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# Structural vulnerabilities and deaths of despair in Scotland, 1980-2021

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**LISBON**  
**ADDICTIONS**  
**2022**

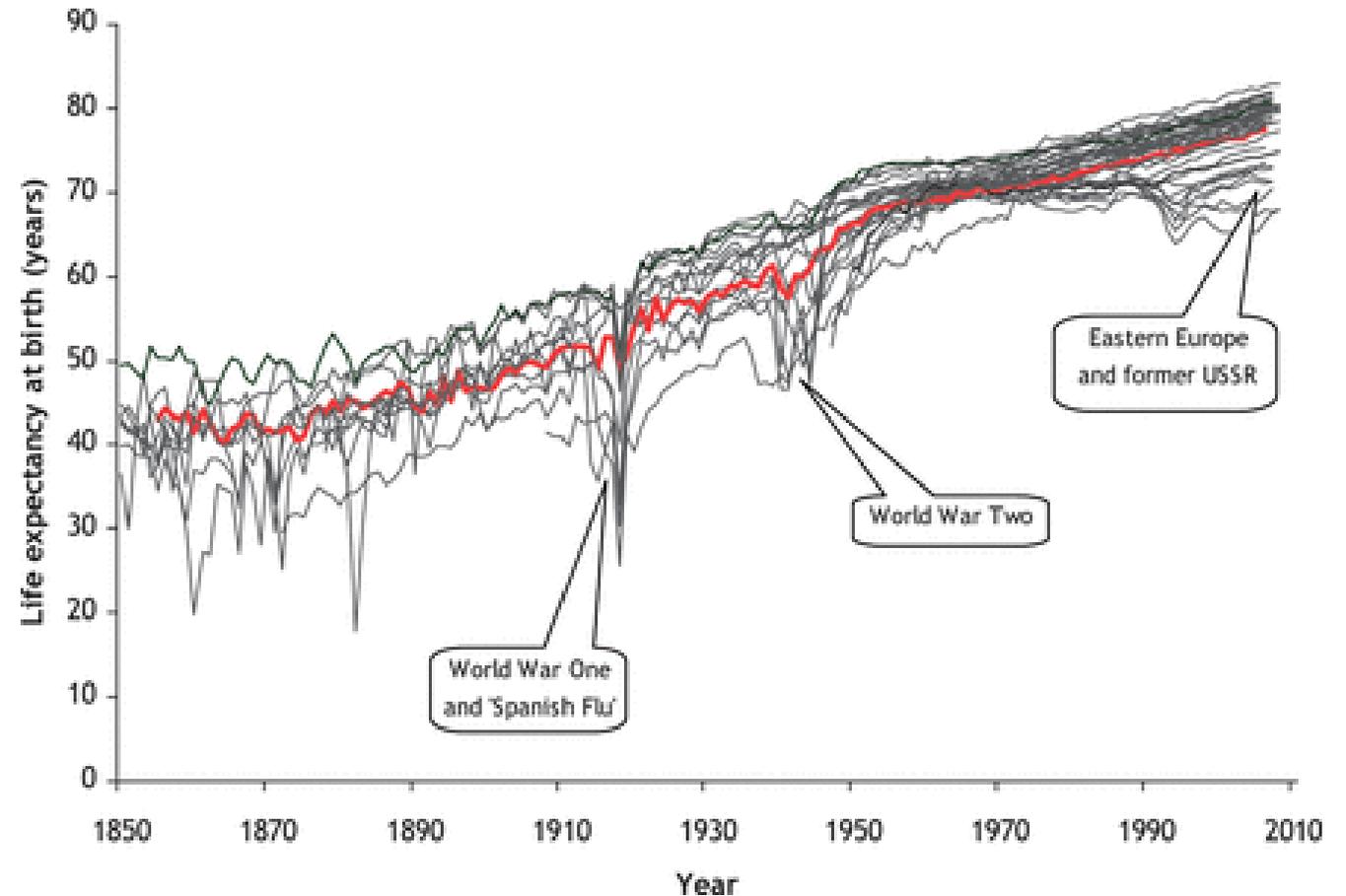
**23-25 November**

# Health and inequalities in Scotland

- Among lowest life expectancy in Europe
- High inequalities in health

In UK context:

- High levels of deprivation
- Very high inequalities in health

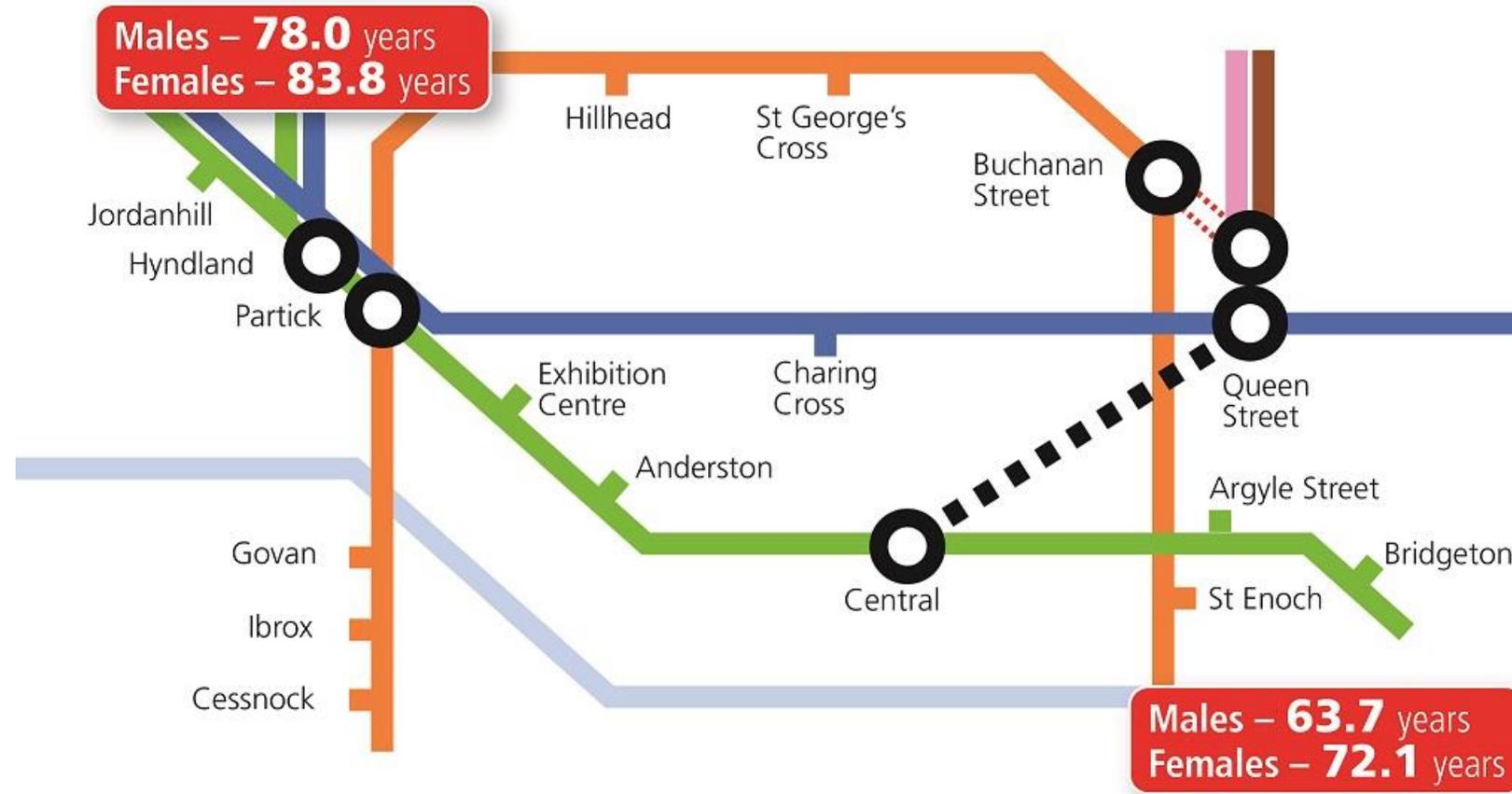


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Source: McCartney, Walsh, Whyte, Collins. *Eur J Public Health*, Volume 22, Issue 6, December 2012, Pages 756–760, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckr136>

# Life-expectancy in Glasgow



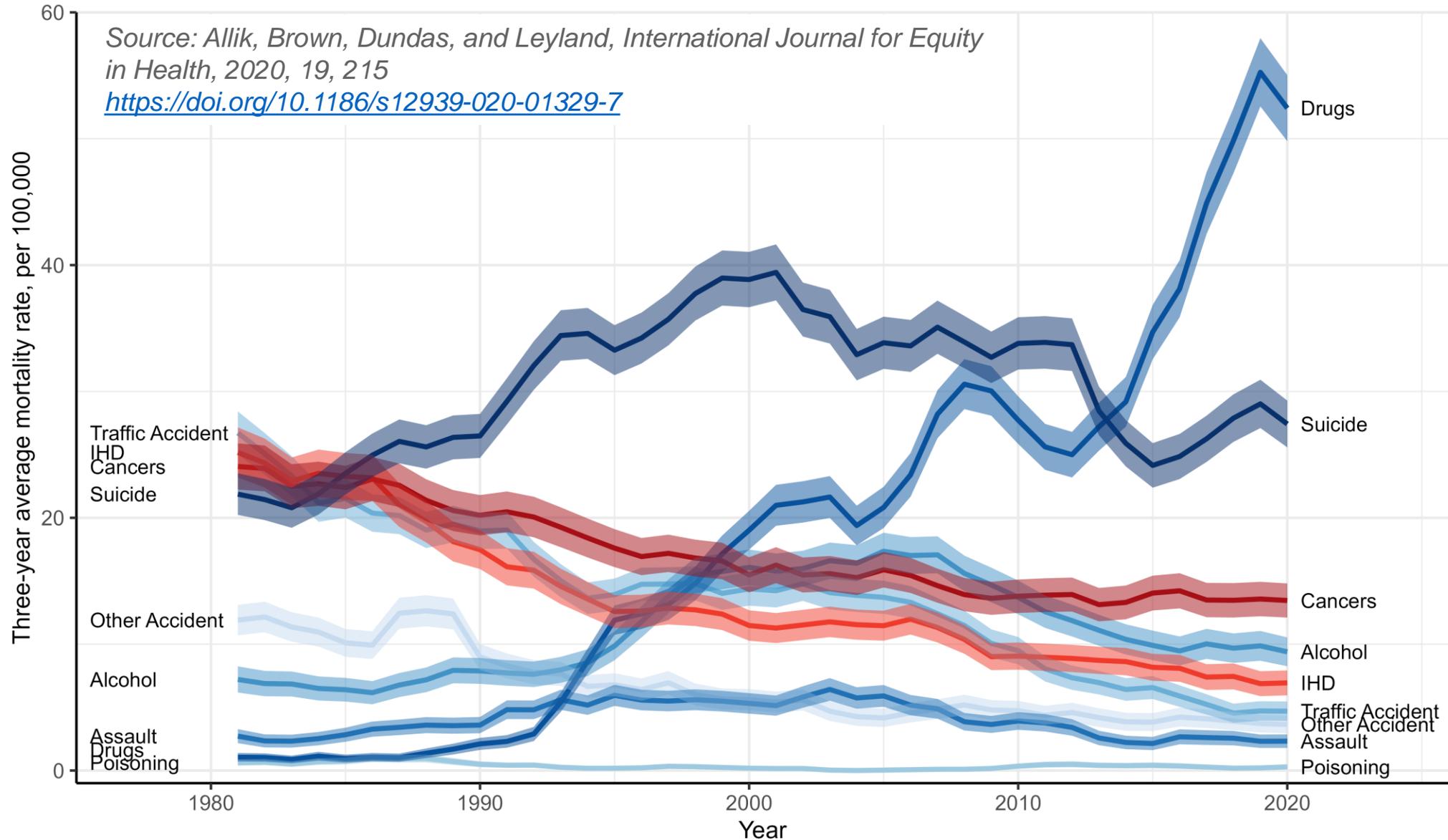
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Source: Public Health Scotland

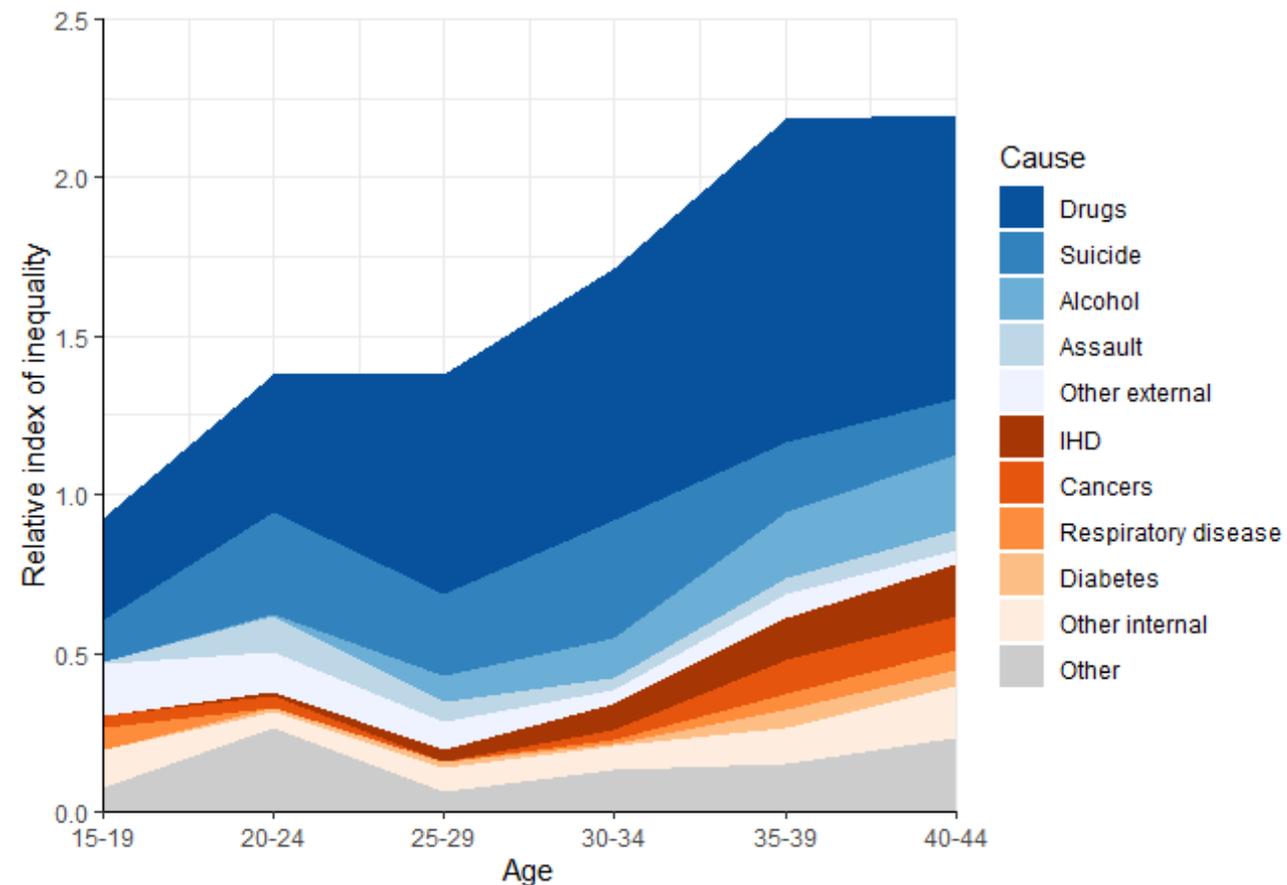
<https://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/measuring-health-inequalities>

# Trends in drug mortality, men aged 15-44



# Socioeconomic inequalities in mortality, men 2016-2018

- Drugs biggest contributor to inequalities in mortality
  - 22% in 2001-03 and 44% in 2016/18
- Drug, suicides & alcohol deaths account for ~70% of inequalities in mortality, same since 2001
- Internal causes make up ~30% inequalities



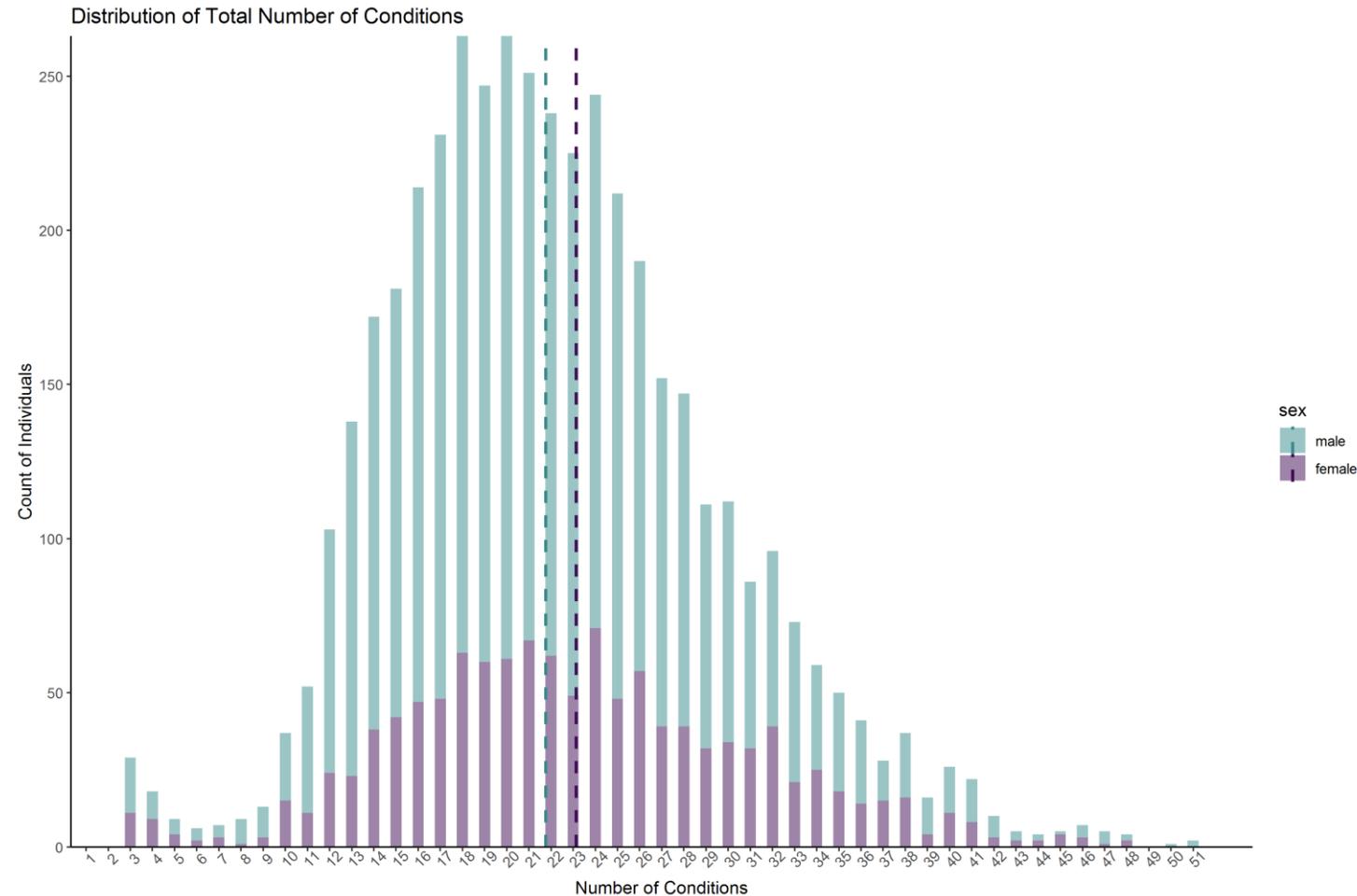
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# Services & conditions preceding drug deaths

- N=4451 in 2009-2016
- Across all deaths: 230 social and health services associated
- An average 23 **unique** service for females and 22 for men

## Common services:

- Employment
- Social (child protection)
- Addiction services (not for drugs)
- Health (mental health, respiratory condition, Hepatitis C)



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Source: "Scottish drug-related deaths study"

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/healthwellbeing/research/mrccsosocialandpublichealthsciencesunit/programmes/relationships/community-networks/drug-related-deaths-study/>

# Clustering of services and conditions

- Multiple drug and substance use (e.g. alcohol)
  - Drug treatment services
  - Contact with other health and addiction services
  - General Practice services as main referral & bridging point
- Mental health services
  - Referrals either to MH or addiction services
- Stakeholder feedback
  - Users' experience highlights similarities (services not joined up)
  - Interventions: Linking up services

# Why ‘deaths of despair’?

**“The single biggest structural driver of problem drug use is poverty and deprivation.”**

(House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee, 2019)

- Predisposition towards problem drug use
- Vulnerable people
- Very long-term impact (e.g. 1970-1980 industrial change)

# Reducing ‘deaths of despair’



House of Commons  
Scottish Affairs Committee

## Problem drug use in Scotland

First Report of Session 2019

*Report, together with formal minutes  
relating to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 29 October 2019*

HC 44  
Published on 4 November 2019  
by authority of the House of Commons

- Declare a ‘public health emergency’
- Reverse austerity policies
- Adopt public health approach
- Adopt evidence-based approach
- Safe consumption facilities
- Decriminalise drugs for personal use

Source: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmscotaf/44/44.pdf>

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# Acknowledgements & resources

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Denise Brown, Ruth Dundas, Alastair H. Leyland, Rosie Seaman, Mark McCann

Miall, N. , Fergie, G. and Pearce, A. (2022) *Health Inequalities in Scotland: trends in deaths, health and wellbeing, health behaviours, and health services since 2000*. Project Report. University of Glasgow. (doi: 10.36399/gla.pubs.282637).

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