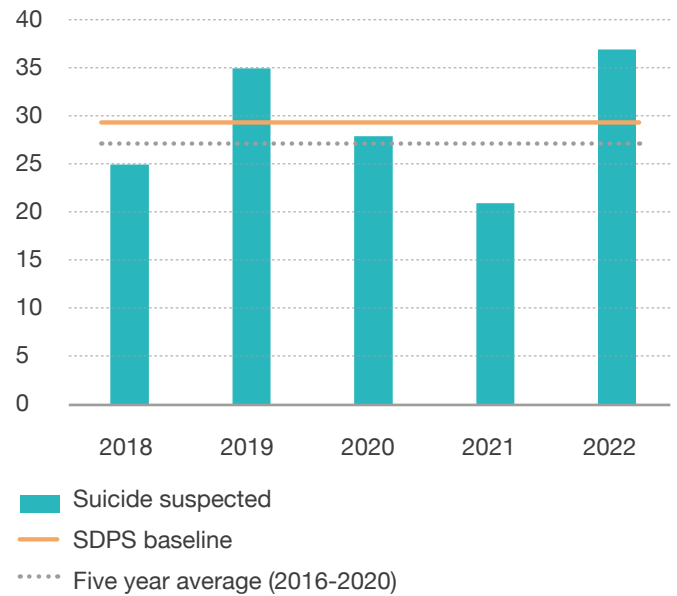


Figure 10: Suicide suspected fatalities by year and by SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Interim review five-year average (2016-2020)

Notes

Accidental fatalities refers to accidental causes and natural water-related causes. This data analysis is based upon on the official releases of WAID data as found online [Annual reports and data | National Water Safety Forum](#). 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 [Population Estimates | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#). Baseline rates are based on mid-year 2015 data.