Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 15 May 2020

Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

Contact:
Sarah Caul
health.data@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 456 490

Release date:
26 May 2020

Next release:
2 June 2020

Table of contents

1 . Other pages in this release

- Comparison of weekly death occurrences in England and Wales: up to week ending 15 May 2020
- Where to find statistics on UK deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) and infection rates by country

2 . Main points

- The number of deaths registered in England and Wales in the week ending 15 May 2020 (Week 20) was 14,573; this was 3,380 lower than Week 18, 1,916 more than Week 19 and 4,385 more than the five-year average.
- The early May Bank Holiday contributed to both the decrease in the number of deaths registered in Week 19 and the increase in the number of deaths registered in Week 20, as deaths were unlikely to be registered on Friday 8 May. Next week's report will allow a better assessment of recent trends in the number of all-cause deaths and deaths related to COVID.
- Of the deaths registered in Week 20, 3,810 mentioned "novel coronavirus (COVID-19)", the lowest number of deaths involving COVID-19 in the last six weeks, accounting for 26.1% of all deaths and 120 deaths fewer than Week 19.
- People aged 90 years and over continued to have the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in Week 20.
- In Week 20, the proportion of deaths occurring in care homes decreased to 30.6% while deaths involving COVID-19 as a percentage of all deaths in care homes decreased to 37.2%.
- In Week 20, the number of deaths in care homes was 2,350 higher than the five-year average, while in hospitals there were 614 excess deaths; the total number of excess deaths involving COVID-19 continued to decrease.
- The percentage of deaths involving COVID-19 continued to decrease across all English regions; the North West had the highest number of COVID-19 deaths (620) for the second week in a row.
- In Wales, there were 180 deaths registered in Week 20 involving COVID-19, accounting for 23.3% of all deaths registered in Wales.
- Of all deaths involving COVID-19 registered up to Week 20, 65.1% occurred in hospital with the remainder mainly occurring in care homes (28.3%), private homes (4.6%) and hospices (1.3%).
- The number of deaths registered in the UK in the week ending 15 May 2020 (Week 20) was 16,366 of which 4,210 deaths involved COVID-19.

3 . Deaths registered by week

Figure 1: The number of deaths involving COVID-19 continued to decrease

Number of deaths registered by week, England and Wales, 28 December 2019 to 15 May 2020

The provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales increased from 12,657 in Week 19 (week ending 8 May 2020) to 14,573 in Week 20 (week ending 15 May 2020). This was 4,385 more deaths than the five-year average (Figure 1). More information is in Measuring the data.

The number of death registrations in Week 20 was impacted by the early May Bank Holiday, which took place on Friday 8 May 2020 (in Week 19). The number of deaths registered on the early May Bank Holiday fell to 88 deaths compared with 2,950 deaths registered on the previous Friday (Friday 1 May 2020). Trends seen in Week 19 and Week 20 should therefore be interpreted with caution, as deaths not registered on the early May Bank Holiday were likely registered in the following week (Week 20).

Early May Bank Holiday normally takes place on a Monday, however, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE day, the bank holiday took place on Friday 8 May. In this analysis a week is defined as Saturday to Friday. Having the bank holiday on the Friday rather than the Monday results in a larger effect on registration delays as the death would have to be registered in the following week. On a normal bank holiday, deaths that cannot be registered on a Monday could still be registered on the Tuesday to Friday of the same week, reducing the impact of the delay on the weekly figures.

When looking across the last two weeks and looking at a rolling seven-day period, which smoothed some of the effect of the Friday bank holiday, we see that the number of deaths overall has continued to decrease. It is important to note that we expect the number of deaths to return to a normal level two weeks after a week with a bank holiday.

The number of deaths was around or below the five-year average up to Week 12. The number of deaths increased between Weeks 13 and 16 before decreasing between Weeks 17 and 19 but increased in Week 20.

The number of death registrations involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) decreased from 3,930 in Week 19 to 3,810 in Week 20. Of all deaths registered in Week 20, 26.1% mentioned COVID-19, down from 31.1% in Week 19.

Similar patterns can be seen for England and Wales separately, with the number of deaths in England increasing from 11,946 in Week 19 to 13,783 in Week 20, which was 4,257 above the Week 20 average. Of the Week 20 deaths, 26.3% (3,624 deaths) involved COVID-19.

In Wales, the number of deaths increased from 692 deaths in Week 19 to 772 deaths in Week 20, 137 deaths higher than the Week 20 average. Of these, 23.3% (180 deaths) involved COVID-19.

The number of deaths mentioning “Influenza and Pneumonia” on the death certificate (without COVID-19) increased from 994 in Week 19 to 1,194 in Week 20 but remained below the five-year average. The number of deaths that mentioned both “Influenza and Pneumonia” and COVID-19 on the death certificate also increased to 1,382 compared with 1,313 deaths in Week 19.

In Week 20, 34.3% of all deaths mentioned “Influenza and Pneumonia”, COVID-19, or both compared with 38.9% in Week 19. “Influenza and Pneumonia” has been included for comparison, as a well-understood cause of death involving respiratory infection that is likely to have somewhat similar risk factors to COVID-19.

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK.
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our coronavirus roundup.
- View all coronavirus data.
- Find out how our studies and surveys are serving public need.

Figure 2: The number of excess deaths involving COVID-19 decreased for the fourth week in a row

Year-to-date analysis for deaths registered in England and Wales, 2020

As COVID-19 was not a cause of death prior to 2020, any deaths involving COVID-19 appear in the counts above the five-year average. This means that when the number of deaths involving COVID-19 is higher than the number of excess deaths, the bar indicating deaths not involving COVID-19 makes a negative contribution.

Between Weeks 1 and 12, 138,916 deaths were registered, which was 4,822 less than the five-year average for these weeks. However, between Weeks 13 and 20, 135,575 deaths were registered, which was 53,960 more than the five-year average. Week 20 showed a continuation of the decreasing trend in excess deaths (both involving COVID-19 and involving other causes) seen in Weeks 16 to 19 (Figure 2). We are continuing to investigate the number of non-COVID-19 related deaths and will publish detailed analysis on this in the future.

Care should be taken when looking at Weeks 19 and 20 because of the early May Bank Holiday. Looking at Weeks 19 and 20 combined, we see that the number of deaths registered (27,230 deaths) was 37.8% above the five-year average (19,764 deaths). This has decreased from 80.6% above the five-year average in Week 18. When looking at Week 19 and 20 combined, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 was 7,740, which is 274 deaths more than the difference compared with the five-year average (7,466 deaths).

Looking at the year-to-date (using the most up-to-date data we have available), the number of deaths up to 15 May was 274,473, which is 49,120 more than the five-year average. Of the deaths registered by 15 May, 41,220 mentioned COVID-19 on the death certificate, this is 15.0% of all deaths.

4 . Deaths registered by age group

Figure 3: People aged 90-years and over continued to have the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in Week 20

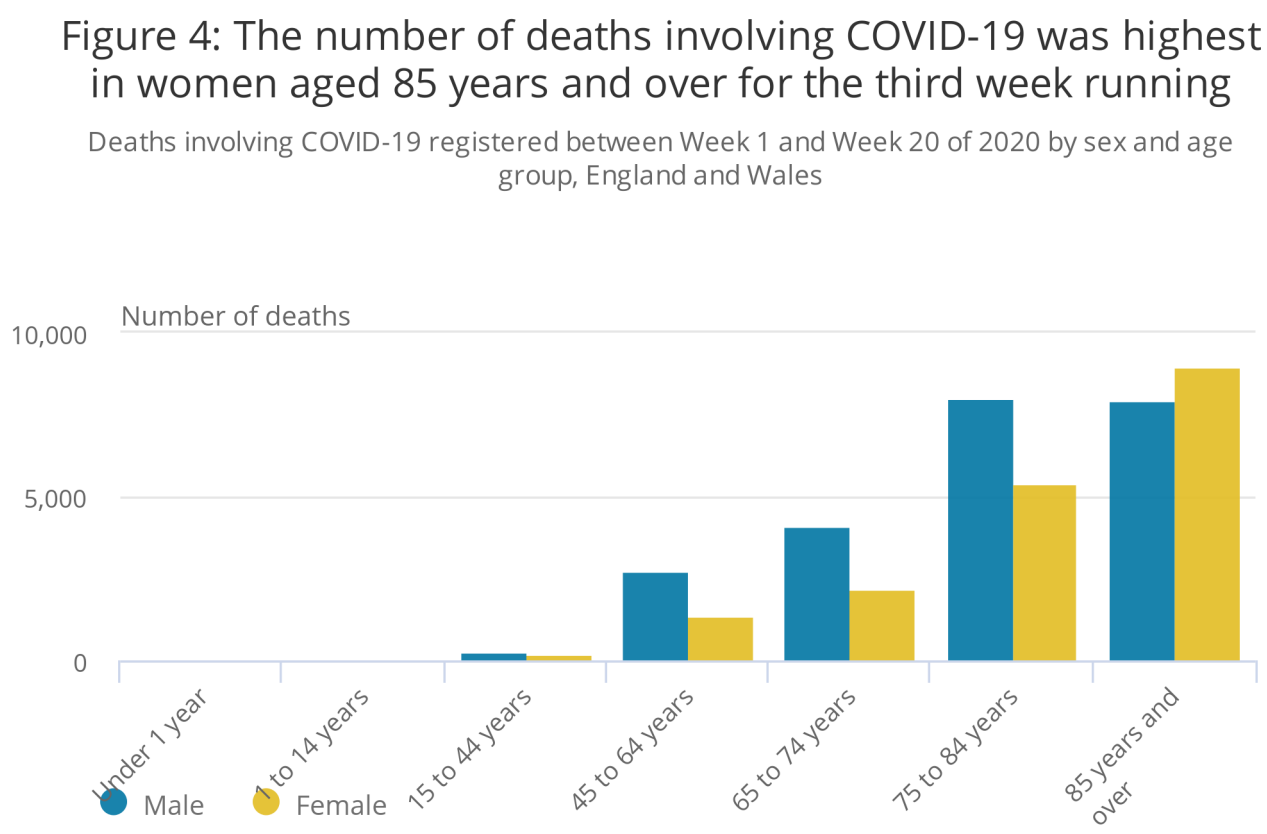
Deaths by age group, England and Wales, week ending 15 May 2020

In Week 20 (week ending 15 May 2020), the number of deaths increased across most age groups compared with Week 19; this is at least partially because of the early May Bank Holiday in Week 19. The only age group that showed a decrease in the number of deaths registered in Week 20 was 10- to 14-year-olds; a decrease of six deaths compared with Week 19.

The highest proportion of coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths was in age group 85 to 89 years where 30.9% of deaths involved COVID-19 (868 deaths). The largest number of COVID-19 deaths was in those aged 90 years and over with 1,002 deaths.

Figure 4: The number of deaths involving COVID-19 was highest in women aged 85 years and over for the third week running

Deaths involving COVID-19 registered between Week 1 and Week 20 of 2020 by sex and age group, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.
2. Based on date death was registered rather than occurred.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The ICD-10 definitions for COVID-19 are U07.1 and U07.2.
5. Individual weeks may not sum to the year-to-date analysis as previous weeks have been recalculated in order to have the most up-to-date figures.

Looking at the year-to-date, for most age groups, there have been more deaths involving COVID-19 in males than in females (Figure 4). However, there were more deaths for females aged 85 years and over (8,993) than males (7,969).

Though there are now more COVID-19 deaths for women aged 85 years and over, this could be because the over-85 years female population (939,000) is larger than the over-85 male population (564,000) in England and Wales.

5 . Deaths by region in England and Wales

Figure 5: The number of deaths involving COVID-19 was highest in the North West for the second week running

Deaths by regions in England, and Wales, week ending 15 May 2020

Figure 6: The number of deaths registered across all English regions and Wales increased while the number of COVID-19 deaths decreased in Week 20

Deaths by regions in England, and Wales, week ending 15 May 2020

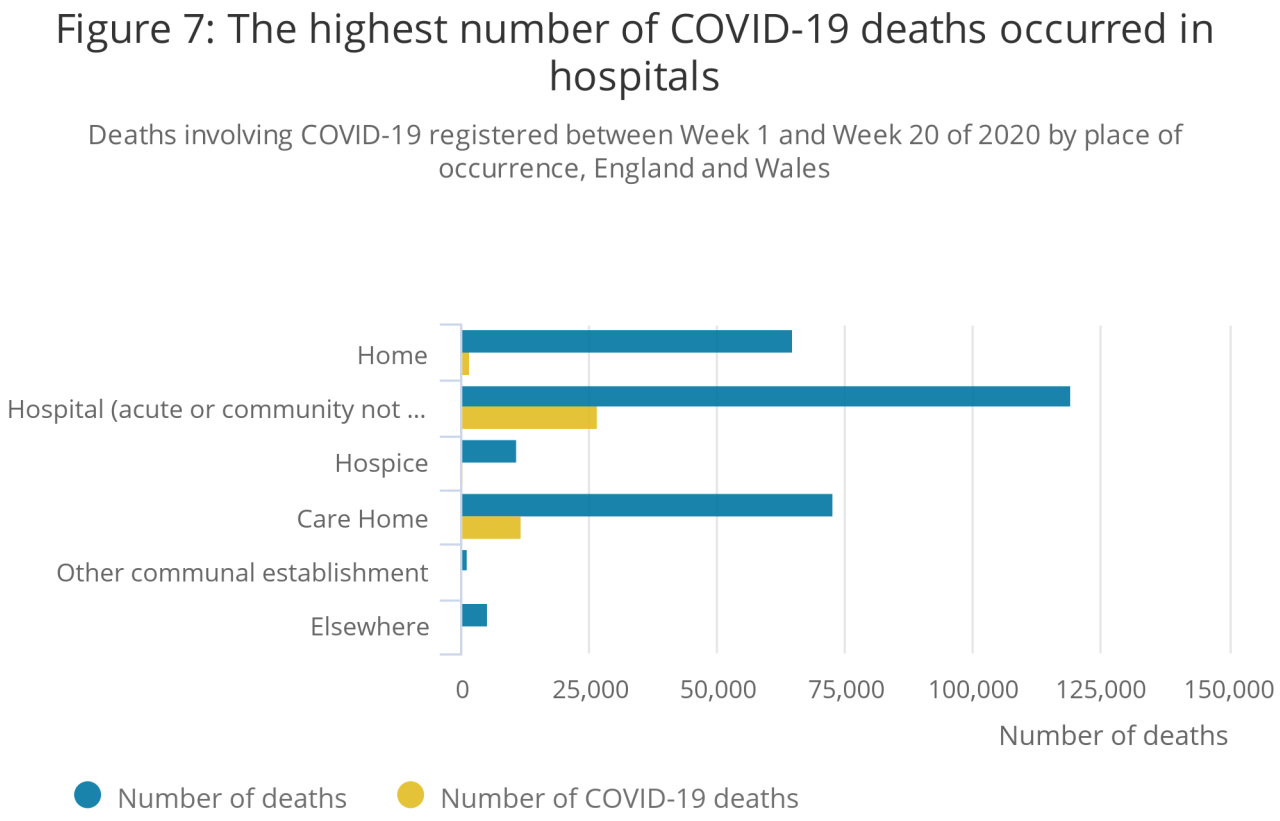
In Week 20 (week ending 15 May 2020), there were 180 deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) registered in Wales. The North West was the English region with the largest number of deaths involving COVID-19 for the second week running, with 620 deaths. The North West also had the highest proportion of COVID-19 deaths, with 31.1% of all deaths being COVID-19 related. This was the first time, since Week 11, where London did not have the highest proportion of deaths involving COVID-19.

6 . Deaths registered by place of occurrence

The year-to-date analysis shows that, of deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) up to Week 20 (week ending 15 May 2020), 65.1% (26,817 deaths) occurred in hospital, with the remainder occurring in care homes (11,650 deaths), private homes (1,876 deaths), hospices (524 deaths), other communal establishments (191 deaths), and elsewhere (162 deaths).

Figure 7: The highest number of COVID-19 deaths occurred in hospitals

Deaths involving COVID-19 registered between Week 1 and Week 20 of 2020 by place of occurrence, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.
2. Based on date death was registered rather than occurred.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The ICD-10 definitions for COVID-19 are U07.1 and U07.2.

The proportion of deaths from all causes that occurred in care homes continued to decrease, to 30.6% in Week 20. The proportion of care home deaths that involved COVID-19 decreased; 37.2% of all deaths in care homes involved COVID-19 in Week 20, compared with 39.2% in Week 19.

Between Week 19 and Week 20, there was a 18.3% increase in deaths occurring in private homes, while deaths occurring in hospitals increased by 22.0% compared with Week 19. The proportion of COVID-19 deaths in hospitals continued to decrease (50.1% in Week 20) while the proportion of COVID-19 deaths in care homes continued to increase (43.6% in Week 20).

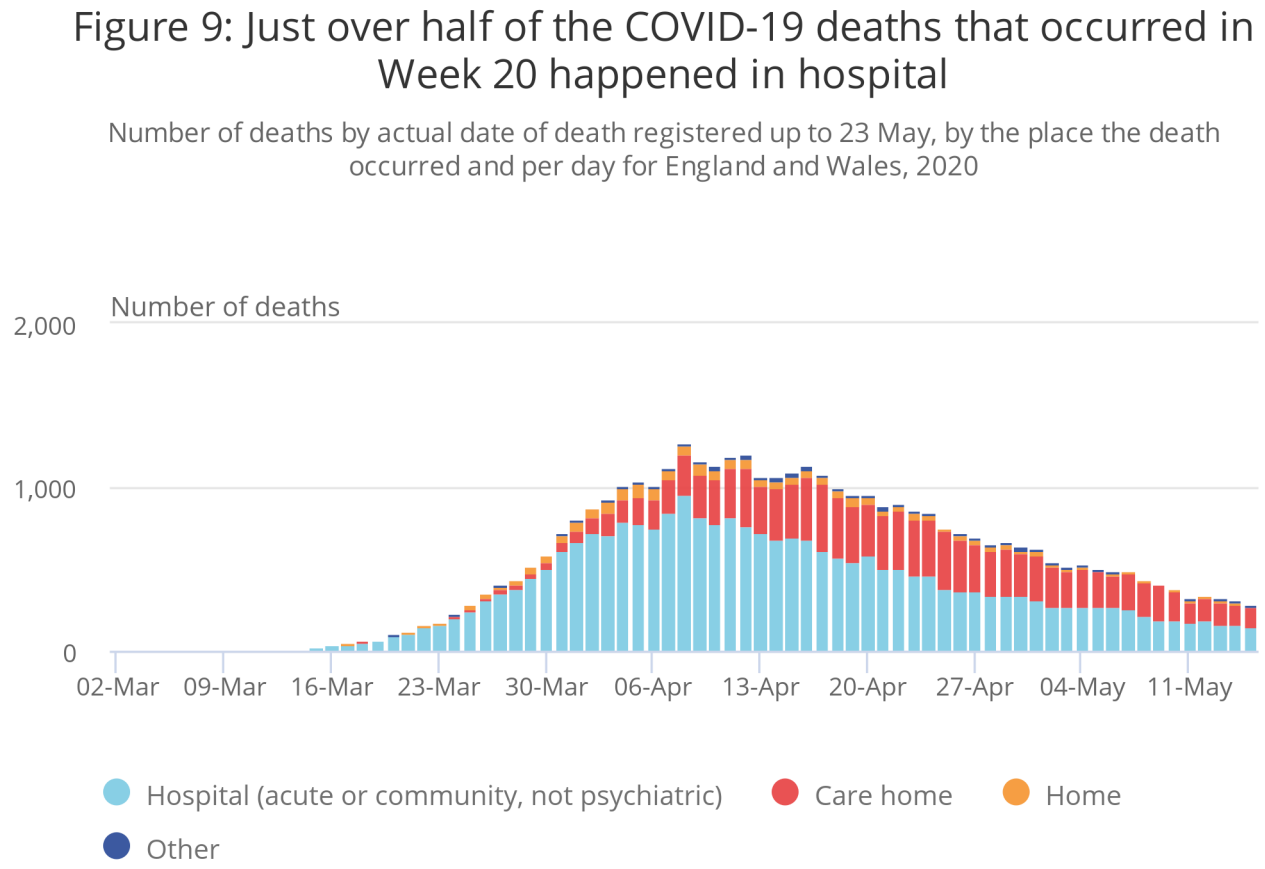
Figure 8: The numbers of excess deaths in care homes, hospitals, and private homes increased in Week 20, but remained below Week 18 figures

Number of excess deaths by place of death between Week 1 and Week 20 of 2020 by place of occurrence, England and Wales

The number of deaths above the five-year average in hospitals increased in Week 20, to 614 (Figure 8). However, this follows the decreasing trend seen since Week 16; the increase in excess deaths in hospital compared with Week 19 is likely to have been affected by the early May Bank Holiday. Deaths in care homes and private homes have shown a similar pattern in excess deaths, with 2,350 excess deaths in care homes and 1,342 excess deaths in private homes in Week 20.

Figure 9: Just over half of the COVID-19 deaths that occurred in Week 20 happened in hospital

Number of deaths by actual date of death registered up to 23 May, by the place the death occurred and per day for England and Wales, 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.
2. Based on date of death registered up to 16 May.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The ICD-10 definitions for COVID-19 are U07.1 and U07.2.

Figure 9 is based on date of death for deaths registered up to 23 May 2020, rather than date of registration. This means as more deaths are registered, deaths per day are likely to increase, especially later dates.

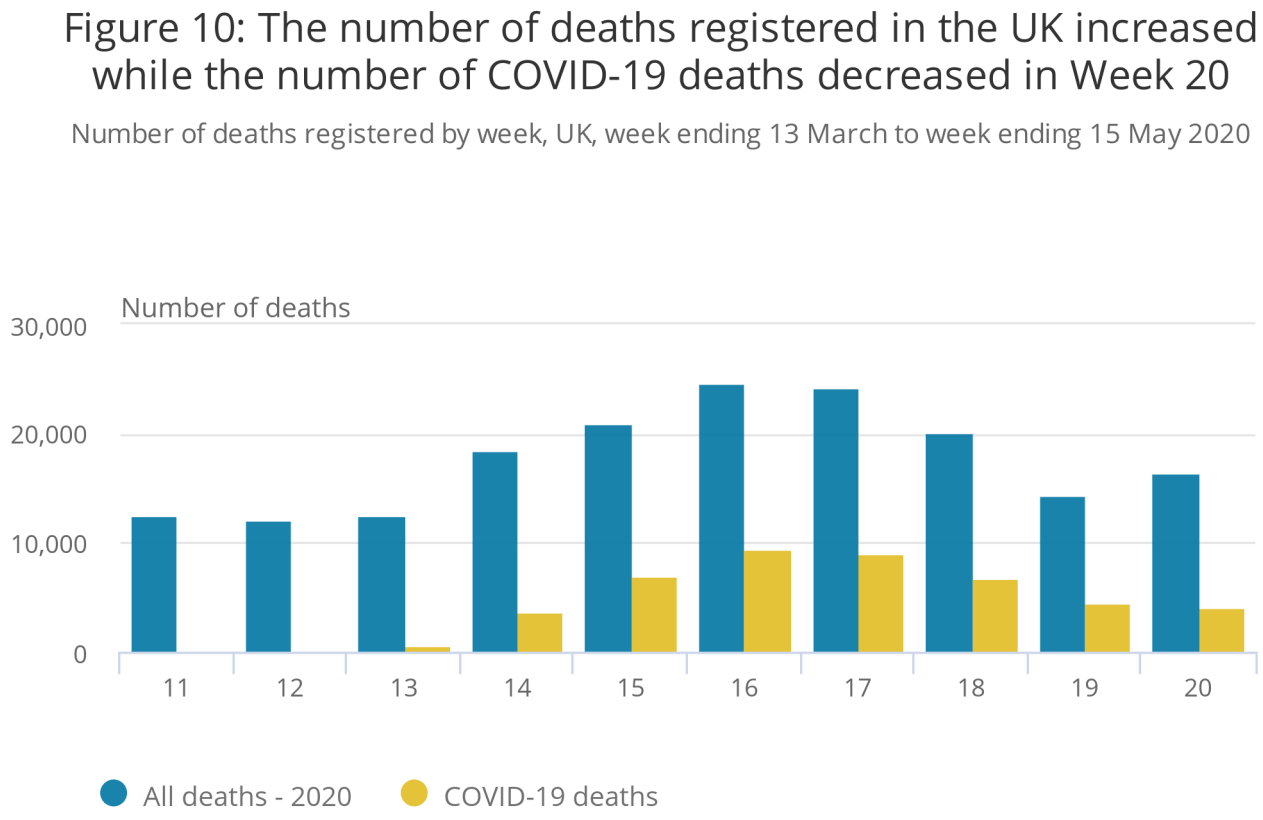
Looking at the most recent week, on average, deaths occurring in hospitals have accounted for 51.5% of all deaths involving COVID-19 and deaths in care homes have accounted for a further 44.3%, this may change as more deaths are registered. Although we expect numbers of deaths to increase as more are registered, it currently appears that deaths per day are decreasing.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Public Health England to better understand deaths that are occurring in care homes. From 28 April, we have published counts of deaths reported by care home operators to CQC involving COVID-19. More information can be found in our comparisons article.

7 . Deaths registered in the UK

Figure 10: The number of deaths registered in the UK increased while the number of COVID-19 deaths decreased in Week 20

Number of deaths registered by week, UK, week ending 13 March to week ending 15 May 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales

Notes:

1. Based on date death was registered rather than occurred.
2. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
3. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.
4. The ICD-10 definitions for COVID-19 are U07.1 and U07.2.
5. National Records of Scotland produce figures for Scotland.
6. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency produce figures for Northern Ireland.

All constituent countries of the UK had the early May Bank Holiday on 8 May 2020, therefore death registrations were affected across the UK in Week 20.

Across the UK, there were 16,366 deaths (all causes) registered in Week 20 (ending 15 May), of which 4,210 deaths involved the coronavirus (COVID-19). There were five deaths involving COVID-19 in the UK in Week 11 (ending 13 March); this increased to 9,495 deaths registered in Week 16 (ending 17 April) but has fallen to 4,210 deaths registered in Week 20. In Week 20, England had the highest number of deaths involving COVID-19 with 3,624 deaths, followed by Scotland with 332 deaths, Wales with 180 deaths and Northern Ireland with 74 deaths.

8 . Deaths data

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Dataset | Released 26 May 2020
Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available. Includes data on the coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths.

Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board
Dataset | Released 26 May 2020
Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), by local authority, health board and place of death in the latest weeks for which data are available.

Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England
Dataset | Released 26 May 2020
Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority. Published by the Office for National Statistics and Care Quality Commission.

9 . Glossary

Coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths

Coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths are those deaths registered in England and Wales in the stated week where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death. A doctor can certify the involvement of COVID-19 based on symptoms and clinical findings – a positive test result is not required.

Definitions of COVID-19 for deaths in Scotland and Northern Ireland are similar to England and Wales.

10 . Measuring the data

Week 16 includes the Easter Monday bank holiday. Based on past years, we would expect the proportion of deaths occurring in the week including Easter Monday to drop for the period. The Coronavirus Act 2020 permitted Registry Offices to continue to take death registrations over the holiday period this year. This may reduce the usual drop in registration of deaths occurring in the week.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the Mortality statistics in England and Wales QMI.

To meet user needs, we publish very timely but provisional counts of death registrations in England and Wales in our Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional dataset. These are presented by sex, age group and regions (within England) as well as for Wales as a whole. To allow time for registration and processing, these figures are published 11 days after the week ends. Because of the rapidly changing situation, in this bulletin we have also given provisional updated totals based on the latest available death registrations, up to 16 May 2020.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, our regular weekly deaths release now provides a separate breakdown of the numbers of deaths involving COVID-19: that is, where COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, including in combination with other health conditions. If a death certificate mentions COVID-19 it will not always be the main cause of death but may be a contributory factor. This new bulletin summarises the latest weekly information and will be updated each week during the pandemic.

These figures are different from the daily surveillance figures on COVID-19 deaths published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on the GOV.UK website, for the UK as a whole and constituent countries. Figures in this report are derived from the formal process of death registration and may include cases where the doctor completing the death certificate diagnosed possible cases of COVID-19, for example, where this was based on relevant symptoms but no test for the virus was conducted. Our figures also include any deaths that occur outside hospital.

In contrast to the GOV.UK figures, we include only deaths registered in England and Wales, which is the legal remit of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Table 1 provides an overview of the differences in definitions between sources.

From 29 April 2020, DHSC started to publish as their daily announced figures on deaths from COVID-19 for the UK, a new series that uses improved data for England produced by Public Health England (PHE). These figures provide a count of all deaths where a positive test for COVID-19 has been confirmed, wherever that death has taken place, a change from previously reporting only confirmed COVID-19 deaths in hospitals. Figures for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have already begun to include deaths outside hospitals, so this change ensured that the UK-wide series has a shared and common definitional coverage. A statement was published by ONS which provides more detail of the changes.

Table 1: Definitions of COVID-19 deaths between different sources

	DHSC COVID-19 (as published on GOV.UK) before 29 April	DHSC COVID-19 (as published on GOV.UK) from 29 April	ONS COVID-19 deaths registered	ONS COVID-19 death occurrence (actual date of death)	NHS England
Coverage	UK (however we only include England and Wales breakdowns for comparable coverage with ONS data)	UK (however we only include England and Wales breakdowns for comparable coverage with ONS data)	Registrations in England and Wales	Registrations in England and Wales	England
			In discussions with devolved nations to create UK estimates in the near future	In discussions with devolved nations to create UK estimates in the near future	
Inclusion	Deaths in hospitals	Includes any place of death, including care homes and community	Any place of death, including Nursing homes	Any place of death, including Nursing homes	Deaths in hospitals
	Deaths where patient has been tested for COVID-19	Deaths where patient has been tested for COVID-19	Deaths where COVID-19 has been mentioned on the death certificate	Deaths where COVID-19 has been mentioned on the death certificate	Deaths where patient has been tested for COVID-19
Timeliness	Provided daily but not officially registered.	Provided daily but not officially registered.	Weekly registrations are 11 days behind because of the time taken to register, process and publish	Weekly registrations are 11 days behind because of the time taken to register, process and publish	Updated daily for each date of death
			Registered in the week ending 15 May (Week 20)	Deaths which occurred in Week 20 but were registered up to 23 May	

Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales

We will publish accompanying articles periodically, giving enhanced information such as age-standardised and age-specific mortality rates for recent time periods and breakdowns of deaths involving COVID-19 by associated pre-existing health conditions.

Within the accompanying dataset we have also provided weekly provisional figures on COVID-19 deaths registered in the UK along with age breakdowns by UK and sex and age breakdowns by Great Britain estimates.

There is usually a delay of at least five days between occurrence and registration. More information on this issue can be found in our impact of registration delays release.

Our User guide to mortality statistics provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to mortality and includes a glossary of terms.

11 . Strengths and limitations

Figures are based on the date the death was registered, not when it occurred. There is usually a delay of at least five days between occurrence and registration. More information on this issue can be found in our impact of registration delays release.

12 . Related links

Deaths registered in England and Wales: 2018
Bulletin | Released 6 August 2019
Registered deaths by age, sex, selected underlying causes of death and the leading causes of death. Contains death rates and death registrations by area of residence and single year of age.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) product page
Product page | Updated when new data are available
Brings together the latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.