

WAID Scotland 2020 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

Overall Water-Related Fatalities

In 2020, there were 99 Water-Related Fatalities in Scotland. Although there had been a recent downward trend, the 2020 data shows a slight increase in water-related fatalities bringing the numbers back to the same level as they were in 2016 (see figure 1).

Figure 1 also breaks down Water-Related Fatalities by cause. Accident and Natural Causes have decreased whilst Suicides (suspected) have remained around the same (see Figure 1). 'Not Recorded' has seen an increase in 2020. Scotland has historically had a relatively high number of Not Recorded water-related fatalities due to the way in which data is captured in Scotland. Water Safety Scotland and its partners however are committed to improving data. More information on WSS work on this can be found [here](#). The number of Not Recorded fatalities is particularly high this year. This could be partially due to post mortem outcome delays from the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit (SFIU) as result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted the data may change as further verification of records occurs over the following months.

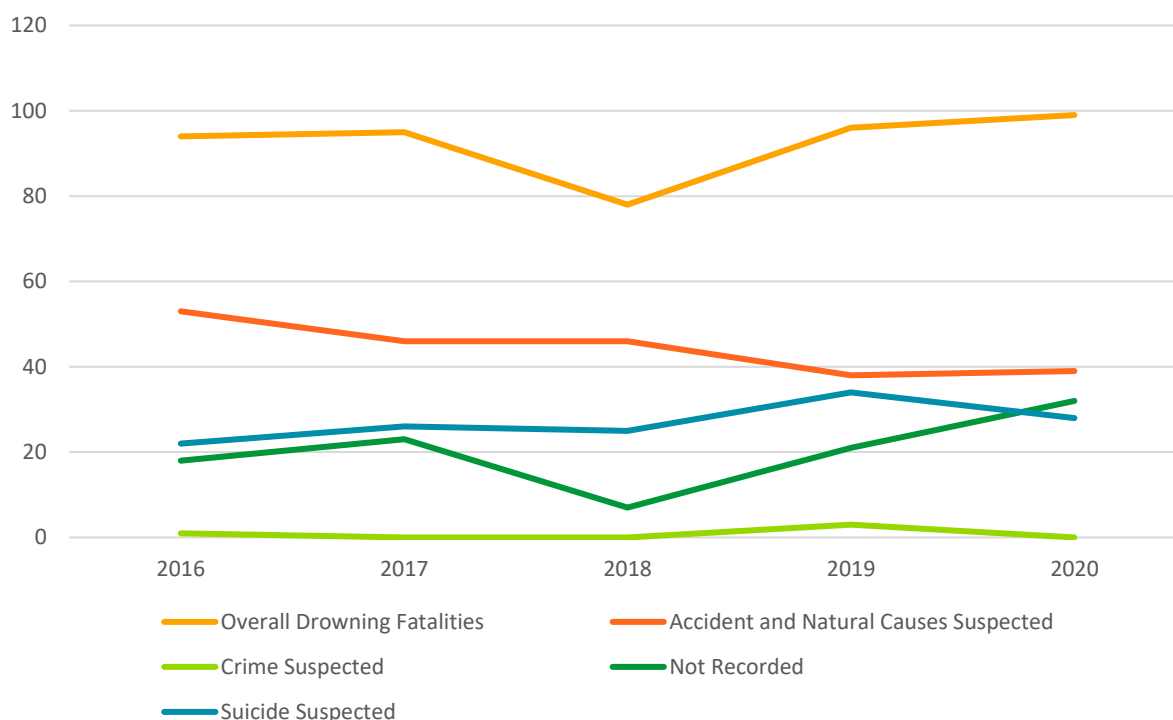


Figure 1: Overall fatalities by year, 2016 -2020

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 97 Water-Related

Fatalities on average per year. **The 2020 figures show that overall Water-Related Fatalities have increased since the previous years and are now slightly above baseline level (see Figure 2).**

Year	Overall Water-related fatalities
Three Year Average (2013 – 2015)	97
2016	91
2017	95
2018	78
2019	96
2020	99

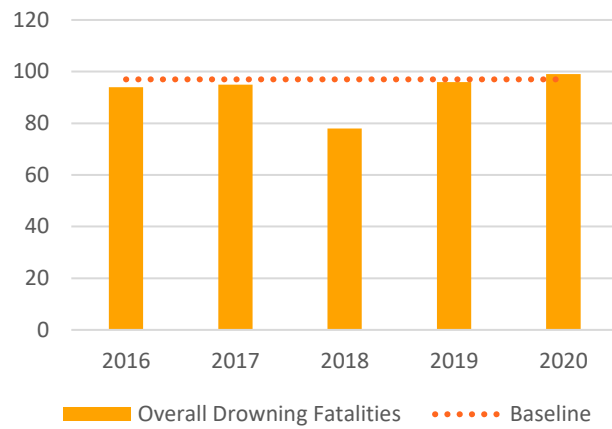


Figure 2: Overall Water-related fatalities by year 2016-2020 vs SDPS Baseline (2013-2015)

Suicide Suspected Fatalities

In 2020, there were 28 ‘Suicide Suspected’ Fatalities at or near water in Scotland. This is a decrease from last year’s figures but still around the average of SDPS three-year baseline.

Year	Suicide Suspected Fatalities
SDPS Baseline	29
2016	22
2017	26
2018	25
2019	35
2020	28

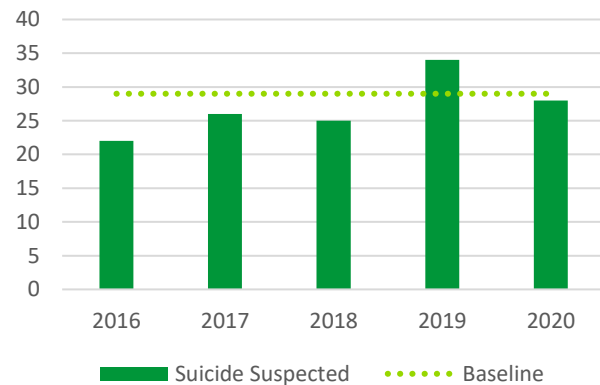


Figure 3: Suicide Suspected Fatalities by year 2016 – 2020 VS SDPS Baseline (2016 – 2020)

Accidental Fatalities

In 2020, there were 39 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 2020 figures therefore **show a 22 per cent decrease in accidental drowning fatalities** (see Figure 4).

¹ Accidental Drowning Fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

Year	Accidental Fatalities
Three Year Average (2013 – 2015)	50
2016	52
2017	46
2018	46
2019	37
2020	39

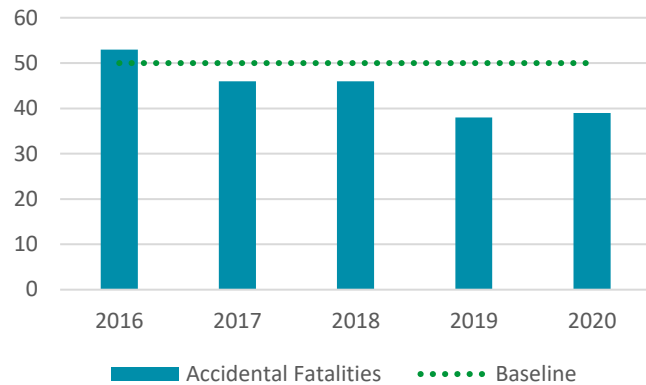


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by year 2016– 2020 and average (2013 – 2015)

Key points

In 2020:

- There were 39 accidental fatalities and a further 28 suicides suspected
- 82% of accidental fatalities were male
- Males 20 -29 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 5). This is significant change to previous years in which males of middle age were the highest group for accidental fatalities
- 79% of accidental fatalities happened at **inland waters** (see Figure 6). This is a significant change from previous years which has seen most accidental fatalities at the coast
- Recreational activities accounted for 43% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 7)
- 12 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol (31%)
- The rate of accidental drowning has steadily come down since 2016 (0.96 per 100,000) to 0.71 in 2020 (see Figure 8)
- When considering rates, those aged 20-29 were the highest at risk group (see Figure 9)

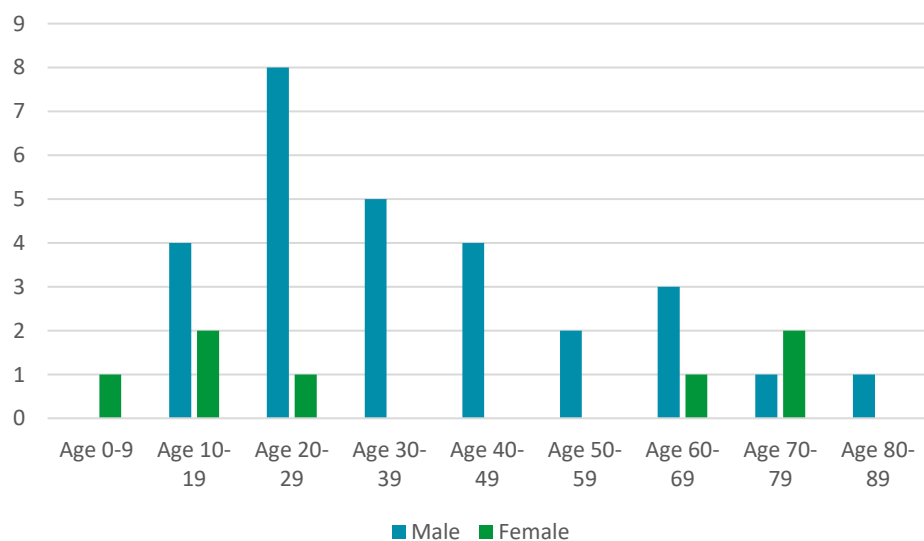


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by age. N=35, 4 not recorded

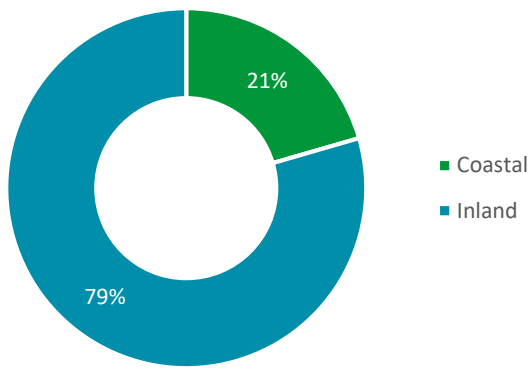


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by location. N=39

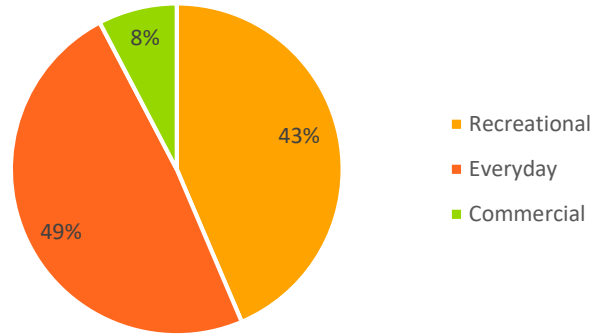


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by activity. N=39

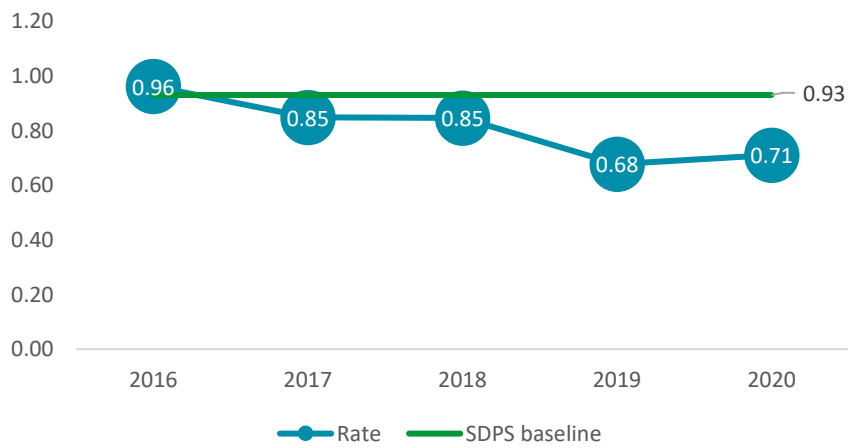


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by year and rate - 2016 – 2020 and SDPS average (2013 – 2015). Rate based on NRS figures per 100,000

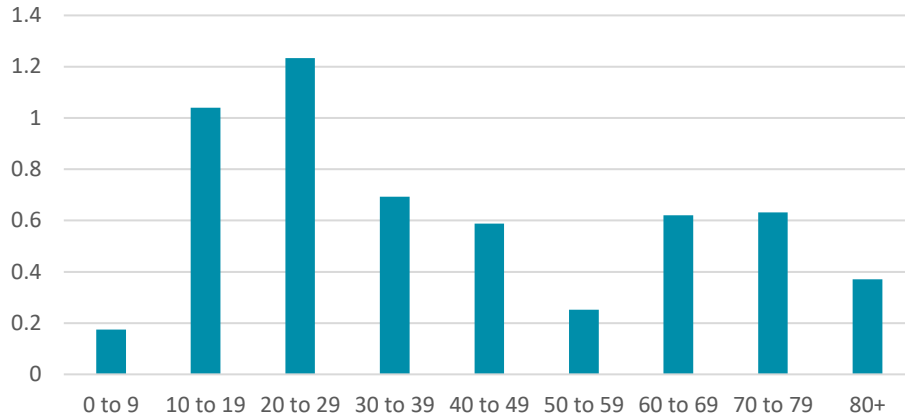


Figure 9: Accidental drowning fatalities by age and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000. N= 35, 4 = not recorded)

Notes: Accidental fatalities refers to Accidental 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 NRS figures, published online: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/scotlands-facts/population-of-scotland>

2020 rates are based on 2019 mid-year population statistics as the 2020 mid-year population is not due to be released until June 2021.