



Continuous Mortality Investigation

Institute and Faculty of Actuaries

Format of Chart 3 of the summary pandemic mortality monitor

This note describes the rationale for a change in the format of Chart 3 of the summary pandemic mortality monitor, with effect from week 19 of 2021.

- Chart 3 of [the week 19 monitor](#) shows mortality rates compared to 2019. This is consistent with the calculation of excess deaths in the pandemic mortality monitor.
- Previous versions of the pandemic mortality monitor, showed rates relative to an average of the previous ten complete calendar years. This is consistent with the regular quarterly mortality monitors we have produced since Q4 of 2018.

We consider the choice of comparator in this chart to be relatively unimportant, as the aim of the chart is to allow comparisons between cumulative standardised mortality rates in different years. The use of relative rates makes that comparison easier. We have shown the current year and each of the last ten years, compared against the average of those ten years. This results in charts that allow the relative mortality for each year to be seen clearly.

We recently became aware that some commentators were treating the ten-year average as a benchmark for current mortality, or indeed the CMI's implied view of what mortality rates would have been in 2020 and 2021 if the pandemic had not occurred. This is not the case. Age-standardised mortality rates tend to reduce over time, and mortality rates in 2020 and 2021 would very likely have been below the ten-year average in the absence of the pandemic. This is especially true for 2021, as the ten-year average includes the exceptional mortality since the second quarter of 2020.

As our pandemic monitors are aimed at users who wish to understand how mortality during the pandemic compares to what might otherwise have been expected, we are now showing how the current year and each recent year compares to 2019.

As we have noted since the start of the pandemic, mortality in the first 12 weeks of 2020 was similar to mortality in the first 12 weeks of 2019, so we regard mortality in 2019 as a better benchmark of "normal" mortality. Changing the format of Chart 3 means that it is now consistent with the calculation of excess deaths in the pandemic mortality monitor.

We intend to continue to use the version of the chart relative to the ten-year average in our quarterly mortality monitors, the next of which is due on 13 July 2021.

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