| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 25-1074  Responded to: 4 April 2025 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**How many deaths are currently being treated as unexplained?**

**Is it possible to split the deaths into gender?**

**Can I receive the ages of the individuals whose deaths are being treated as unexplained?**

**Is it possible to receive the dates each of the deaths was first reported?**

Throughout any incident of death, Police Scotland Officers and Staff will provide support and assistance to families and our partners.

There are three broad categories of death:

* Medical Death;
* Unexplained Medical Death;
* Police Reportable Death.

**Medical Death**

There are occasions where a death is expected or attributable to natural causes.

The vast majority of deaths occur as a result of an obvious medical condition within a medical environment. Health Care Providers (HCPs) are responsible for providing a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and to provide support and guidance to families.

Police Scotland and the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) may have minimal involvement in such deaths.

A MCCD may be issued if a medical practitioner is able to identify a cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief (certainty is not required).

**Unexplained Medical Death**

In circumstances listed in the COPFS Guidance on Reportable Deaths, a healthcare professional may require to report the fact of the death to COPFS.

The Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit (SFIU) is a specialist unit within COPFS with responsibility for receiving reports of deaths occurring in Scotland which are sudden, suspicious accidental or unexplained and fall within the categories set out in the guidance.

Not all deaths that are reportable to COPFS require Police involvement.

HCPs have their own processes and systems for reporting deaths to the SFIU. Medical uncertainty as to a cause of death is not in itself cause for suspicion.

A HCP may notify the Police of a death, in order to initiate an assessment of the circumstances. This need not necessarily lead to the Police assuming responsibility for investigating or reporting the death.

In the absence of suspicion, a death would be classified as a medical death. The continuing role of the Police in such circumstances would be limited.

**Police Reportable Death**

It is the responsibility of Police Scotland to investigate and report to COPFS all deaths which fall into the following categories:

* Suspicious death - any death where the circumstances are unknown and give cause for concern.
* Drug misuse.
* Accidental deaths, including deaths resulting from falls and industrial accidents.
* Any death of a child or young person under 18 years of age, which is unexplained.
* Incidents of suicide.
* Deaths occurring as a result of neglect or fault.
* Any death where the identity of the deceased is unknown and cannot be readily ascertained.
* Deaths in legal custody.
* Any death as directed by COPFS.

In accordance with the information above, you will see that Police Scotland have minimal involvement in the investigation of unexplained medical deaths and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

Your request may be better directed to COPFS.

​If you would like information on how many sudden death reports Police Scotland submit to COPFS, please let us know but bear in mind that we are unable to do so broken down by the nature of the death as all reports would have to be individually reviewed.

Additionally, if you are interested in data regarding unresolved/ undetected murders, please let us know.

If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](https://www.foi.scot/appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.