

Statistical bulletin

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 18 December 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.



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Release date:
30 December 2020

Next release:
6 January 2021

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1 . Main points

- A reduced bulletin has been published for Week 51 (week ending 18 December 2020); bulletins for future weeks will be published as normal.
- The number of deaths registered in England and Wales in the week ending 18 December 2020 (Week 51) was 13,011; this was 719 more deaths than in Week 50.
- In Week 51, the number of deaths registered was 12.7% above the five-year average (1,463 deaths higher).
- Of the deaths registered in Week 51, 2,986 mentioned "novel coronavirus (COVID-19)", accounting for 22.9% of all deaths in England and Wales; in Week 51 deaths involving COVID-19 increased compared with Week 50 (by 230 deaths), following decreases in Week 49 and Week 50.
- Of the 2,986 deaths involving COVID-19, 2,557 had this recorded as the underlying cause of death (85.6%).
- Of the 2,760 deaths that involved Influenza and Pneumonia, 298 had this recorded as the underlying cause of death (10.8%).
- The number of deaths in hospitals and private homes was above the five-year average in Week 51 (678 and 835 deaths higher respectively) but deaths in care homes and other places were below the five-year average (7 and 68 fewer deaths respectively).
- In England, the total number of deaths increased from 11,460 (Week 50) to 12,113 (Week 51); all English regions had a higher number of deaths than the five-year average for the sixth week in a row.
- In Week 51, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 in England increased from 2,530 deaths (Week 50) to 2,729; the number of deaths involving COVID-19 increased in all English regions except the North East, North West, and West Midlands.
- In Wales, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 increased from 223 deaths (Week 50) to 256 deaths (Week 51), while the total number of deaths in Week 51 was 164 deaths higher than the five-year average.
- Based on a statistical model that allows for the time taken for deaths to be registered, we estimate that the number of deaths actually occurring (rather than registered) in Week 51 in England and Wales was between 11,770 and 14,710.
- The number of deaths registered in the UK in the week ending 18 December 2020 was 14,627, which was 1,489 deaths higher than the five-year average; of the deaths registered in the UK in Week 51, 3,270 deaths involved COVID-19, 204 deaths higher than in Week 50.

2 . Deaths data

[Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional](#)

Dataset | Released 30 December 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 coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths.

[Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board](#)

Dataset | Released 30 December 2020

Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving 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 30 December 2020

Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority. Published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Try the new way to filter and download these data:

- [Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales by age and sex: COVID-19](#)
- [Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales by region: COVID-19](#)
- [Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and place of death](#)
- [Death registrations and occurrences by health board and place of death](#)

3 . Measuring the data

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 18 December 2020.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, our regular weekly deaths release now provides a separate breakdown of the number 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 bulletin summarises the latest weekly information and will be updated each week during the pandemic.

From the bulletin dated 3 November 2020, we have added two additional analyses.

Previously, we gave a breakdown of deaths involving COVID-19 into those where COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death (“due to COVID-19”) and those where it was a contributory factor (“involving COVID-19”) in the [monthly mortality analysis](#); because of high public interest, this distinction is now shown in Figure 2 of the weekly bulletin.

This bulletin is based mainly on the date deaths are registered, not the date of death, because of the [time taken for a death to be registered](#). Deaths in England and Wales are normally registered within five days, but there can be a considerably longer delay in some circumstances, particularly when the death is referred to a coroner.

We have developed a statistical model to estimate the number of deaths likely to have occurred in each week, based on previous experience of the pattern of registration delays, including the effects of bank holidays. The method is described in the article [Predicting total weekly death occurrences in England and Wales: methodology](#) and the results are shown in the tab, “Estimated total deaths 2020”, of the [accompanying dataset](#).

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 its 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.

From 29 April 2020, the 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 had already begun to include deaths outside hospitals, so this change ensured that the UK-wide series had a shared and common definitional coverage. A [statement](#) was published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which provides more detail of the changes.

On 12 August 2020, the PHE data series was revised to include two measures: deaths of positively tested individuals where the death occurred within 28 days and deaths within 60 days of a positive test. More information on these changes can be found in their [technical summary \(PDF, 854KB\)](#).

In contrast to the GOV.UK figures, we include only deaths registered in England and Wales, which is the legal remit of the ONS. Tables 2 and 3 provide an overview of the differences in definitions between sources.

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) between 29 April and 12 August	DHSC COVID-19 (as published on GOV.UK) from 12 August	ONS COVID-19 deaths registered	ONS COVID-19 death occurrence (actual date of death)	NHS England	Public Health Wales
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)	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 only	Wales only
				Selected UK figures are included in the weekly release	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	Includes any place of death, including care homes and community	Any place of death, including care homes and community	Any place of death, including care homes and community	Deaths in hospitals	Includes any place of death, including care homes and community
	Deaths where the patient has tested positive for COVID-19	Deaths where the patient has tested positive for COVID-19	Deaths where the patient has tested positive for COVID-19 within 28 and 60 days of testing	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	Deaths where patient has been tested for COVID-19
Timeliness	Provided daily but not officially registered	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	Updated daily for each date of death
				Registered in the week ending 18 December (week 51)	Deaths which occurred in week 51 but were registered up to 26 December		

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

Table 2: Definitions of COVID-19 deaths in care homes between different sources

	ONS COVID-19 deaths registered	ONS COVID-19 death occurrence (actual date of death)	Care Quality Commission deaths in care homes (date of notification received)	Care Inspectorate Wales deaths in care homes (date of notification received)
Coverage	Registrations in England and Wales	Registrations in England and Wales	Death notifications sent by registered care home operators in England to CQC	Death notifications sent by registered care home operators in Wales to CIW
	Selected UK figures are included in the weekly release	In discussions with devolved nations to create UK estimates in the near future		
Inclusion	Any place of death, including care homes	Any place of death, including care homes	Deaths in care homes - deaths of care home residents that occurred elsewhere are also collected	Deaths in care homes - deaths of care home residents that occurred elsewhere are also collected
	Deaths where COVID-19 has been mentioned on the death certificate	Deaths where COVID-19 has been mentioned on the death certificate	Deaths where the care home provider has stated COVID-19 as a suspected or confirmed cause of death on the death notification	Deaths where the care home provider has stated COVID-19 as a suspected or confirmed cause of death on the death notification
Timeliness	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	Daily deaths notifications by date of notification - these take on average 4 days to receive and process	Daily deaths notifications by date of notification
			Data are published weekly by ONS	Data are published weekly by Welsh Government

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.

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](#).

4 . Related links

[Deaths registered in England and Wales: 2019](#)

Bulletin | Released 1 July 2020

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 \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Web page | Updated as and when new data become 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.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) roundup](#)

Blog | Updated as and when new data become available

Catch up on the latest data and analysis related to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our economy and society.

[Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society](#)

Bulletin | Released 10 December 2020

Early experimental data on the impact of the coronavirus on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

[Monthly mortality analysis, England and Wales: November 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 December 2020

Provisional death registration data for England and Wales, broken down by sex, age and country. Includes deaths due to COVID-19 and leading causes of death.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest insights](#)

Interactive tool | Updated as and when data become available

Explore the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the ONS and other official sources.