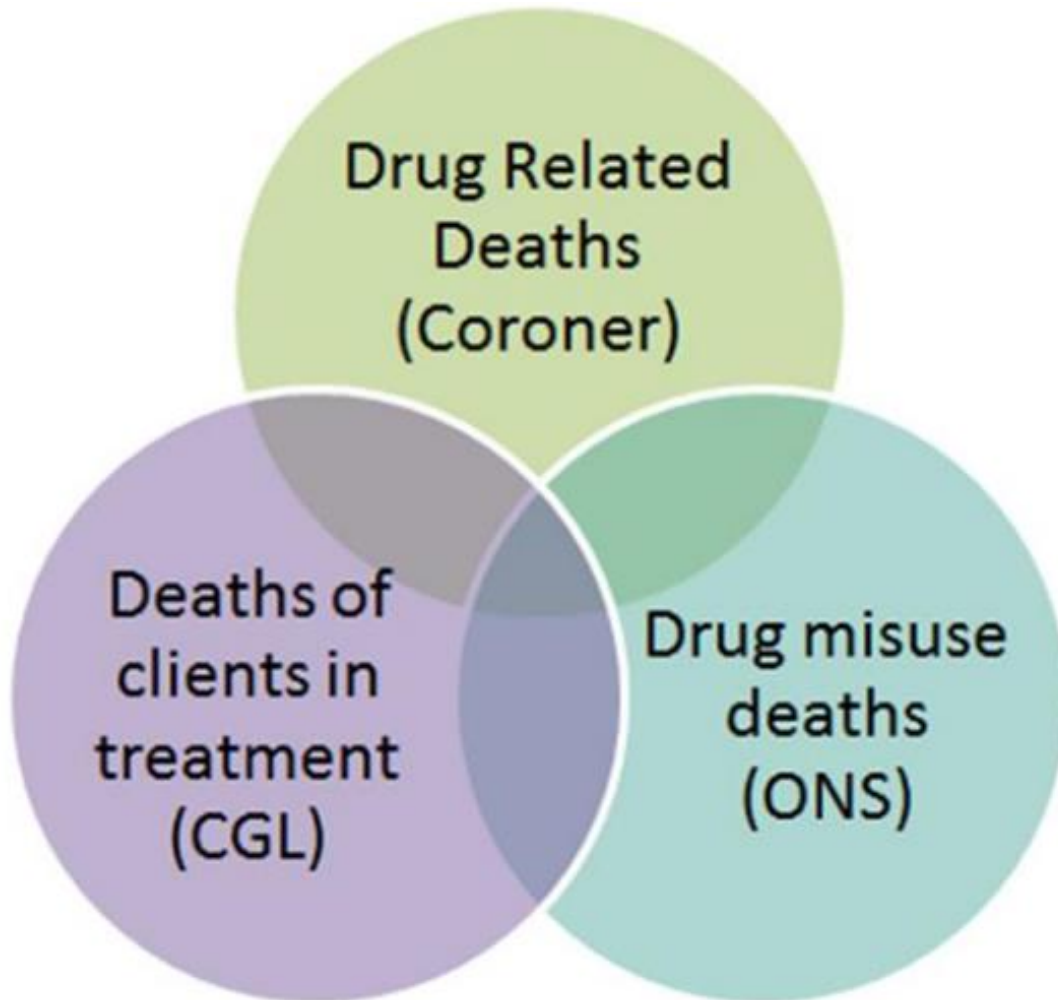


Drug Related Deaths (2019-21)

April 2023

Wirral Public Health Intelligence Team

Classification of deaths due to, or related to, drug use



Drug Related Death

- Based on Wirral resident population.
- Drug related death is defined as a death with any mention of drug use on the death certificate.

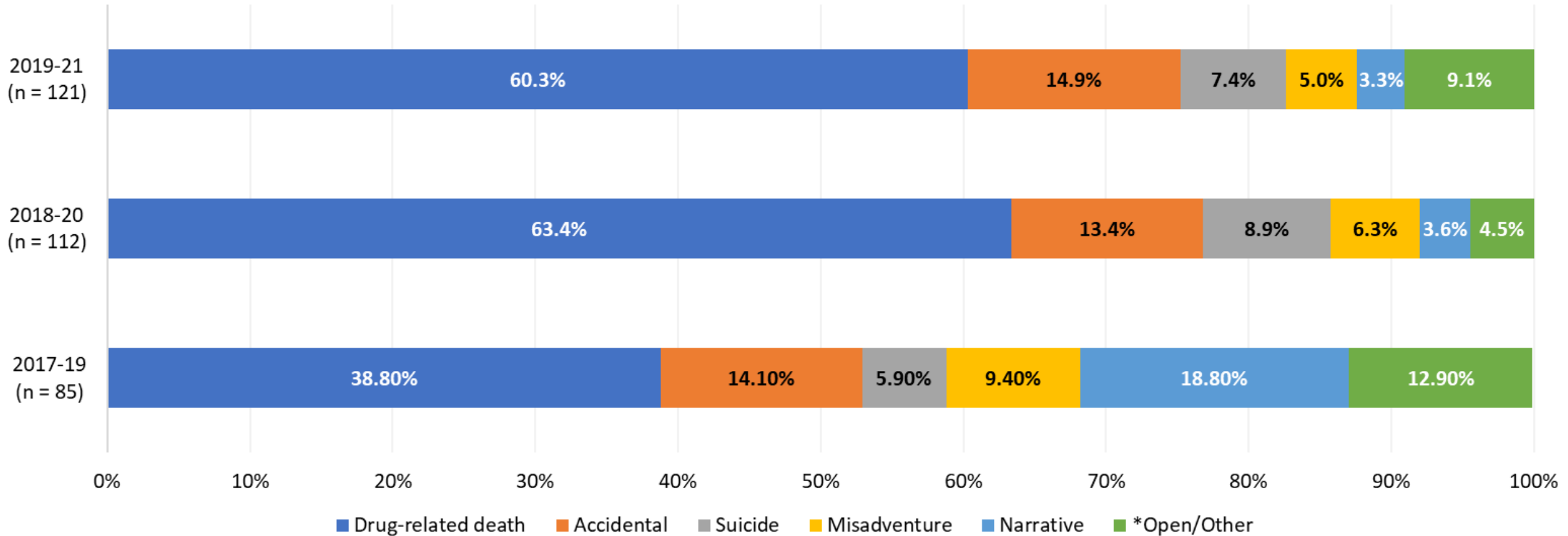
Deaths of clients in treatment

- Based on CGL client population.
- Deaths are counted for any CGL client that has died of any cause whilst in service.

Drug misuse death

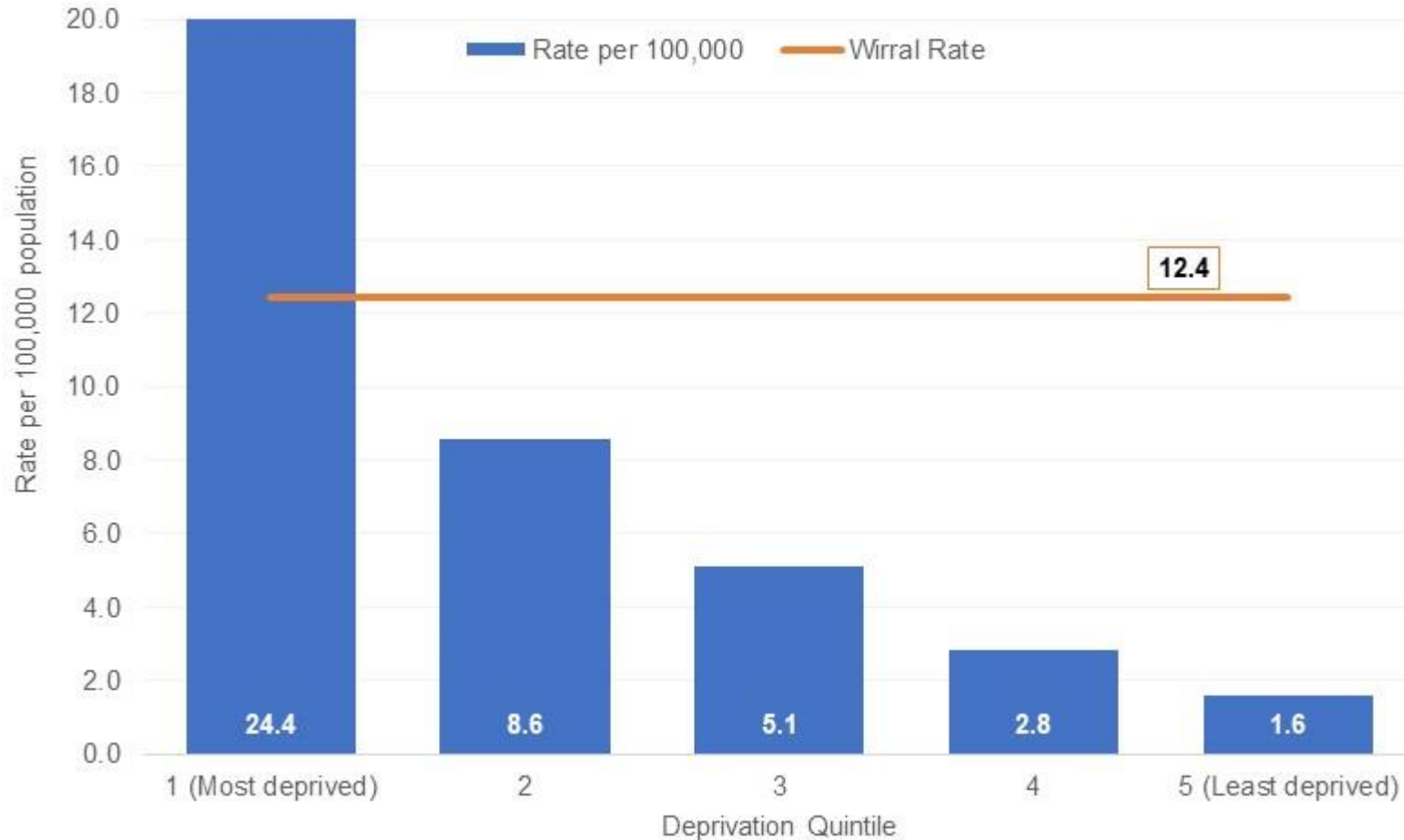
- Based on Wirral resident population.
- Drug misuse death is defined as a death where the underlying cause of death matches any of the ONS defined drug misuse causes of death.

Verdicts



- There were a total of 121 drug related deaths examined by the Coroner in Wirral during 2019-21 included in this summary
- Just over 60% of all cases had a verdict of drug-related death, with the remaining cases assigned other verdicts including accidental death (14.9%), suicide (7.4%), misadventure (5.0%), narrative (3.3%) and open/other (9.1%)
- There were substantially more cases included in this audit with an Open/Other verdict in 2019-21 (9.1%) compared to 2018-20 (4.5%)

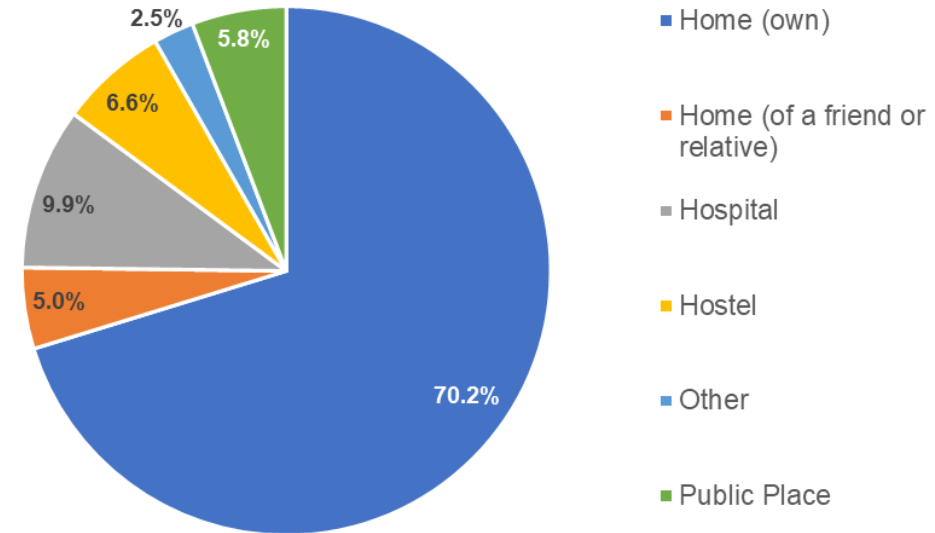
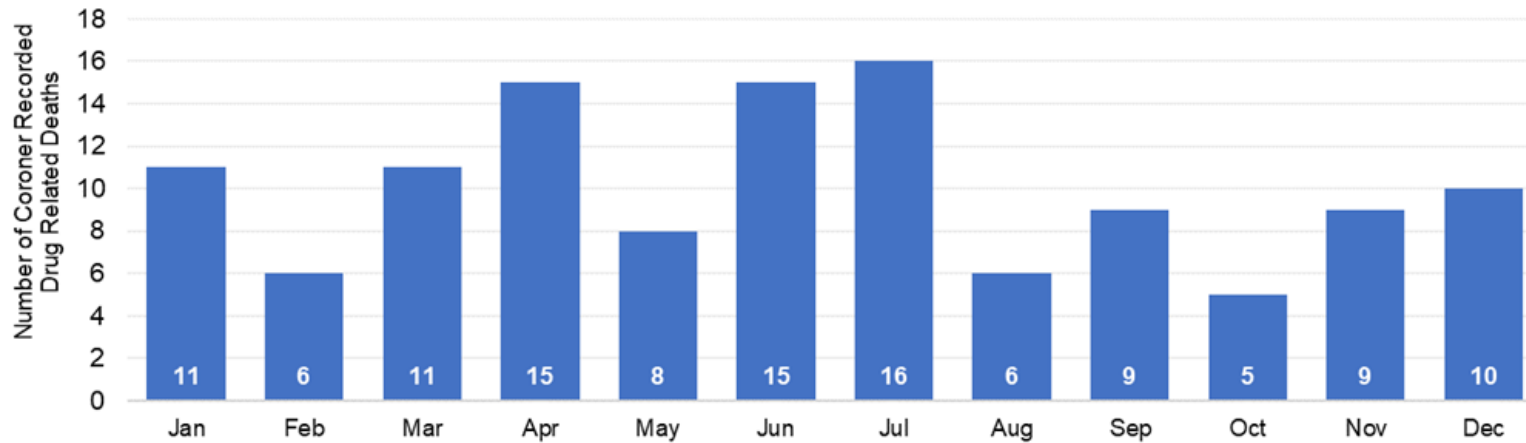
Demographics



Note: Wirral rate includes unknown postcodes, so deprivation quintile could not be determined

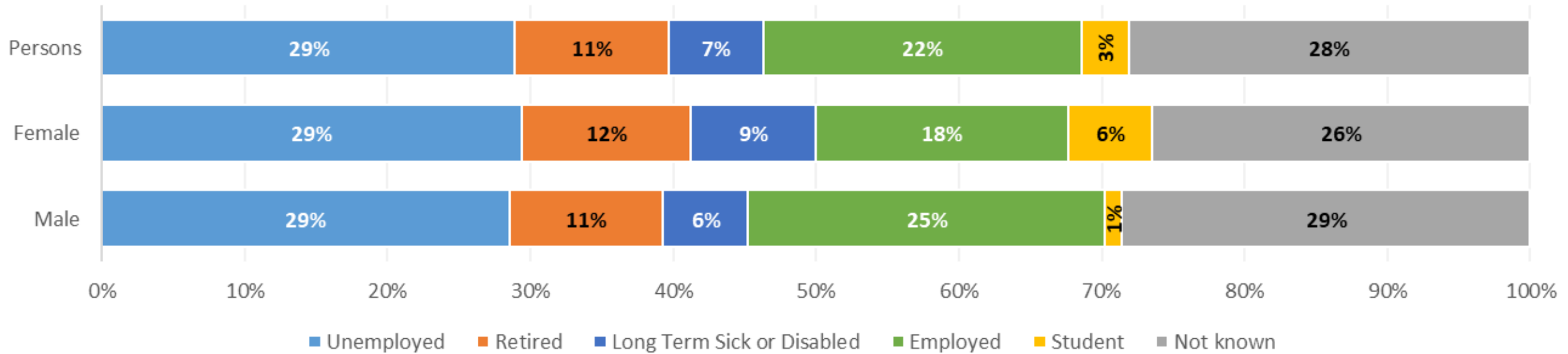
- More than 7 in 10 (71%) drug related deaths were males; this is similar to the national picture (ONS drug misuse death indicator reports 69% for the same time period)
- The largest proportion of deaths were in the those aged 40-49 and 50-59 years (both 33% of all deaths included in this audit)
- The average age of drug related deaths in Wirral among males was 47 years and 55 years for females; both substantially lower than the average age of death in Wirral (from any cause) for both males (76 years) and females (80 years)
- There was a higher drug-related death rate in the most deprived 20% of the Wirral population (Quintile 1); this is more than 15 times the rate of 1.6 in the least deprived 20% (Quintile 5)
- Less than 2% of drug related deaths were from an ethnically diverse population, compared to an estimated 7.6% of the Wirral population belonging to a group other than White British

Seasonality & Location



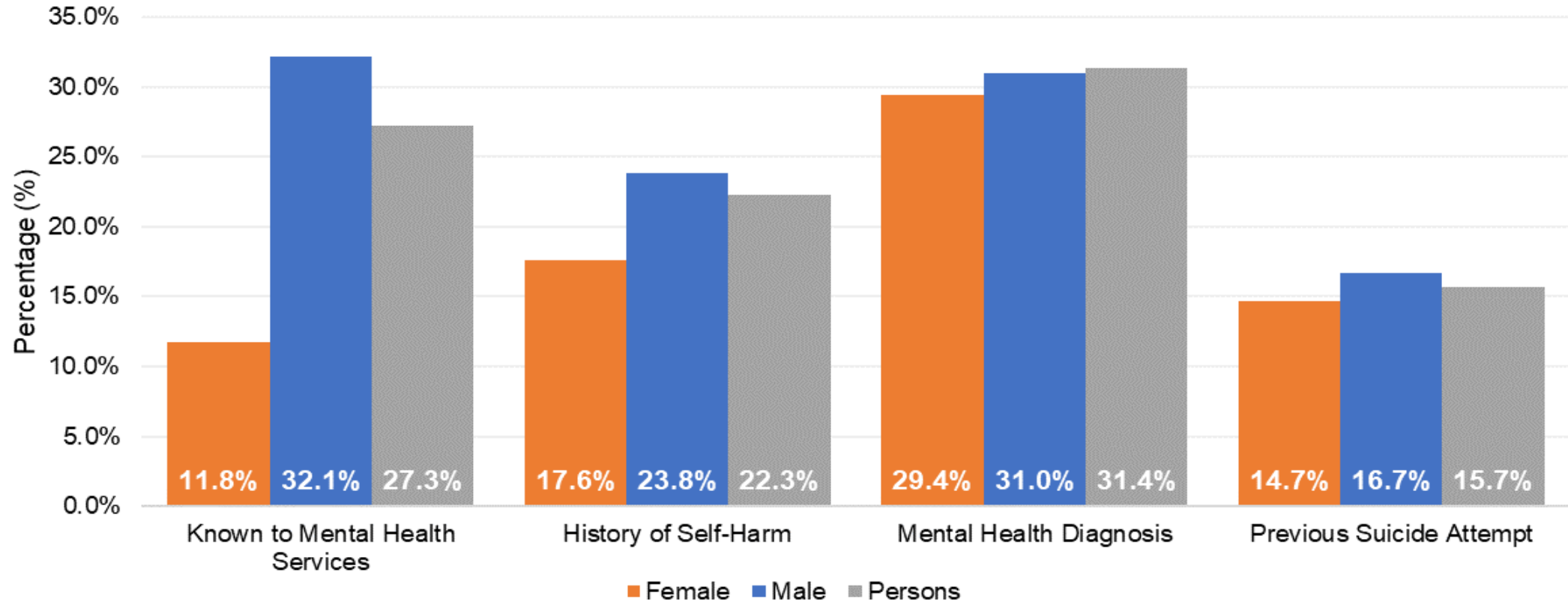
- The months of April, June and July (15, 15 and 16 respectively) had the highest number of drug related deaths during 2019-21
- February, August and October (6, 6 and 5 respectively) had the fewest number of deaths
- Reasons for this are unclear and cannot be compared to national figures, as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) drug misuse deaths are not presented by month nationally
- Over three quarters of all drug related deaths occurred at either an individual's own home (70.2%) or a friend/relative's home (5.0%)
- Locations categorised as "Other" include settings such as residential care and drug rehabilitation centres

Social Factors (e.g. employment, living arrangements etc...)



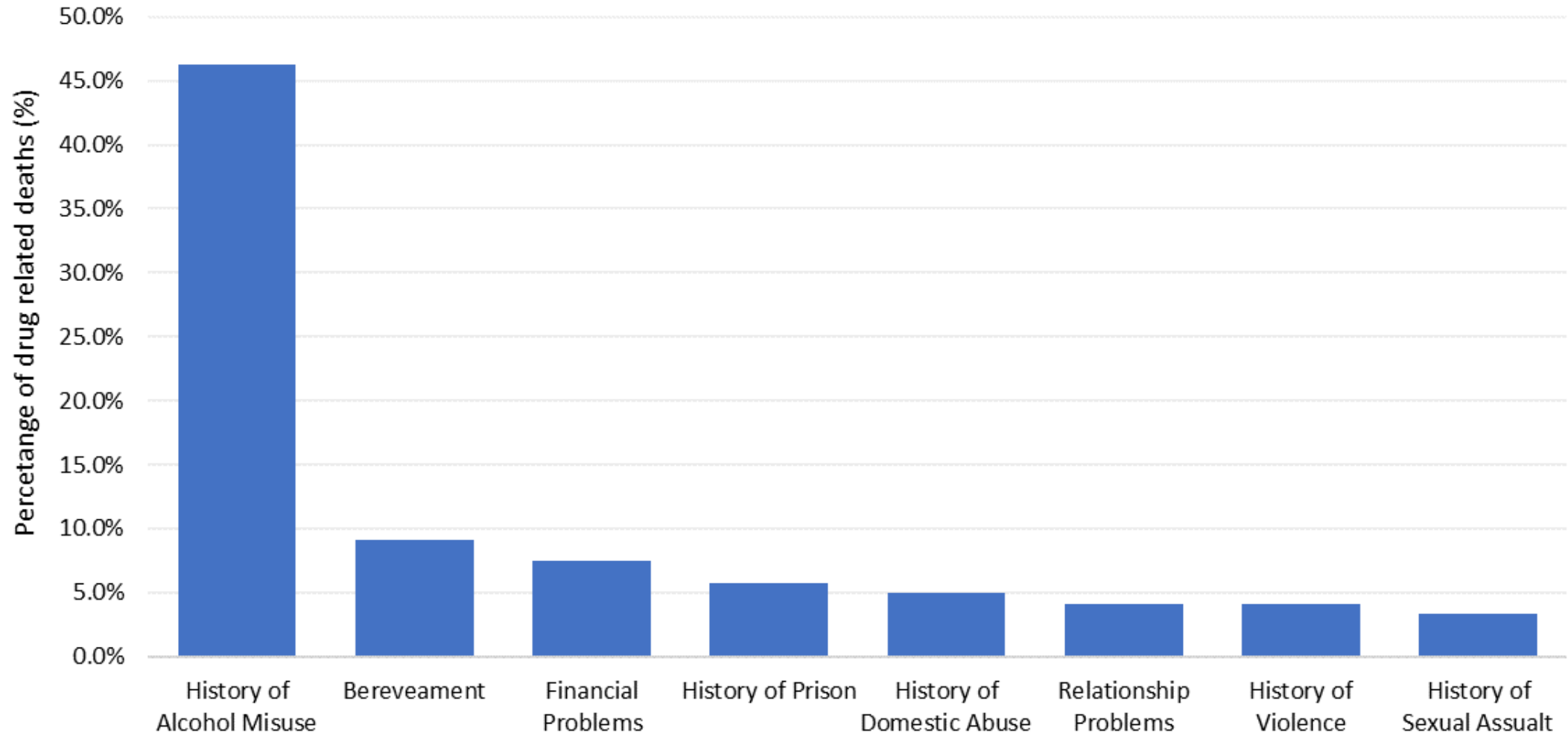
- 47% of deaths occurred in those not in work; 29% unemployed, 7% long-term sick/disabled and 11% retired (although may not have necessarily been of retirement age)
- This is much higher than the overall population of Wirral who were not in work (for any reason, including being long-term sick or disabled) which was just 17% in 2022
- More than 8 in 10 (85%) were either single, separated or divorced; males were much more likely to be single compared to females (71.4% compared to 46.4%)
- More than 1 in 3 drug-related deaths (35%) were recorded as living alone; this was similar for males and females (38% males and 32% respectively)
- Over two in three (69%) cases had Wirral as their place of birth with a further 9% of cases being born within wider Cheshire or Merseyside
- 1 in 5 (20%) had a place of birth recorded as other parts of UK, Europe or world and so, at time of death, were residing some distance from where they were born

Health Factors and Service Engagement



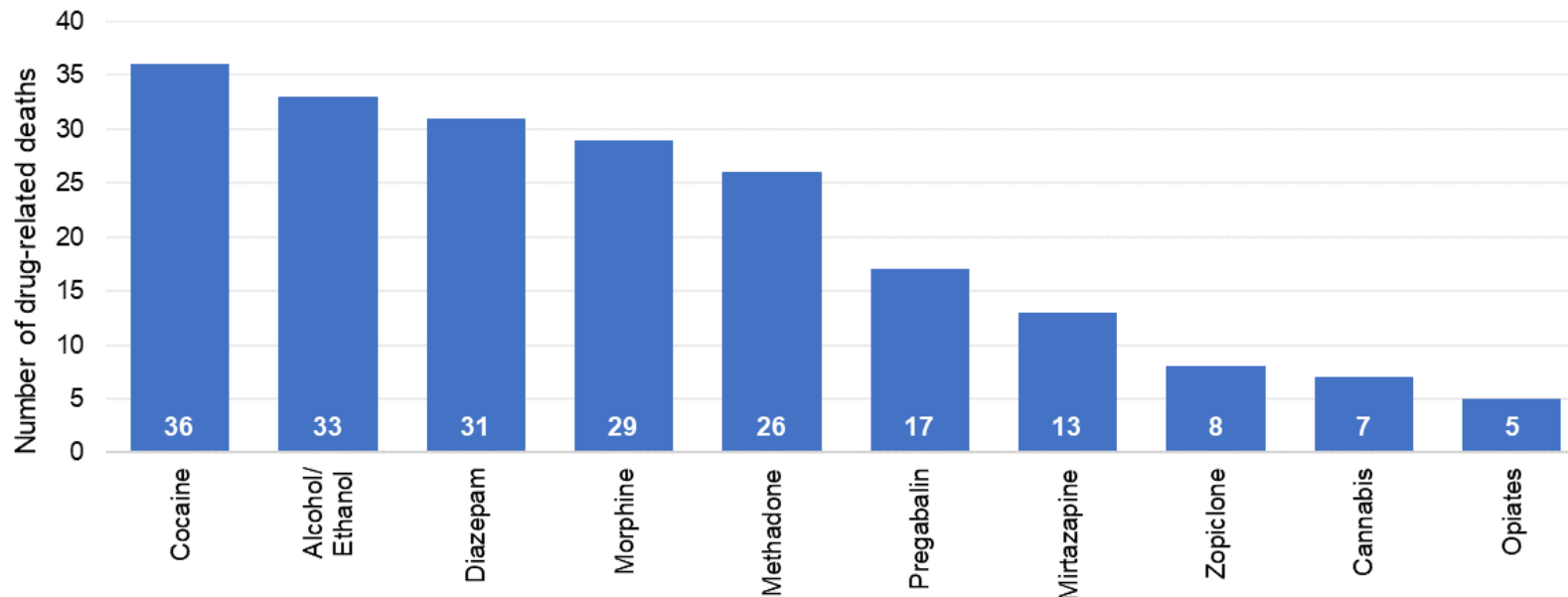
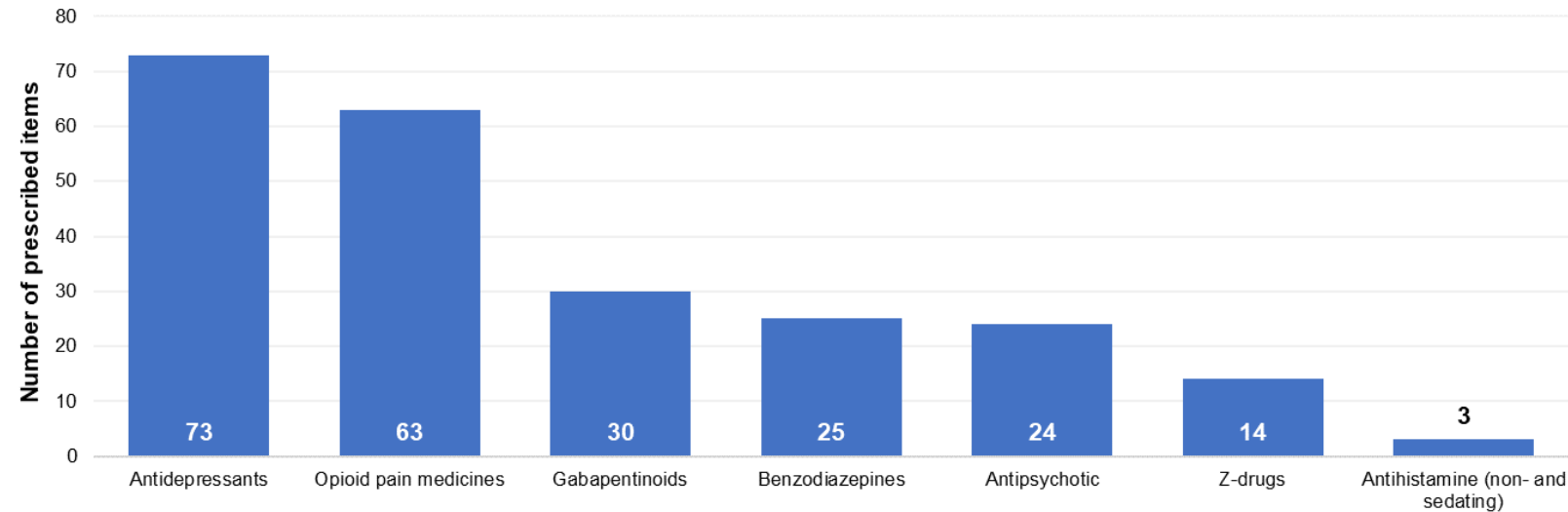
- Almost half (47%) of people included in this audit had a recording in their notes related to mental health¹ but only 27% had ever engaged with local mental health service (this includes people ever known to mental health services, who had a mental health diagnosis, a history of self-harm or had previous suicide attempt)
- 58 people (48%) were suffering from at least one chronic or terminal illness at the time of their death; the most common physical or mental health issues affecting individuals was COPD (20%), followed by asthma and heart/cardiac disease (both 12%)
- Almost three quarters of all people included in this audit (69%) had a history of drug misuse, but only 25% had ever engaged with local rehabilitation services

Potential Contributory Factors



- The most common potential contributory factor recorded (other than drug misuse) was a history of alcohol misuse (46%), followed by a bereavement (9%) and financial problems (7%)
- Caution is noted with these figures as there are a lot of unknown recordings for each issue, if these issues are not recorded on an individual's file, it does not necessarily mean that the person did not experience them

Prescribed Medication and Post-Mortem Toxicology



- The most common drug found in the body at the time of death was cocaine, which was recorded in almost a third of all deaths (29%); alcohol/ethanol was the second most commonly found drug, which was recorded in 27% of all deaths, followed by diazepam, which was recorded in a quarter (25%) of all deaths
- Overall, opiates made up the largest class of drugs found in the toxicology reports, with almost three quarters (64%) of deaths recording at least one opiate
- There were 15 individuals who died due to prescription drugs only*
- The average number of drugs found at post mortem was 5.2, ranging from 1 to 15 drugs
- *This relates to drugs that can be prescribed but have not necessarily been prescribed to the deceased

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