Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 25 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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Next release:
12 January 2021

Correction

6 January 2021 11:14

In Section 4, the North West was incorrectly stated as having the largest number of deaths involving COVID-19 out of the English Regions. This has now been corrected to South East; we apologise for any inconvenience caused.

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1 . Main points

- The number of deaths registered in England and Wales was affected by the Christmas Day Bank Holiday; 11,520 deaths were registered in the week ending 25 December 2020 (Week 52), 1,491 fewer deaths than in Week 51; trends in this week's release should be interpreted with caution.
- In Week 52, the number of deaths registered was 44.8% above the five-year average (3,566 deaths higher) but this increase should be treated with caution; the five-year average was particularly low in Week 52 as the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, all contained two bank holidays, whereas Week 52 of 2020 only contained one bank holiday so would likely have more deaths registered.
- Of the deaths registered in Week 52, 2,912 mentioned "novel coronavirus (COVID-19)", accounting for 25.3% of all deaths in England and Wales; in Week 52, deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) decreased compared with Week 51 (by 74 deaths).
- Of the 2,912 deaths involving COVID-19, 2,497 had this recorded as the underlying cause of death (85.7%).
- Of the 2,578 deaths that involved Influenza and Pneumonia, 270 had this recorded as the underlying cause of death (10.5%).
- The number of deaths in all locations (hospitals, care homes, private homes and other locations) was above the five-year average in Week 52.
- In England, the total number of deaths decreased from 12,113 (Week 51) to 10,680 (Week 52); all English regions had a higher number of deaths than the five-year average for the seventh week in a row.
- In Week 52, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 decreased in five of the nine English regions compared with Week 51, but continued to increase in the North East, East and London.
- In Wales, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 increased from 256 deaths (Week 51) to 278 deaths (Week 52) while the total number of deaths in Week 52 was 307 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 52 in England and Wales was between 12,683 and 16,574.
- Figures for the number of deaths registered in the UK in the week ending 25 December 2020 are not currently available; deaths up to Week 51 are currently included in Section 6, and UK figures will be updated in next week's bulletin.

2 . Deaths registered by week

Figure 1: The number of deaths was above the five-year average in Week 52

Number of deaths registered by week, England and Wales, 28 December 2019 to 25 December 2020

Notes

1. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.

2. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

4. The number of deaths registered in Weeks 19, 20, 22, 23, 36, 37 and 52 were affected by the Early May, Late May, August and Christmas Bank Holidays (Friday 8 May 2020, Monday 25 May 2020, Monday 31 August 2020, Friday 25 December 2020); the impact of the Early May Bank Holiday was analysed in our Week 20 bulletin.

5. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

Download the data

The provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales decreased from 13,011 in Week 51 (week ending 18 December 2020) to 11,520 in Week 52 (week ending 25 December 2020). The number of deaths was 44.8% above the five-year average (3,566 deaths higher).

A decrease between Weeks 51 and 52 is usually observed because of the impact of the Christmas bank holidays. One of the reasons that 2020 is above the five-year average is because Week 52 of 2020 had one bank holiday compared with Week 52 having two bank holidays in four of the five years (2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019) in the five-year average. The trends should therefore be interpreted with caution this week and next week.

In England, the number of deaths decreased from 12,113 in Week 51 to 10,680 in Week 52, which was 3,259 deaths (30.5%) higher than the Week 52 five-year average (Figure 1).

In Wales, the number of deaths decreased from 882 in Week 51 to 825 in Week 52, which was 307 deaths (37.2%) higher than the Week 52 five-year average (Figure 1).

Figure 2: The number of deaths involving COVID-19 decreased in Week 52

Deaths involving and due to COVID-19, and Influenza and Pneumonia, England and Wales, deaths registered in 2020

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.

2. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

4. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows: coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2) and Influenza and Pneumonia (J09-J18).

5. A death can be registered with both COVID-19 and Influenza and Pneumonia mentioned on the death certificate. Deaths where both were mentioned have been counted in both categories.

6. We use the term "due to COVID-19" or "due to Influenza and Pneumonia" when referring only to deaths where that illness was recorded as the underlying cause of death. We use the term "involving COVID-19" or "involving Influenza and Pneumonia" when referring to deaths that had that illness mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, whether as an underlying cause or not.

7. The number of deaths registered in Weeks 19, 20, 22, 23, 36, 37 and 52 were affected by the Early May, Late May, August and Christmas Bank Holidays (Friday 8 May 2020, Monday 25 May 2020, Monday 31 August 2020, Friday 25 December 2020); the impact of the Early May Bank Holiday was analysed in our Week 20 bulletin.

8. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

Download the data

There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

The number of death registrations in England and Wales involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) decreased, from 2,986 in Week 51 to 2,912 in Week 52 - a 2.5% decrease. Of all deaths registered in Week 52, 25.3% mentioned COVID-19; this is the highest proportion of deaths involving COVID-19 since Week 20 (week ending 8 May 2020).

In England, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 was 2,631, accounting for 24.6% of all deaths. In Wales, 278 deaths involved COVID-19, 33.7% of all deaths.

Of the 2,912 deaths that involved COVID-19, 2,497 had this recorded as the underlying cause of death (85.7%, Figure 2). Of the 2,578 deaths that involved Influenza and Pneumonia, 270 had this coded as the underlying cause of death (10.5%).

Deaths that involved both COVID-19, and Influenza and Pneumonia have been included in both categories for consistency when comparing with the underlying cause of death. 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 detailed analysis is available in our Deaths due to coronavirus (COVID-19) compared with deaths from influenza and pneumonia release.

We have developed an experimental statistical model to estimate the number of deaths that actually occurred in a given week, rather than the number registered. For Week 51, we estimate that 13,197 deaths occurred in England and Wales, with a 95% confidence interval of 12,763 to 13,732.

Based on an incomplete count of registrations in Week 52, we estimate that the number of deaths occurring in Week 52 is likely to be 14,439, with a 95% confidence interval of 12,683 to 16,574.

These are provisional estimates that assume the pattern of occurrences can be predicted based on experience in previous years. The estimate for the most recent week always has a wider margin of error than for earlier weeks, so it should be treated with caution.

Figure 3: Deaths not involving COVID-19 have risen above the five-year average in Week 52

Number of deaths registered by week, England and Wales, 28 December 2019 to 25 December 2020

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.
2. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows; coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).
5. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average. This contributed to deaths registered in Week 52 of 2020 rising above the five-year average.

Download the data

Between Weeks 1 and 12 in 2020, 138,916 deaths were registered, which was 4,822 fewer than the five-year average for these weeks. However, between Weeks 13 and 52, 465,129 deaths were registered, which was 77,738 more than the five-year average.

Using the most up-to-date data we have available, the number of deaths up to 25 December 2020 was 604,029, which is 72,900 more than the five-year average. Of the deaths registered by 25 December 2020, 78,467 mentioned COVID-19 on the death certificate. This is 13.0% of all deaths in England and Wales.

In England, the number of deaths up to 25 December 2020 was 566,132, which is 69,823 (12.3%) more than the five-year average. Of these, 73,772 deaths (13.0%) mentioned COVID-19.

In Wales, the number of deaths up to 25 December 2020 was 37,067, which is 3,736 (10.1%) more than the five-year average. Of these, 4,651 deaths (12.5%) mentioned COVID-19.

3 . Deaths registered by age group

In Week 52 (week ending 25 December 2020), the number of deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) in England and Wales decreased in most age groups compared with Week 51, except for in people aged between 70 and 84 years where there was an increase (71 more deaths). The biggest decrease was seen in those aged 90 years and over (97 fewer deaths). More than three-quarters (76.4%) of deaths involving COVID-19 were in people aged 75 years and over.

Across Weeks 1 to 52 of 2020, 55.4% of all deaths involving COVID-19 were in males. There were more deaths in females aged 85 years and over (17,584) than males aged 85 years and over (15,307). However, these numbers do not account for the population structure where there are more women aged over 85 years than men.

Looking at excess deaths by age group, the number of deaths up to 25 December 2020 was above the five-year average for all age groups above 14 years (Figure 4).

Figure 4: The number of deaths in 2020 exceeded the five-year average in age groups 15 years and over

Number of deaths registered by week and age group, England and Wales, 28 December 2019 to 25 December 2020

Notes:

1. Figures include deaths of non-residents.

2. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

4. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows: coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).

5. Individual weeks may not sum to the year-to-date analysis as previous weeks have been recalculated to have the most up-to-date figures.

6. Does not include deaths where age is either missing or not yet fully coded.

7. The number of deaths registered in Weeks 19, 20, 22, 23, 36, 37 and 52 were affected by the Early May, Late May, August and Christmas Bank Holidays (Friday 8 May 2020, Monday 25 May 2020, Monday 31 August 2020, Friday 25 December 2020); the impact of the Early May Bank Holiday was analysed in our Week 20 bulletin.

8. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

Download the data

4 . Deaths by region in England and Wales

Figure 5: The number of deaths in Week 52 was higher than the five-year average in all English regions and Wales

Number of deaths in Wales and regions in England, registered between 28 December 2019 and 25 December 2020

Notes:

1. Based on area of usual residence. Geographical boundaries are based on the most up-to-date information available at the time of publication.

2. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.

3. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

4. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

5. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows; coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).

6. The number of deaths registered in Weeks 19, 20, 22, 23, 36, 37 and 52 were affected by the Early May, Late May, August and Christmas Bank Holidays (Friday 8 May 2020, Monday 25 May 2020, Monday 31 August 2020, Friday 25 December 2020); the impact of the Early May Bank Holiday was analysed in our Week 20 bulletin.

7. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

Download the data

In Week 52 (week ending 25 December 2020), the total number of deaths registered was higher than the five-year average in all English regions and Wales for the seventh week in a row (Figure 5). The largest increase on the five-year average was for the West Midlands (61.6% higher).

In Week 52, there were 278 deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) registered in Wales - a 8.6% increase compared with Week 51 (256 deaths).

Across the English regions, the South East had the largest number of deaths involving COVID-19 (415 deaths) although the number of COVID-19 deaths in this region is a decline compared to the previous week. The English region with the highest proportion of deaths involving COVID-19 was the East Midlands.

Deaths involving COVID-19 decreased in Week 52 in five out of nine English regions, with the largest decrease seen in Yorkshire and The Humber. More detailed geographic analysis can be found in our Monthly mortality analysis release.

Table 1: The number of deaths registered was above the five-year average in all English regions and Wales
Number of deaths in Wales and regions in England, registered week ending 25 December 2020

Region name	Number of deaths	Five-year average	Difference	Percentage above average
West Midlands	1,217	753	464	61.6
Wales	825	518	307	59.3
East Midlands	1,097	706	391	55.4
East	1,198	796	402	50.5
London	1,090	751	339	45.1
North East	669	461	208	45.1
Yorkshire and The Humber	1,130	790	340	43.0
South East	1,701	1,209	492	40.7
South West	1,115	822	293	35.6
North West	1,463	1,134	329	29.0

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

Notes:

1. Based on area of usual residence. Geographical boundaries are based on the most up-to-date information available at the time of publication.

2. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.

3. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

4. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

5. The averages are based on the number of death registrations in each region, recorded for each corresponding week over the previous five years. Moveable public holidays, when register offices are closed, affect the number of registrations made in the published weeks and in the corresponding weeks in previous years.

6. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average.

5 . Deaths registered by place of occurrence

The year-to-date analysis shows that, of deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) up to Week 52 (week ending 25 December 2020), 67.5% (52,954 deaths) occurred in hospital, with the remainder occurring in care homes (20,098 deaths), private homes (3,779 deaths), hospices (1,055 deaths), other communal establishments (311 deaths) and elsewhere (270 deaths).

Between Weeks 51 and 52, the number of deaths involving COVID-19 decreased in care homes and private homes (72 and 20 fewer deaths respectively) but increased in hospitals (19 more deaths). Deaths involving COVID-19 in hospitals as a proportion of all deaths in hospitals increased to 40.2% in Week 52 (from 36.2% in Week 51). Deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes accounted for around one-quarter of all deaths in care homes in Week 52 (24.0%), similar to the proportion in Week 51 (23.0%)

Detailed analysis on deaths of care home residents is available in Deaths involving COVID-19 in the care sector, England and Wales: deaths occurring up to 12 June 2020 and registered up to 20 June 2020.

As well as Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) provides numbers of deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes in England that are based on the date the death was notified to the CQC. From 10 April (the first day when data were collected using the CQC's new method of identifying deaths involving COVID-19) to 31 December 2020, there were 19,157 deaths of residents in care homes involving COVID-19. Of these deaths, 617 were notified in the week up to 31 December. More information on the data provided by the CQC can be found in our joint transparency statement.

In Wales, the Welsh Government publishes the number of deaths of care home residents involving COVID-19 notified to the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Between 1 March and 18 December 2020, there were 1,170 deaths of residents in care homes involving COVID-19.

More information on how these numbers have compared throughout the pandemic can be found in our previous Comparison of weekly death occurrences in England and Wales release.

Figure 6: Excess deaths in all locations (private homes, hospitals, care homes, and other locations) rose in Week 52

Number of excess deaths by place of occurrence, England and Wales, registered between 7 March 2020 and 25 December 2020

Notes:

1. Based on area of usual residence. Geographical boundaries and communal establishments are based on the most up-to-date information available.

2. Figures include deaths of non-residents.

3. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.

4. All figures for 2020 are provisional.

5. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows: coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).

6. "Other" includes deaths in communal establishments other than hospitals and care homes, in hospices, and that occurred "elsewhere". More information on the place of death definitions used is available in the accompanying dataset.

7. There was one bank holiday in Week 52 in 2020, compared with two bank holidays in four of the years in the five-year average. This contributed to deaths registered in Week 52 of 2020 rising above the five-year average.

Download the data

In Week 52, the numbers of deaths in all locations were above the five-year average (Figure 6). The largest proportion of excess deaths were registered in private homes (1,374 deaths), followed by hospitals (1,783 deaths), care homes (359 deaths) and other locations (49 deaths).

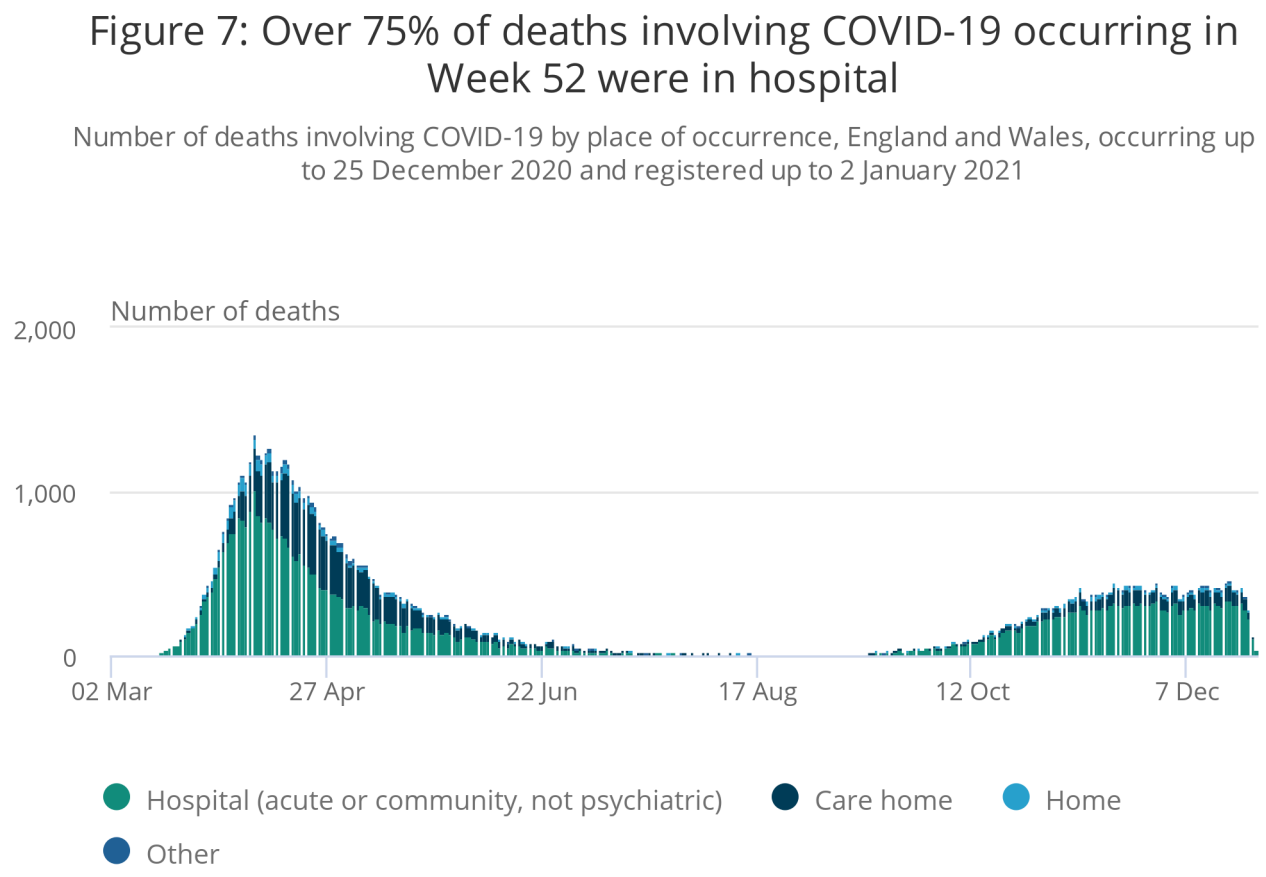
These large increases compared with the five-year average must be interpreted with caution, because of the impact of moveable public holidays on the number of deaths registered in Week 52 across all years.

Looking in more detail at deaths in private homes in Week 52, males accounted for 747 excess deaths compared with 627 for females. Overall, 74.9% of the excess deaths in private homes were of those aged 70 years and over (1,029 excess deaths); this proportion has decreased from 81.3% (680 excess deaths) in Week 51.

The Deaths in private homes release provides analysis for deaths registered from 28 December 2019 to 11 September 2020. In addition, more detailed analysis of excess deaths in England is produced by Public Health England (PHE) on a weekly basis.

Figure 7: Over 75% of deaths involving COVID-19 occurring in Week 52 were in hospital

Number of deaths involving COVID-19 by place of occurrence, England and Wales, occurring up to 25 December 2020 and registered up to 2 January 2021



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 2 January 2021.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows: coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).
5. This chart includes deaths from week ending 6 March 2020 onwards. Three deaths involving COVID-19 occurring prior to this (in the week ending 31 January (Week 5), week ending 7 February (Week 6) and week ending 28 February (Week 9) are not included in the chart.

Figure 7 is based on date of death for deaths registered up to 2 January 2021, rather than date of registration. As more deaths are registered, deaths per day are likely to increase, especially for later dates. Looking at the number of deaths that occurred in Week 52, 77.9% of deaths occurred in hospitals, and care homes accounted for 16.9% of all deaths involving COVID-19; this may change as more deaths are registered.

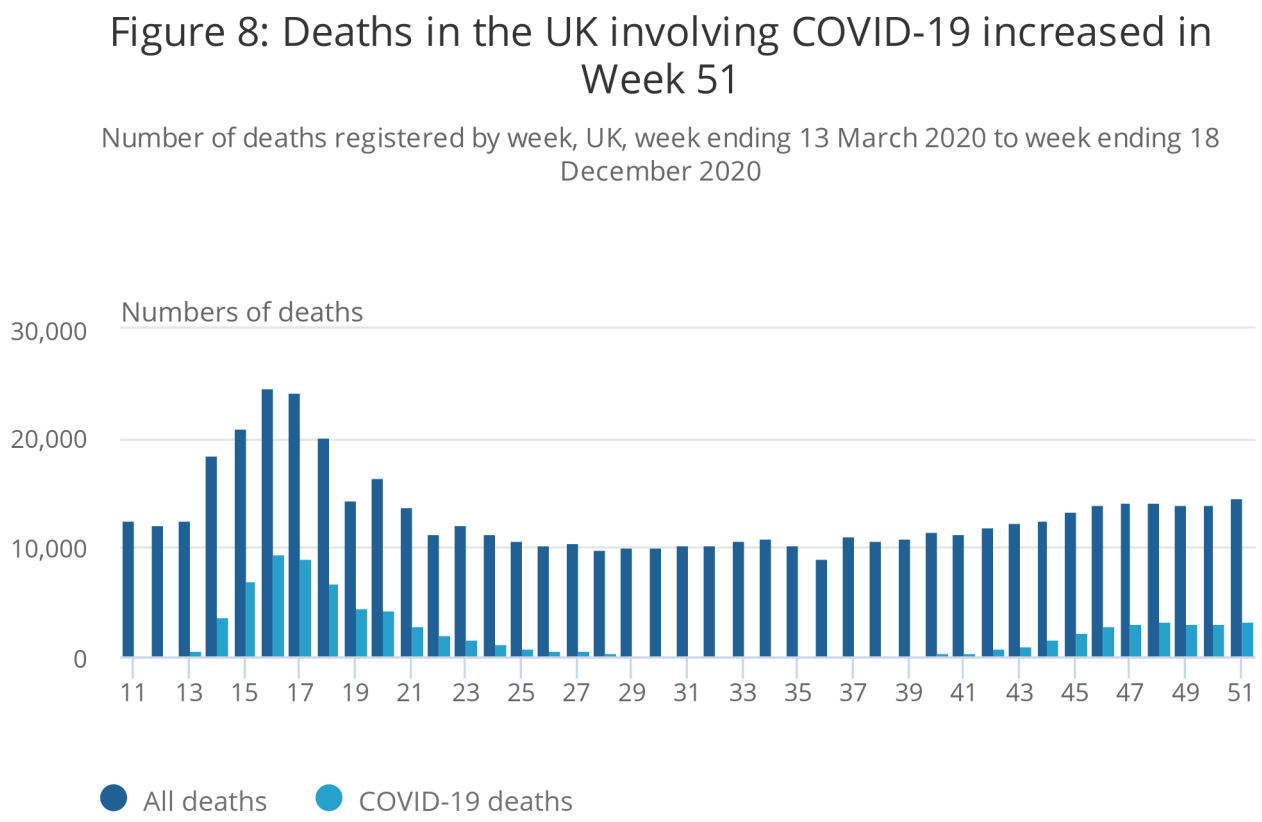
A death of a man aged 80 to 84 years was registered in the week ending 4 September 2020 (Week 36) that occurred in the week ending 31 January 2020 (Week 5). This is the earliest known death involving COVID-19 in the UK. There was also a death of a man aged 55 to 59 years registered in the week ending 21 August 2020 (Week 34) that occurred in the week ending 7 February (Week 6), and a death of a woman aged 30 to 34 years that was registered by 24 October 2020 and occurred in the week ending 28 February 2020 (Week 9).

6 . Deaths registered in the UK

UK figures in this section include data up to Week 51 (week ending 18 December 2020), rather than Week 52 covered in sections 1 to 5. UK data for Week 52 will be updated in next week's bulletin.

Figure 8: Deaths in the UK involving COVID-19 increased in Week 51

Number of deaths registered by week, UK, week ending 13 March 2020 to week ending 18 December 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Notes:

1. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.
2. Based on date a death was registered rather than occurred.
3. All figures for 2020 are provisional.
4. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) definitions are as follows: coronavirus (COVID-19) (U07.1 and U07.2).
5. National Records of Scotland produces figures for Scotland.
6. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency produces figures for Northern Ireland.
7. Data for Scotland and Northern Ireland are currently available up to Week 51; data for the UK for Week 52 will be updated in next week's bulletin.

Across the UK, there were 14,627 deaths (all causes) registered in Week 51 (week ending 18 December 2020), which was 1,489 deaths higher than the UK five-year average and 704 deaths higher than in Week 50. Of these deaths, 3,270 involved the coronavirus (COVID-19), 204 more deaths than in Week 50 (6.7% increase) (Figure 8).

In Week 51, England had the highest number of deaths involving COVID-19 with 2,729 deaths, followed by Wales with 256 deaths, Scotland with 203 deaths and Northern Ireland with 82 deaths.

Figures for the number of deaths registered in the UK in the week ending 25 December 2020 are not currently available; figures for UK deaths registered in Week 52 will be available in next week's bulletin.

7 . Comparison of weekly deaths occurrence in England and Wales

We previously published this section as a separate article on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website, which provided a more thorough description of the differences between different data sources. This section will look at the number of deaths by date of death produced by the ONS compared with death notifications reported by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). For Wales, we can also compare the reconciled DHSC data by date of death released by Public Health Wales (PHW).

On 12 August 2020, Public Health England (PHE) revised their data series 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.

In England, including deaths that occurred up to 25 December 2020 but were registered up to 2 January 2021, of those we have processed so far, the number involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) was 74,462.

The comparative number of death notifications reported by the DHSC on GOV.UK (based on data from PHE) where the deaths occurred within 28 days of testing was 61,451 and the number of deaths by date of death showed 62,881.

In Wales, including deaths that occurred up to 25 December 2020 but were registered up to 2 January 2021 of those we have processed so far, the number involving COVID-19 was 4,732. The comparative number of death notifications reported by the DHSC on GOV.UK (based on data from PHW) where the death occurred within 28 days of testing was 3,298 and the number of deaths by date of death was 3,456 deaths.

8 . Deaths data

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Dataset | Released 6 January 2021
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 6 January 2021
Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving 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 6 January 2021
Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by 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

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 certificate. 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

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 for death occurrences based on the latest available death registrations, up to 2 January 2021.

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 2: 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 25 December (week 52)	Deaths which occurred in week 52 but were registered up to 2 January 2021		

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

Table 3: 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.

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: 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.

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 analysis of deaths due to COVID-19 compared with the leading causes of death. Data tables include deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation.

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.

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 23 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.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) weekly insights: latest health indicators in England
Article | Released 18 December 2020
This article brings together latest coronavirus (COVID-19) data in England. This weekly summary gives an overview of the current situation and explores variations for different age groups and regions.