

Avoidable Deaths in Scottish Borders, 2017-2019

A Scottish Borders Insight into the National Records of Scotland publication, produced by the Corporate Performance and Information R&I Team

In December 2020, National Records of Scotland published its updated figures on Avoidable Mortality for 2019. This Insight supplement analyses what the statistics reveal about Scottish Borders.

Introduction

Avoidable Mortality is a measure of deaths from causes that are considered by the OECD international definition to be “avoidable” through timely and effective healthcare and public health interventions.

When discussing avoidable deaths, the following terms are used:

- **Preventable mortality** – deaths that can be mainly avoided through effective public health and primary prevention interventions
- **Treatable mortality** - deaths that can be mainly avoided through timely and effective healthcare interventions, including secondary prevention and treatment
- **Avoidable mortality** – deaths defined as either preventable or treatable.

The list of international Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) codes which are considered “avoidable/ treatable/ preventable” is extensive but includes some categories of the following:

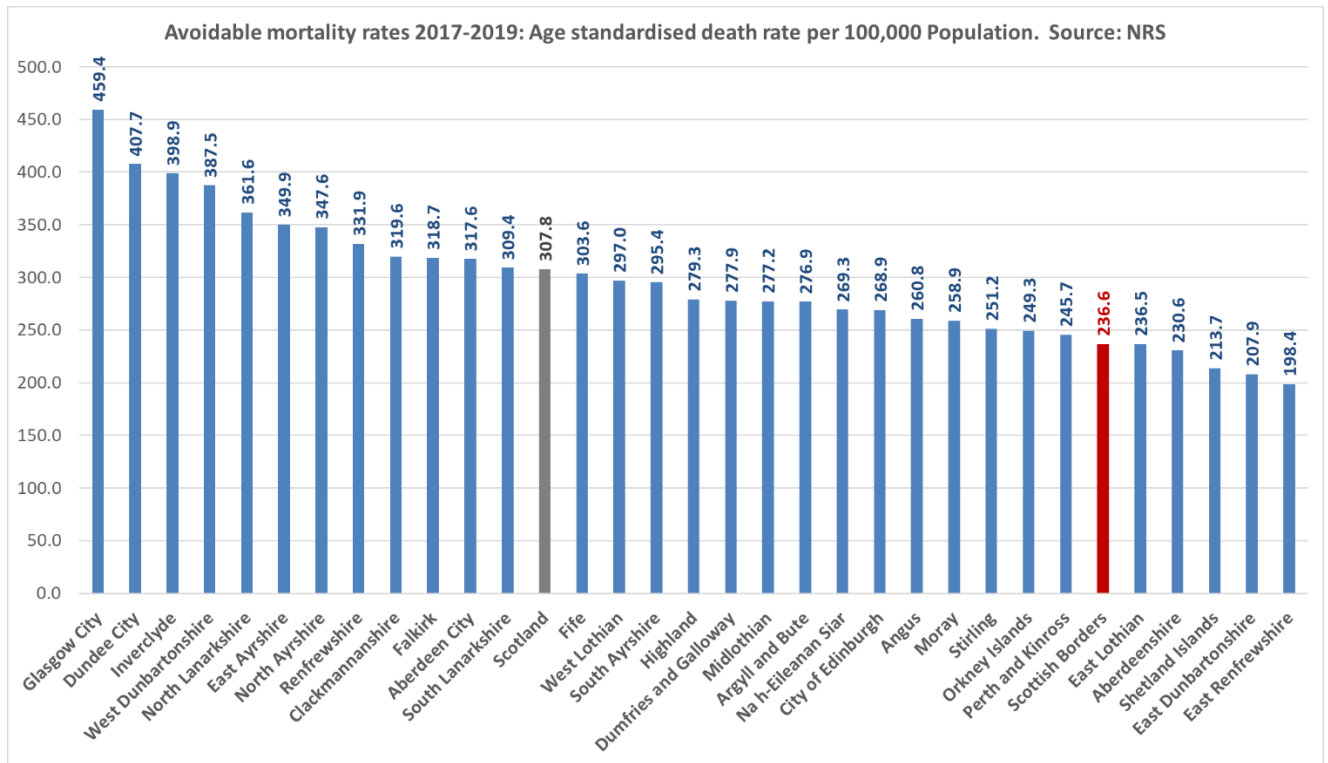
- infectious diseases
- cancers
- Endocrine and metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
- diseases of the nervous, digestive, genito-urinary, respiratory or circulatory systems,
- complications of childbirth and birth defects
- complications of medical care.

It also includes all accidents and injuries and all alcohol and drug-related deaths.

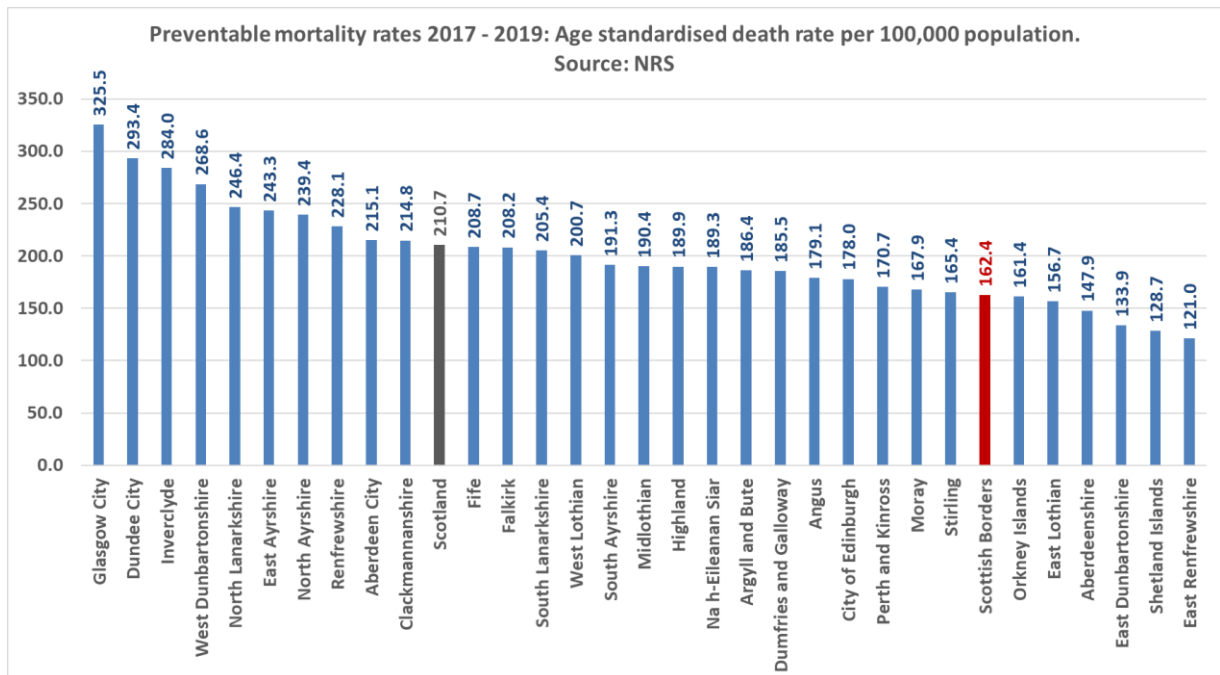
Key findings

- There were over 58,000 registered deaths in Scotland in 2019, of which 15,000 (27%) were considered avoidable. This remains consistent with the past seven years.
- Some Local Authority areas had too few cases to provide exact comparison estimates at local authority level for some of the measures. Therefore, Local Authority estimates were aggregated over a 3-year period (2017-19) and some disease categories were combined, to counteract the smaller numbers of cases.
- Overall, the highest rates of avoidable mortality were in three West of Scotland Health Board areas in 2017-19, with the lowest rates in Shetland and Borders Health Board areas.
- The Avoidable death rate in Scottish Borders was 236.6 per 100,000 population which is well below the Scottish average of 307.8 per 100,000 and is the 6th- lowest out of the 32 Local authority areas.
- 162.4 per 100,000 deaths in Scottish Borders were considered preventable. This is, again, much lower than the Scottish average of 210.7 and is the 7th- lowest out of the 32 Local Authority areas.
- 72.4 per 100,000 deaths in Scottish Borders were considered treatable. This is again much lower than the Scottish average of 97.1 and is the second lowest in Scotland.
- The avoidable mortality rate decreased by a third between 2001 and 2014 but has since plateaued in Scotland as a whole.
- Avoidable mortality rates are 58% higher in Scotland for males than for females.
- The Avoidable death rate in Scottish Borders was 274.5 per 100,000 for males and 201.1 for females. This is lower than the Scottish equivalents of 379.6 and 240.4 respectively.
- The male Avoidable Death rate in Scottish Borders is third-lowest in Scotland but the female rate is only 10th-lowest, which is comparatively not as good as might be expected for Scottish Borders.
- The Preventable death rate in Scottish Borders was 198.2 per 100,000 for males and 128.8 for females. This is lower than the Scottish equivalents of 273.1 and 152.1 respectively.
- The male Preventable Death rate is 5th-lowest in Scotland but the female rate again trails behind, at “only” 13th lowest in Scotland.
- The Treatable death rate in Scottish Borders was 76.3 per 100,000 for males and 72.3 for females. This is lower than the Scottish equivalents of 106.5 and 88.3 respectively.
- The male Treatable Death rate is second-lowest in Scotland and the female rate is not far behind this time, at 5th-lowest in Scotland.
- The gender differences in Avoidable Death concur with other Vital Statistics on life expectancy and cause of death, which also show that women’s health in Scottish Borders has been losing its advantage over men’s health in the past few years.
- However, there is better gender equality in the Treatable Death figures, indicating that women are as likely as men, if not more so, to visit their doctor if they feel unwell.
- Cancer and circulatory diseases were the most common causes of avoidable mortality in 2019 in Scotland, accounting for 34% and 25% respectively of all avoidable deaths.
- After adjusting for age, avoidable mortality rates in the most deprived areas were 4.5 times more than those in the least deprived areas in Scotland as a whole.
- The only age category in Scotland as a whole to experience a notable reduction in avoidable deaths since 2001 is the 70-74 group (a reduction of 24%).
- The number of avoidable deaths for all other ages have remained relatively stable since 2001.

The following graph shows how Scottish Borders fits in with the Scottish picture in terms of Avoidable Mortality



The following graph shows how Scottish Borders fits in with the Scottish picture in terms of Preventable Mortality



The following graph shows how Scottish Borders fits in with the Scottish picture in terms of Treatable Mortality

