

FOI DOF/2026-0044

Request

You requested the following information on 27 January 2026.

Under Freedom of Information legislation in terms of coroner inquests, please provide the number of deaths in which drug intoxication was the (i) primary, and (ii) secondary cause in each of the last three calendar years ending December 2025, if possible broken down by Health & Social Care Trust area.

DoF response

I can confirm the Department holds this information.

NISRA publishes an annual 'Drug-Related and Drug Misuse Deaths, Northern Ireland'. The most recent update included data for 2023, and was published in March 2025. The report can be found at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/drug-related-and-drug-misuse-deaths-2013-2023>.

The report includes data on all drug related deaths. Not all drug-related deaths undergo investigation by a coroner. In terms of deaths which were investigated by a coroner, for the three most recent years available, the number of drug-related death registrations are shown in the table below.

The counts shown are for death registrations with mention of drugs, not specifically mentions of 'drug intoxication' as not all drug-related deaths will be worded as such. For primary cause, this has been defined as the underlying cause of death recorded on the death registration being drug poisoning, drug abuse or drug dependence. These deaths can be identified solely through the [International Classification of Diseases \(ICD\)](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)). The current National Statistics definition and the ICD ninth (ICD-09) and ICD tenth (ICD-10) revision codes used to define drug-related deaths are given at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/cause-death/drug-related-deaths>.

Secondary cause has been defined as any other drug mentions recorded on a death certificate.

Year	Trust	Deaths (primary cause)	Deaths (secondary cause)
2021	BHSCT	71	7
2021	NHSCT	42	7
2021	SEHSCT	27	2
2021	SHSCT	28	3

2021	WHSCT	44	6
2022	BHSCT	49	9
2022	NHSCT	35	3
2022	SEHSCT	28	7
2022	SHSCT	16	2
2022	WHSCT	26	3
2023	BHSCT	60	3
2023	NHSCT	38	3
2023	SEHSCT	23	9
2023	SHSCT	20	1
2023	WHSCT	28	3

Drug-related deaths data for 2024 and 2025 are subject to FOI Exemption Section 22(1) (information intended for future publication). The release date for 'Drug-Related and Drug Misuse Deaths, Northern Ireland 2024' has been scheduled on the [vital statistics publication schedule](#) for February/March 2026. Data for the year to December 2025 is not yet fully available and will be published in February/March 2027. By applying Section 22(1), we are required to conduct a Public Interest Test, which can be found attached at Annex B.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Annex B

Request Ref:

DoF/2026-0044

Request Summary: The number of deaths in which drug intoxication was the (i) primary, and (ii) secondary cause in each of the last three calendar years ending December 2025, if possible broken down by Health & Social Care Trust area.

Information Details:	Exemption/Exception Applied	Reasons for Disclosure	Reasons for Non-Disclosure
<p>The release date for the Drug-Related and Drug Misuse Deaths, Northern Ireland 2024 update has been scheduled on the vital statistics publication schedule for February/March 2026 and will publish data for 2024. Data for the year to December 2025 is not yet fully available and the Drug-Related and Drug Misuse Deaths, Northern Ireland 2025 update will be published in February/March 2027.</p>	<p>S22-Information Intended for future publication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To show compliance with the FOI Act by disclosing information held by the Department as a Public Authority; There is a general public interest in the accountability, openness and transparency of government, and to promote public understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 data relating to drug-related deaths will be available in February/March 2026. The release date for the 2025 data has yet to be announced but is likely to be February/March 2027 which is in line with previous years' publication scheduling. NISRA plan to carry out standard internal quality assurance checks on the 2024 and 2025 data which may result in the information requested being subject to ongoing change in the run-up to publication. It is in the public interest that the quality assurance process is concluded before making this information available to the public to ensure accuracy and consistency of messaging and thereby confidence in what we report. As the information requested may be of interest to the wider public, it is important that it can be accessed by all interested parties at the same time in an accurate form. This is in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, which states: 'Producers must ensure statistics are accessible and freely available to all so that the public can have confidence that there is equal access to official statistics and the value of data are maximised.'

PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: After weighing up the public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable that the information provided details the three most recent years currently published, up to and including 2023 (section 22[1]), as required by the Statistics and Registration Services Act and the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Signed: Deborah Lyness

Date: 2 February 2026

Annex C - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request examines the response based on applied exemptions, search adequacy, or response timeliness.

It is not the following, which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of the original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

To make an Internal Review request:

- **Clearly state:** That you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.