

Alcohol-specific deaths

2023

Published on 10 September 2024



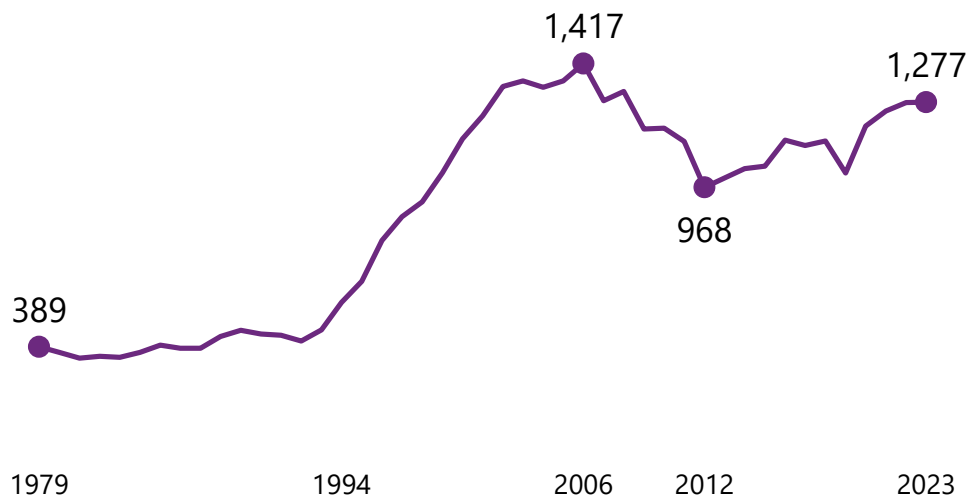
This statistical report details information on the number of deaths that were registered in Scotland in 2023 which are classified as alcohol-specific. It also includes breakdowns by sex, age, cause of death and deprivation.

Alcohol-specific deaths remain stable in 2023

Alcohol-specific deaths have generally risen since 2012. Before this point, deaths fell sharply from the peak of 1,417 in 2006 to 968 in 2012.

Last year, there was one more death than in 2022.

Number of deaths



Alcohol-specific mortality rate rises slowly since 2012

The rate of alcohol-specific mortality fell between 2006 and 2012. Since then it has generally risen.

Males deaths continue to account for around two thirds of all alcohol-specific deaths.

Age standardised mortality rate (per 100,000 population)



Rates are 4.5 times as high in most deprived areas compared to least deprived

The gap between alcohol-specific mortality rates in the most and least deprived areas has narrowed over time. However, alcohol-specific deaths continue to be more common in more deprived areas.

Age standardised mortality rate (per 100,000 population)

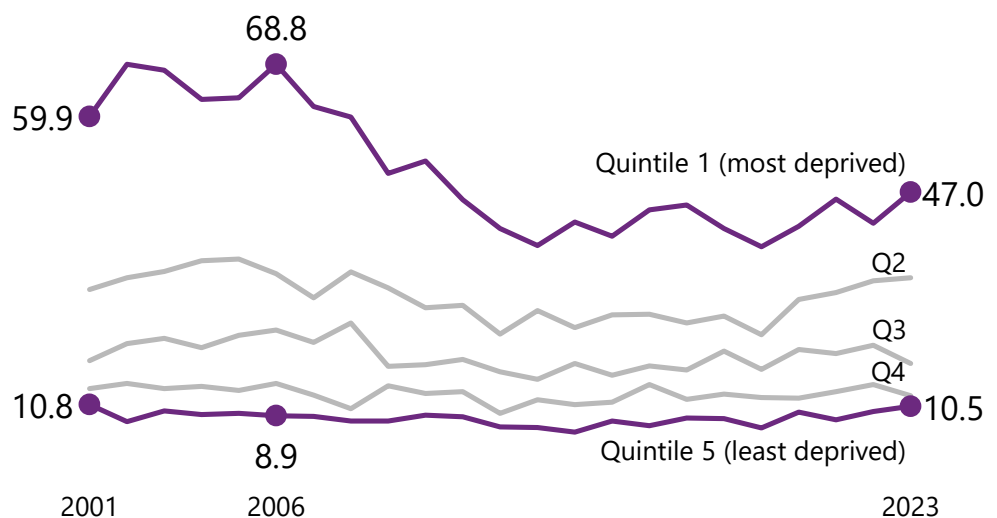


Table of Contents

1. Main Findings.....	4
2. Alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland	5
3. Alcohol-specific deaths by age and sex.....	6
4. Alcohol-specific deaths by month of registration	8
5. Alcohol-specific deaths in Scottish areas	9
6. Multiple deprivation and urban rural.....	11
7. Comparisons with the rest of the UK.....	12
8. Notes on statistical publications.....	13

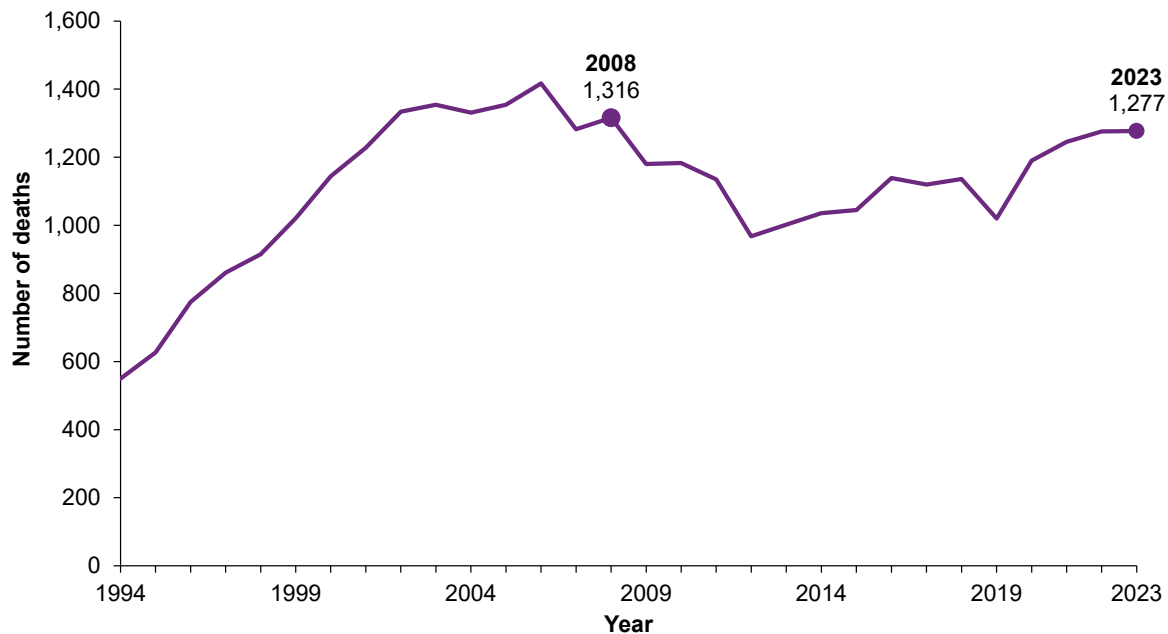
1. Main Findings

- There were 1,277 alcohol-specific deaths registered in Scotland in 2023, an increase of one death from 2022. This is the highest number of alcohol-specific deaths registered in a year since 2008.
- The rate of mortality for alcohol-specific deaths was 22.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 2023. This measure takes into account the size and age-structure of the population.
- Male deaths continue to account for around two thirds of alcohol-specific deaths. Over the last year, male alcohol-specific deaths increased by 25, while female deaths decreased by 24.
- The age profile of alcohol-specific deaths has become older over time, with the average age at death increasing from 56 to 60 in the last decade. In 2023, the alcohol-specific mortality rates for those aged 65 to 74, and 75+ were at their highest since the series began in 1994.
- After adjusting for age, the alcohol-specific mortality rate was higher than the Scottish average in the council areas of Inverclyde, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, and Dundee City.
- Alcohol-specific deaths were 4.5 times as high in the most deprived areas of Scotland compared to the least deprived areas in 2023. This compares to a ratio of 1.8 times for all causes of death. This ratio has decreased over time.

2. Alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland

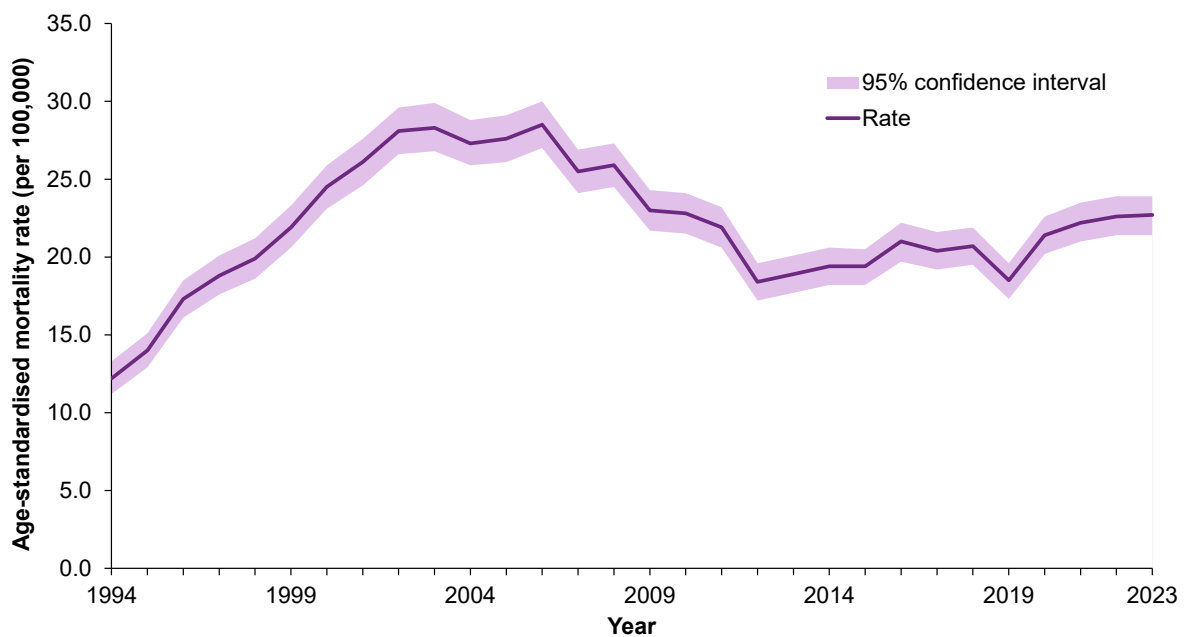
There were 1,277 alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland in 2023, an increase of one death on 2022. This is the highest number of alcohol-specific deaths registered in a year since 2008 (Figure 1a).

Figure 1a: Number of alcohol-specific deaths, 1994-2023



The rate of mortality from alcohol-specific causes was 22.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 2023 (Figure 1b).

Figure 1b: Age-standardised mortality rate for alcohol-specific deaths, 1994-2023



The rate of mortality for alcohol-specific deaths fell between 2006 and 2012, from 28.5 to 18.4 deaths per 100,000 people. Since then, it has generally risen, but did fall in 2019. The current rate of mortality is now at a similar level to the 2010 rate.

What are age-standardised rates?

Age-standardised mortality rates are a better measure of mortality than numbers of deaths, as they account for the population size, age structure, and provide more reliable comparisons between groups or over time.

More information on the calculation of age-standardised mortality rates is available on our website.

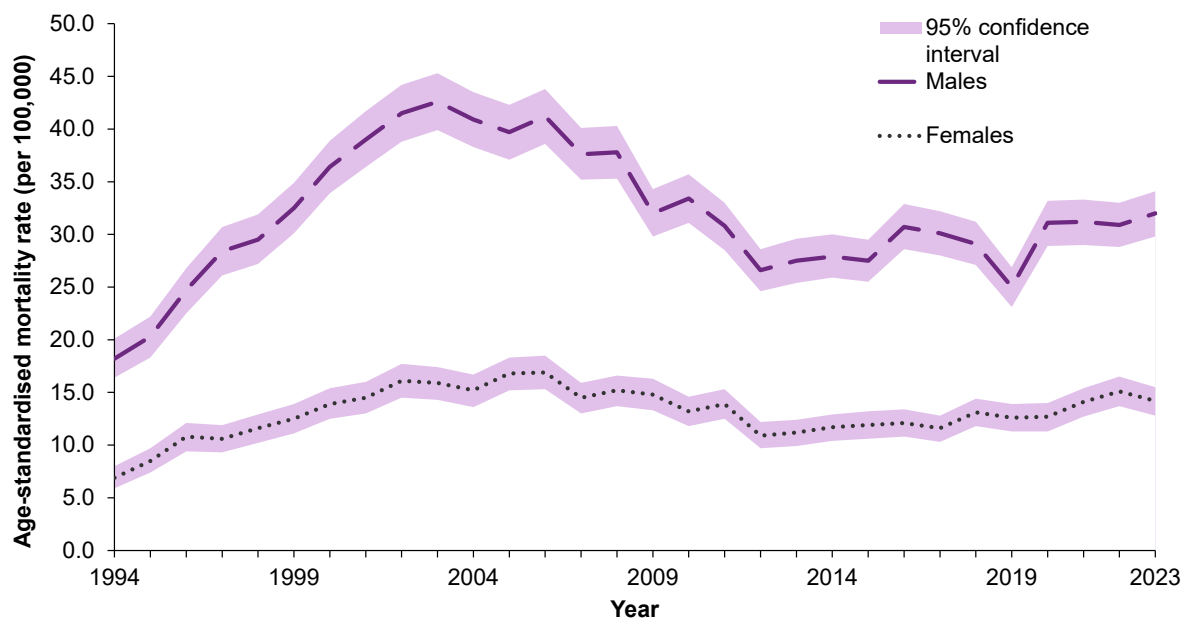
3. Alcohol-specific deaths by age and sex

In 2023, there were 861 (67%) male deaths and 416 (33%) female deaths from alcohol-specific causes. Males have accounted for around two thirds of these deaths in Scotland in recent years.

Over the last year, there was an increase of 25 male alcohol-specific deaths. The number of female deaths decreased by 24 since 2022.

The mortality rates for males and females have not changed significantly in the past year. It is notable that the drop in rate in 2019 occurred only in males, with the rates for females showing a slow and gradual increase over the last decade (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Age-standardised mortality rate for alcohol-specific deaths, by sex, 1994-2023

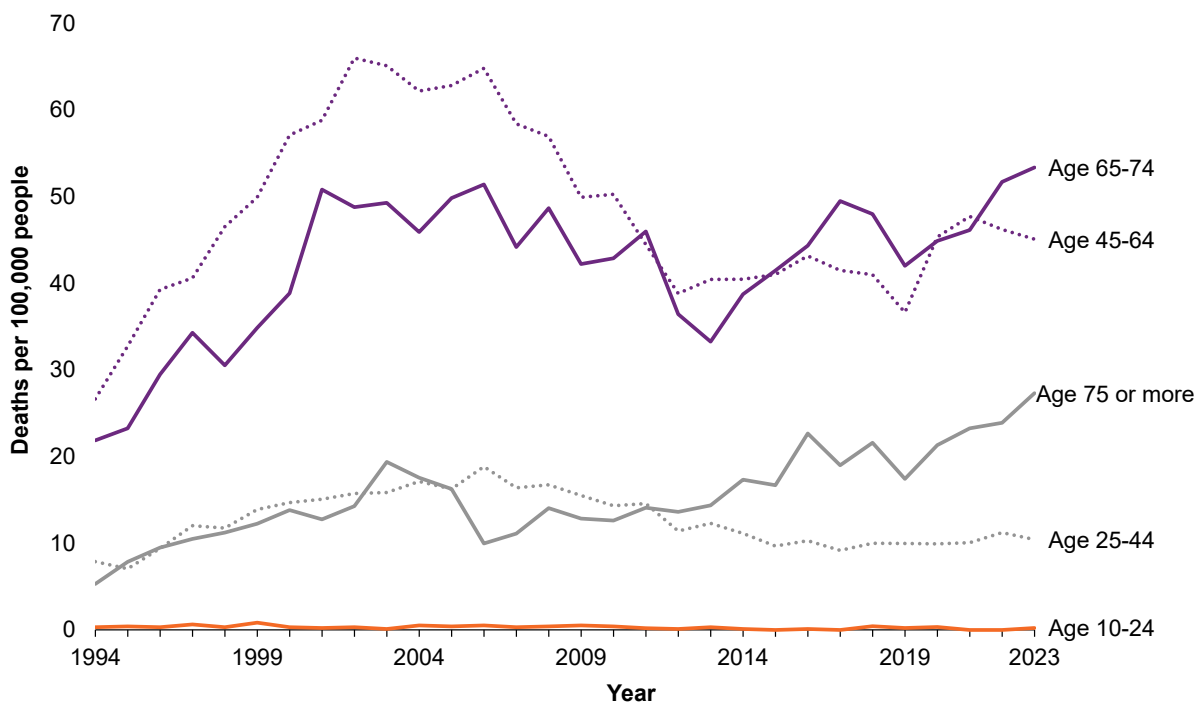


The age profile of alcohol-specific deaths has become older over time. Between 1979 and 2013, the average age of alcohol-specific deaths fluctuated, but gradually increased from 54 to 56. In the last decade, the average age has increased rapidly from 56 to 60 between 2013 and 2023.

The rate of alcohol-specific deaths is highest in age groups 45-64 and 65-74. These ages have had the highest mortality rates since the data was first available (Figure 3). The rate in those aged 75 and over has doubled in the last decade, but it remains about half of both of the two highest age groups. For age 25-44, the rate of mortality fell between 2006 and 2015, and has remained fairly stable since then.

In 2023, the mortality rates for those aged 65-74, and 75 and over were at their highest since the series began in 1994.

Figure 3: Age-specific mortality rate for alcohol-specific deaths by age group, 1994-2023

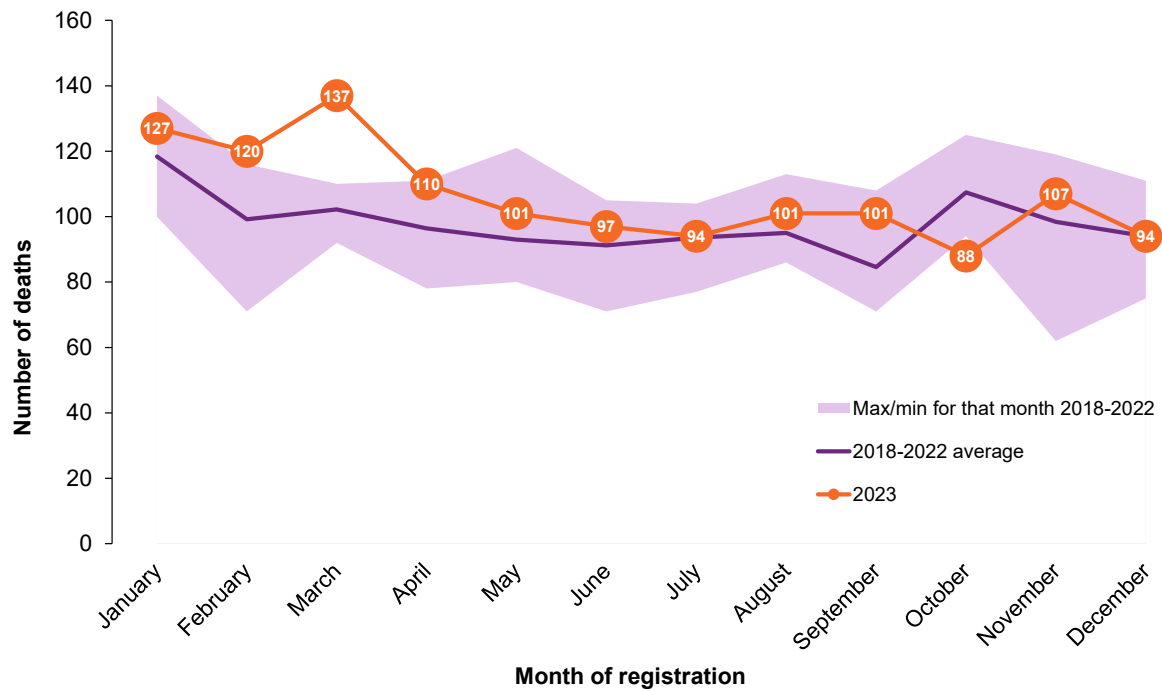


4. Alcohol-specific deaths by month of registration

In 2023, alcohol-specific deaths were higher than the average of the previous five-years in 10 out of 12 months (Figure 4).

The number of alcohol-specific deaths in February and March 2023 were higher than in those months of any of the previous five years. In comparison, the number of alcohol-specific deaths in October 2023 was lower than any year between 2018 and 2022.

Figure 4: Alcohol-specific deaths by month of registration



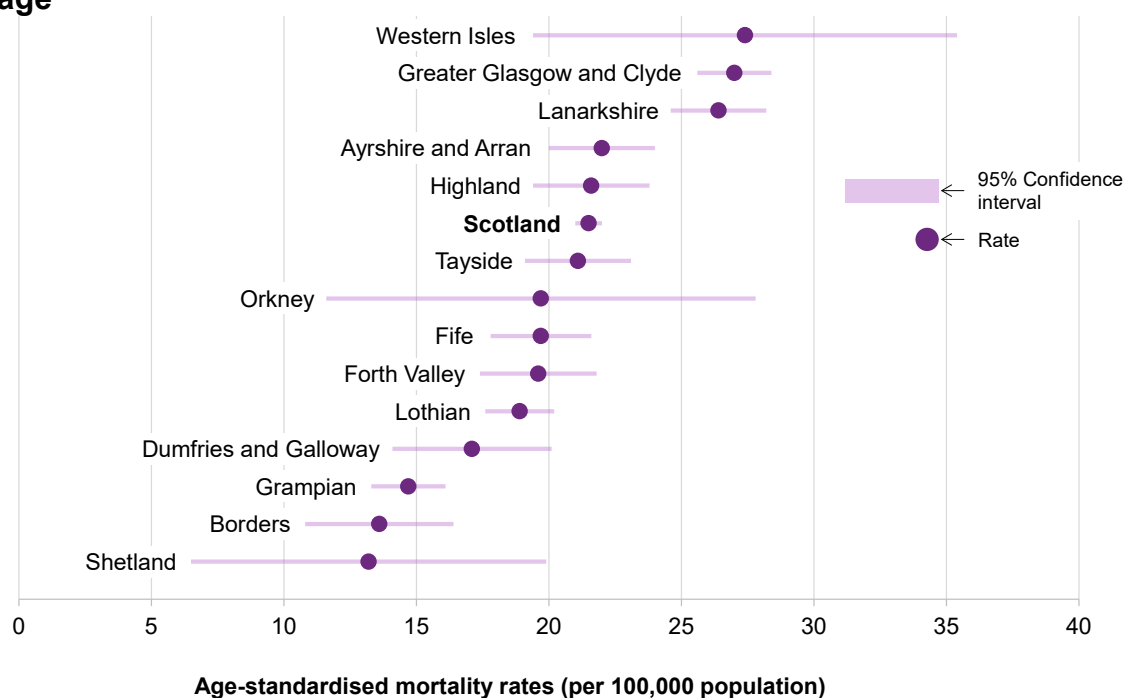
5. Alcohol-specific deaths in Scottish areas

In the past five years, after adjusting for age, the rate of mortality from alcohol-specific deaths was higher than the Scottish average in the NHS Board areas Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire (Figure 5).

The alcohol-specific mortality rate was lower than the Scottish average in NHS Board areas Shetland, Borders, Grampian, Dumfries and Galloway, and Lothian over 2019 to 2023.

Other areas had rates that were higher or lower than the Scottish average but there are large confidence intervals around these values. This makes it hard to tell whether there was a true difference between those areas and the Scottish average. When comparing mortality rates in areas across Scotland, we group five years of data together as relatively few people die from alcohol-specific causes.

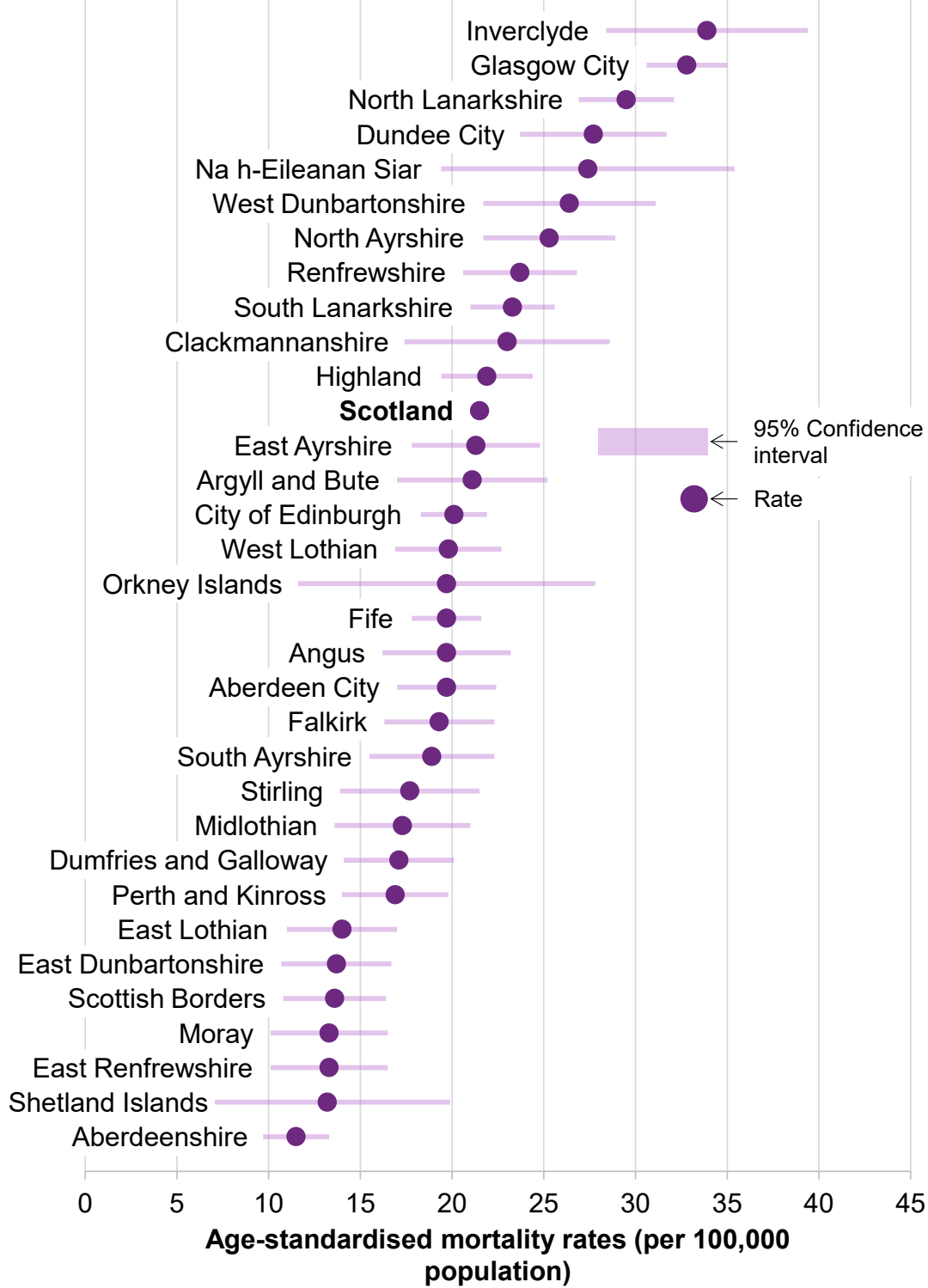
Figure 5: Age-standardised mortality rates in NHS board areas, 2019-2023 average



Over the last five years, the council areas Inverclyde, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, and Dundee City all had alcohol-specific death rates higher than the Scottish average (Figure 6).

In comparison, Aberdeenshire, Shetland Islands, East Renfrewshire, Moray, Scottish Borders, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Perth and Kinross, and Dumfries and Galloway all had rates below the Scottish average over the period 2019 to 2023.

Figure 6: Age-standardised mortality rates in council areas, 2019-2023 average

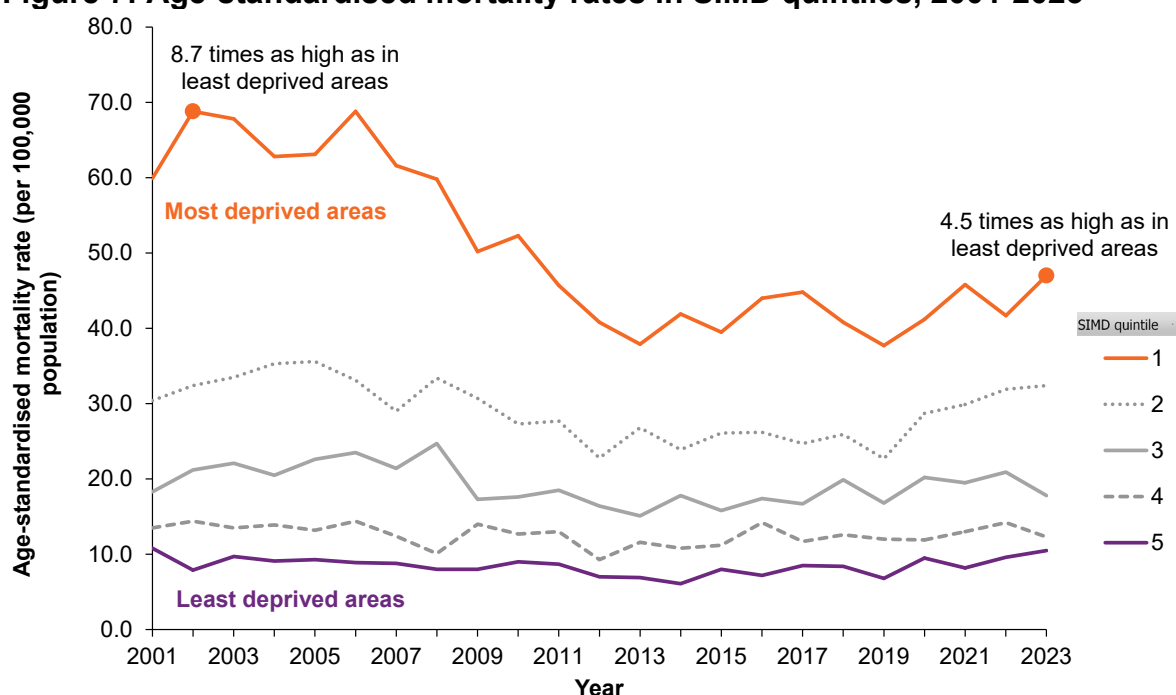


6. Multiple deprivation and urban rural

After adjusting for age, people in the most deprived areas of Scotland were 4.5 times more likely to have an alcohol-specific death compared to the least deprived areas. This is a larger deprivation ratio than for deaths from all causes. For all causes, deaths in the most deprived areas are around twice as likely as the least deprived areas.

This disparity in rates of alcohol-specific death between the most and least deprived areas has generally fallen over the last two decades (Figure 7). There has been a clear and consistent trend over time showing alcohol-specific deaths are more common in more deprived areas.

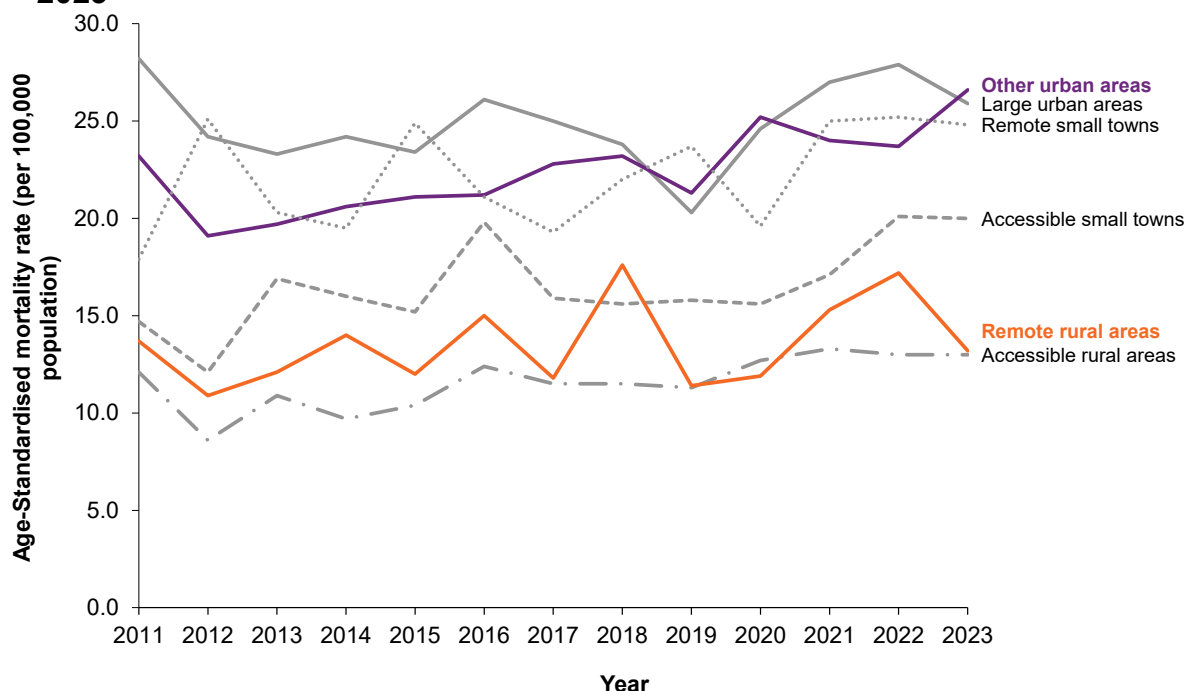
Figure 7: Age-standardised mortality rates in SIMD quintiles, 2001-2023



In urban and rural areas, the pattern has been less clear over time and there is less of a relationship between levels of rurality and the rate of alcohol-specific deaths (Figure 8). The rates in large urban areas, other urban areas, and remote small towns have been consistently higher than other areas.

In 2023, alcohol-specific deaths were 2.0 times as likely to be in large urban areas compared to remote rural areas. The highest alcohol-specific mortality rate was seen in other urban areas at 26.6 deaths per 100,000 population. The lowest rate was seen in accessible rural areas at 13.0 per 100,000 people.

Figure 8: Age-standardised mortality rates by urban-rural classification, 2011-2023



7. Comparisons with the rest of the UK

Scotland continued to have the highest alcohol-specific death rate of the UK constituent countries in 2022 (the latest year for which comparable data exists). Data for the rest of the UK is yet to be released for 2023.

The difference between Scotland and the other UK countries has narrowed over the last two decades. In 2001, the alcohol-specific mortality rate for Scotland was between 2.1 and 2.9 times as high as other UK countries. The rate for Scotland was between 1.2 and 1.6 times as high in 2022.

More information and analysis on trends across the UK is available in the ONS publication of [Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK](#).

8. Notes on statistical publications

Accredited Official Statistics

The designation of these statistics as Accredited Official Statistics was confirmed in August 2011 following an independent review by the Office for Statistics Regulation. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

In June 2024, the Office for Statistics Regulation introduced the new accredited official statistics badge, to denote official statistics that have been independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and judged to meet the standards in the Code of Practice for Statistics. The new badge replaces the current National Statistics badge, though the meaning is the same.

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

It is National Records of Scotland's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of accredited official statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Office for Statistics Regulation promptly. Accredited official statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc. can be found in the [methodological annexes](#) that are published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our aim is to provide relevant and reliable information, analysis and advice that meets the needs of government, business and the people of Scotland. We do this as follows:

- Preserving the past – We look after Scotland's national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.
- Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.
- Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the [Statistics](#) section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the [Scotland's Census](#) website.

We also provide information about [future publications](#) on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government [ScotStat website](#).

You can also follow us on twitter [@NatRecordsScot](#)

Enquiries and suggestions

Please get in touch if you need any further information or have any suggestions for improvement.

Email: statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright

You may use or re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. Further information is available within the [Copyright and Disclaimer section](#) of the National Records of Scotland website.