



## England & Wales mortality monitor – COVID-19 update – week 8 of 2022

### Summary

There have been around 119,000 excess deaths from all causes in the UK from the start of the pandemic to 25 February 2022. We calculate excess deaths by comparing deaths to those expected if mortality rates were similar to those experienced in 2019. This estimate uses data from National Records Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) as well as the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

In week 8 of 2022, there were 6% fewer deaths registered in England & Wales than would have been expected if Standardised Mortality Rates had been the same as in the corresponding week of 2019. The corresponding figure for week 7 of 2022 was 9% fewer deaths.

### Background

During the coronavirus pandemic we have been publishing frequent updates to the CMI Mortality Monitor. This update shows the position as at 25 February 2022 (week 8 of 2022), based on provisional deaths data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 8 March 2022.

In future weeks, we plan to publish:

- A weekly “summary” pandemic monitor. The next is planned for week 9 of 2022 on Tuesday 15 March 2022.
- More detailed information quarterly. The next is planned for week 13 of 2022 on Tuesday 12 April 2022.

All updates are publicly available from the [CMI pages of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries website](#), together with software that we have made available to Authorised Users to carry out ad hoc analyses.

### Notes

Full details of the methods used for results based on the ONS data are included in [Working Paper 111](#). Our analysis is based on Standardised Mortality Rates (SMRs). These adjust the provisional weekly deaths data published by the ONS to control for changes in the size, age and gender distribution of the population over time. We note that mortality rates and mortality improvements vary by age, and the results shown are sensitive to the age distribution of the chosen standard population (the 2013 European Standard Population).

Our calculations rely on data for registered deaths, and we are conscious that in recent months deaths may have been registered earlier or later than in previous years. Consequently, comparisons of mortality between 2020, 2021 and 2022 and earlier years may not be on a like-for-like basis. Also, results for individual weeks may not be consistent between years due to the timing of public holidays.

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### TAS compliance

This paper is intended to analyse recent mortality in England & Wales. It complies with the principles in the Financial Reporting Council’s Technical Actuarial Standard “TAS 100: Principles for Technical Actuarial Work”. Any person using this paper should exercise judgement over its suitability and relevance for their purpose.



### Results – Standardised mortality rates

Chart 1 shows how SMRs in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 compare to the range of SMRs in the same week in the 2011-2019 period. (Note that most years do not have a week 53 – there was no week 53 in 2019 or 2021, and the 2011-2019 range for week 53 only relates to 2015.)

Standardised mortality in 2022 to date has generally been near the bottom of the 2011-2019 range.

**Chart 1: Weekly standardised mortality rates for 2011 to 2022**

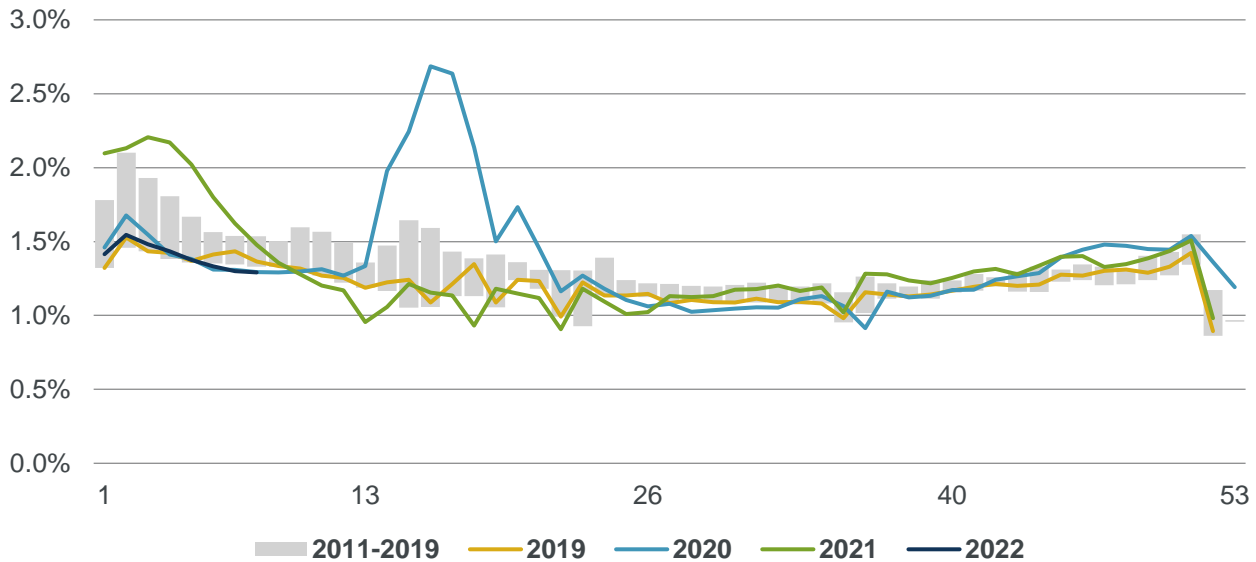
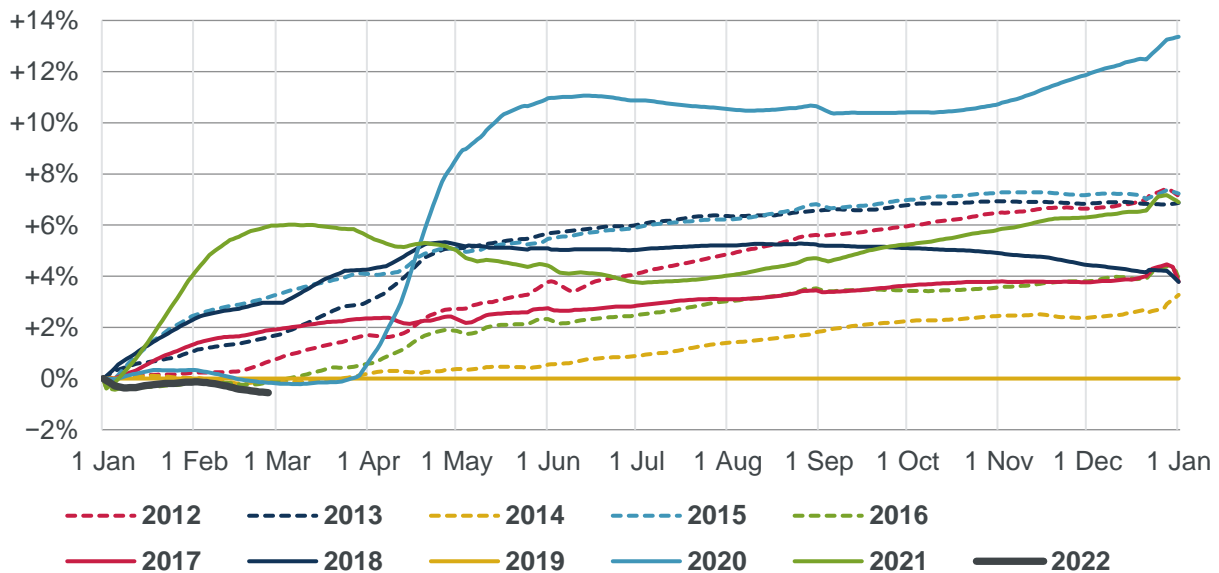


Chart 2 shows cumulative standardised mortality rates relative to 2019, as a proportion of mortality for 2019 as a whole<sup>1</sup>. Cumulative mortality to week 8 of 2022 is 0.6% below 2019, and lower than any other year shown.

**Chart 2: Cumulative standardised mortality rate compared to 2019**



<sup>1</sup> Showing relative mortality rather than absolute mortality makes it easier to make comparisons between years. We use 2019 as the comparator as this is consistent with the excess deaths calculations in this report.

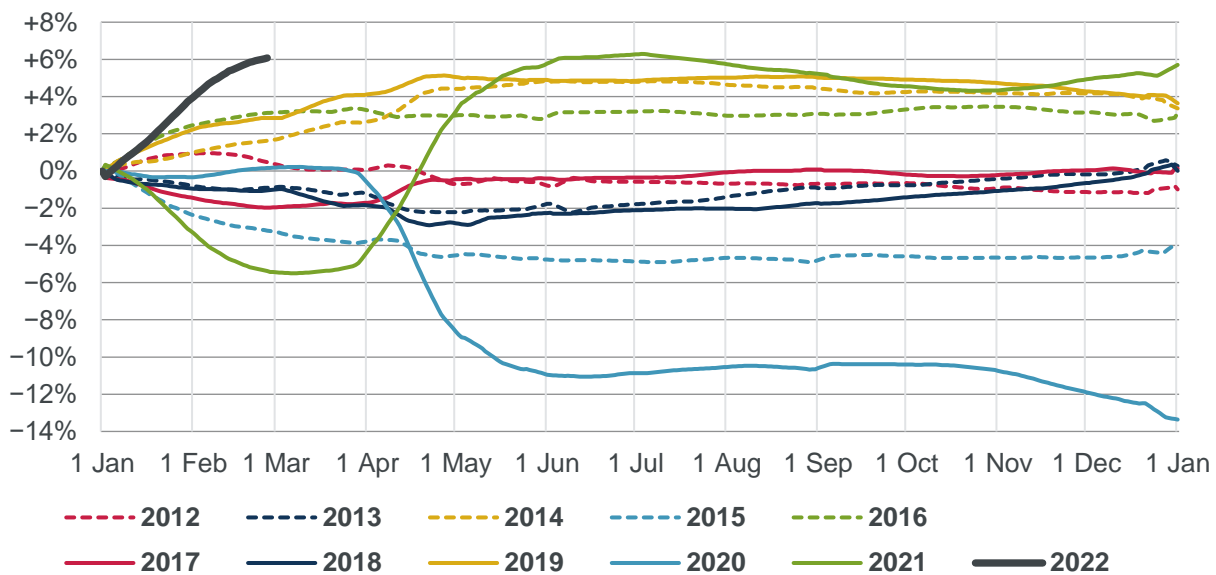


Chart 3 shows the cumulative annual standardised mortality improvement for 2022 and the previous ten years. The cumulative mortality improvement to week 8 of 2022 is +6.1%.

Please note:

- The cumulative improvement for year N is the reduction in cumulative mortality from year N-1 to year N, as a proportion of full-year mortality for year N-1.
- Chart 3 shows cumulative improvements, so a higher value represents a higher improvement and lower mortality; whereas in Chart 2 a higher value represents higher mortality.
- The cumulative mortality improvement for 2022 compares experience in 2022 to that in 2021. We have seen a mortality improvement in 2022 so far as mortality in early 2022 has been slightly below pre-pandemic levels, while mortality in early 2021 was high due to the pandemic.

**Chart 3: Cumulative annual standardised mortality improvement for 2012 to 2022**



The cumulative (non-annualised) standardised mortality improvement between 2019 and 2022 to week 8 (consistent with Chart F in the quarterly monitor) is +0.6%.

### Results – Excess and COVID-19 deaths

The ONS data shows 766 deaths registered during week 8 of 2022 “where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate”. The overall impact of the coronavirus pandemic on total deaths may be different:

- There may have been some deaths that were wholly or partially due to COVID-19 but where COVID-19 was not mentioned on the death certificate.
- Some deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate may not be “excess” deaths, as the deceased might have died from another cause in the same period, in the absence of coronavirus.
- There may have been “forward mortality displacement”: some deaths that occurred earlier in the pandemic would otherwise have occurred in this period.
- There may have been indirect impacts on deaths due to restrictions on movement and changes in behaviour during the pandemic. For example, access to healthcare, reductions in other infectious diseases, and changes in traffic, pollution and mental health.



To consider the possible impact of the pandemic on total deaths, we have estimated the number of deaths that we would have seen in each week of the pandemic (in 2020, 2021 and 2022) if the SMRs for each gender and age-group had been the same in that week as in the corresponding week of 2019, the last full “normal” year before the pandemic.

As mortality in the first 12 weeks of 2019 and 2020 was similar, as seen in Charts 2 and 3, this gives a broad indication of “expected” mortality in the absence of the coronavirus pandemic. However, as there was no ISO week 53 in 2019, we have instead used week 1 of 2020 to calculate expected deaths for 53 week of 2020.

We can then subtract the expected deaths from actual deaths to estimate the “excess” deaths that, in the absence of other likely causes, may be attributable to the pandemic. Excess death calculations depend on the historical period used to estimate expected deaths. We use SMRs for 2019 to estimate expected deaths in the absence of a pandemic.

We have not made any adjustment for differences in the timing of public holidays. While such differences affect individual weeks, the positive and negative impacts for different weeks should cancel out over time in cumulative results.

Table 1 shows results for week 8 of 2022 compared to week 7 of 2022:

- Actual deaths in week 8 of 2022 were 6% lower than expected: 5% lower than expected for males and 6% lower than expected for females.
- In week 7 of 2022 deaths were 9% lower than expected: 8% lower than expected for males and 10% lower than expected for females.

**Table 1: Comparison of COVID-19 deaths and “excess” deaths**

Description	Week 8			Week 7
	Male	Female	Total	Total
“Expected” registered deaths	5,979	5,843	<b>11,822</b>	12,386
Actual registered deaths, from all causes	5,670	5,480	<b>11,150</b>	11,271
“Excess” registered deaths (actual minus expected)	-309	-363	<b>-672</b>	-1,115
Registered deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate	459	307	<b>766</b>	863
Excess as a proportion of expected	-5%	-6%	<b>-6%</b>	-9%



Chart 4 compares three measures of COVID-19 mortality during the pandemic: our calculation of “excess” registered deaths from all causes, ONS data for registered deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, and data for deaths of people within 28 days of a positive test result for COVID-19, from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) COVID-19 dashboard.

The relationship between the three measures has varied considerably during the pandemic. Early in the pandemic, the number of excess deaths was much higher than for the other two measures, but this has not been the case since then. During the second half of 2021, all three measures tended to show broadly similar results. However, excess deaths have been markedly lower than ONS and UKHSA figures for much of 2022, and negative in recent weeks. This indicates that during recent weeks non-COVID deaths have been lower than would have been expected in the absence of the pandemic. We noted possible reasons for such differences on page 3.

**Chart 4: Comparison of weekly measures of COVID-19 deaths (see text for details)**

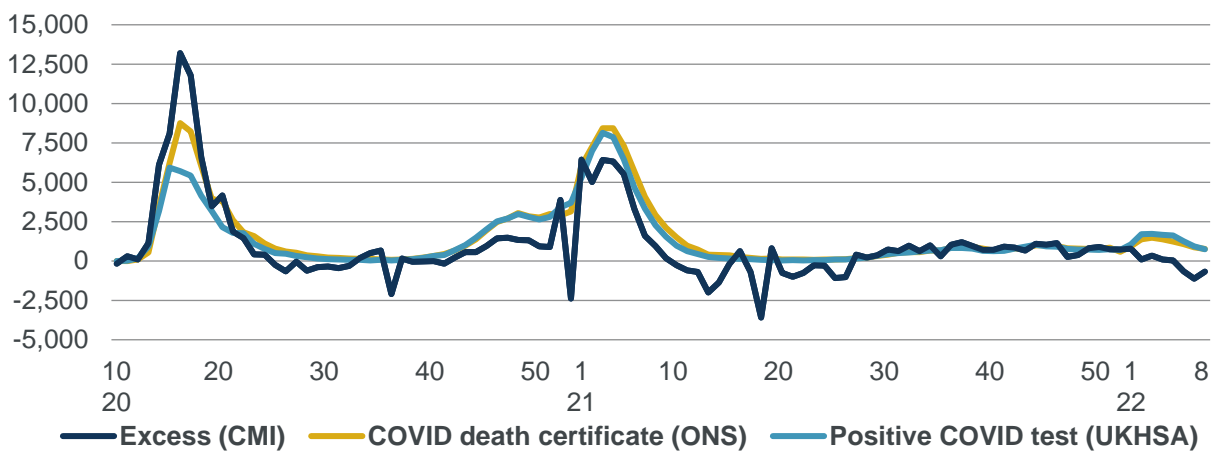
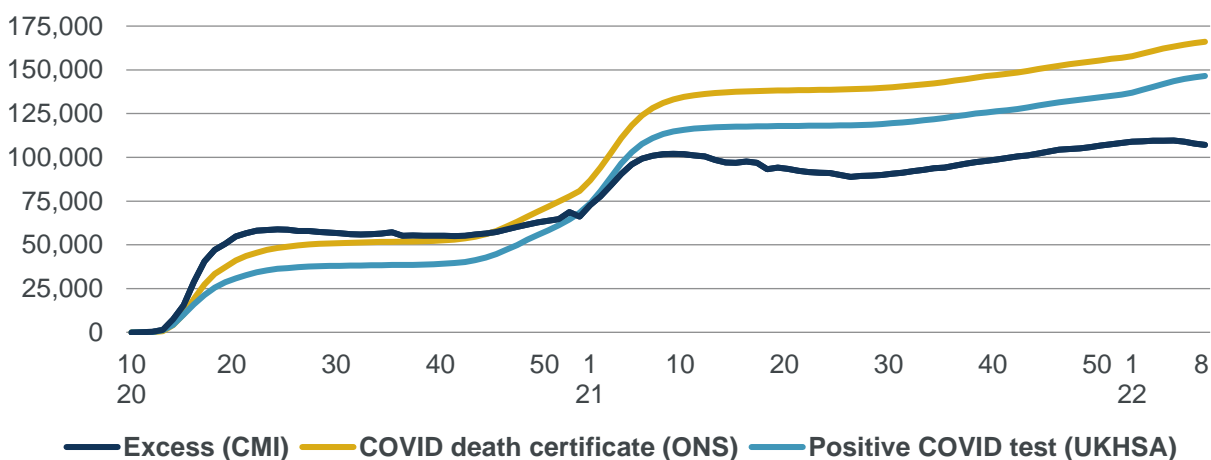


Chart 5 is similar to Chart 4, but shows cumulative numbers of deaths since week 10 of 2020. In the earlier part of the period shown, the cumulative number of excess deaths from all causes was higher than both the cumulative number of deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, and the cumulative number of deaths within 28 days of a positive test. However, cumulative excess deaths are now lower than both of those measures – a consequence of weekly excess deaths being lower than the other measures, and sometimes negative.

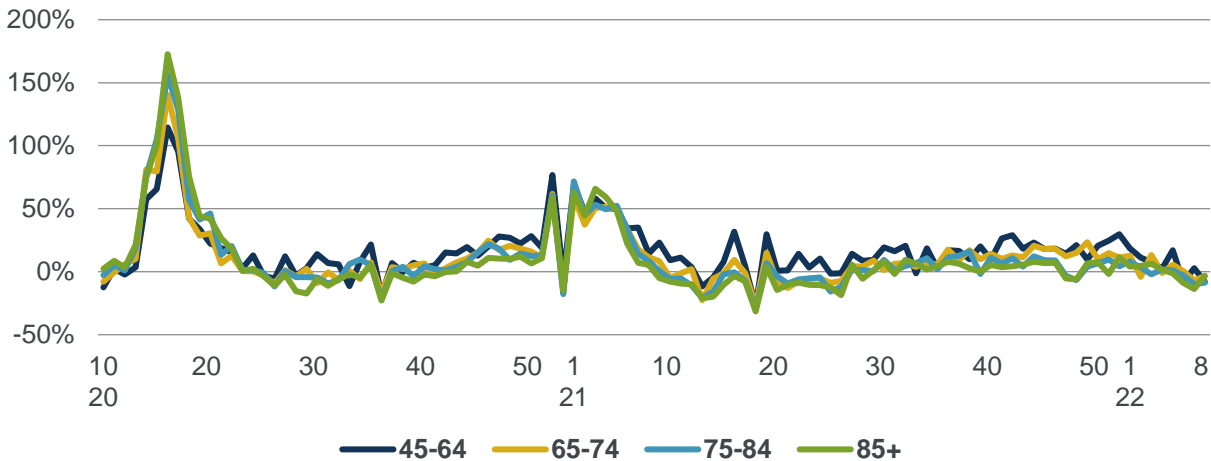
**Chart 5: Comparison of cumulative measures of COVID-19 deaths (see text for details)**



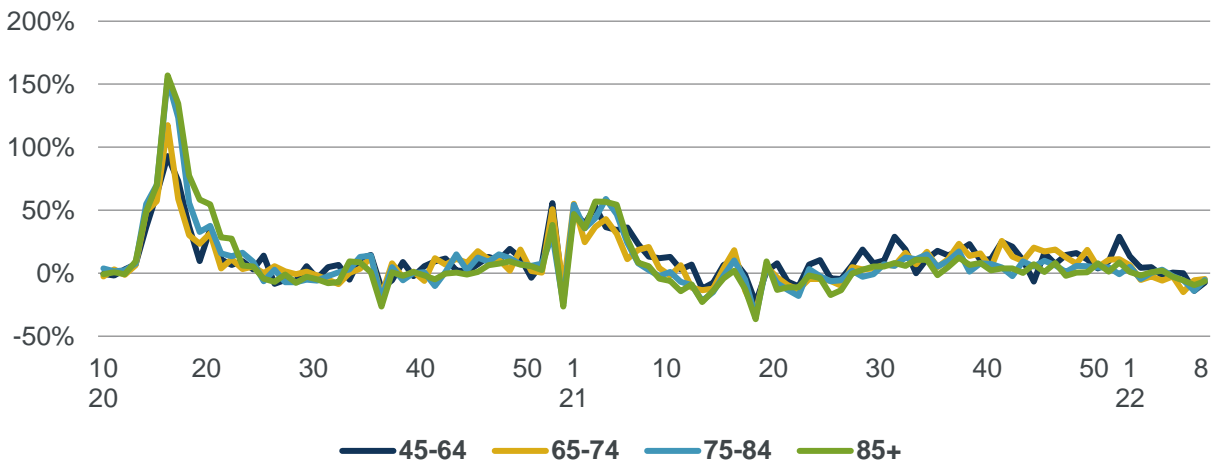


Charts 6 and 7 show excess deaths as a proportion of expected deaths by age band for each week during the pandemic. Charts 8 and 9 show the same information, for the most recent 26 weeks, in more detail. Excess deaths as a proportion of expected has tended to be lower for the older age groups in recent months, and excess deaths have been negative for most age groups shown in recent weeks. We do not show results for ages below 45 as the relatively low numbers of deaths at those ages means that estimates of expected deaths would be unreliable.

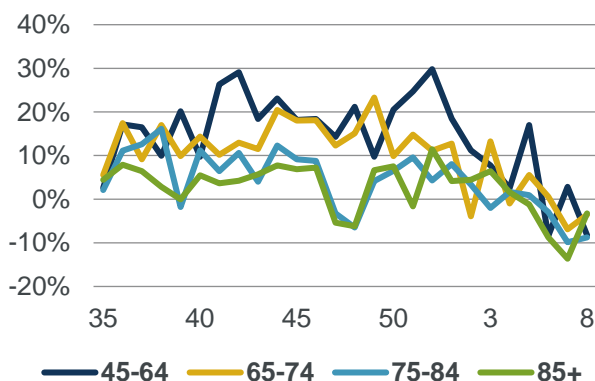
**Chart 6: Excess as a proportion of expected in each week – males (see text for details)**



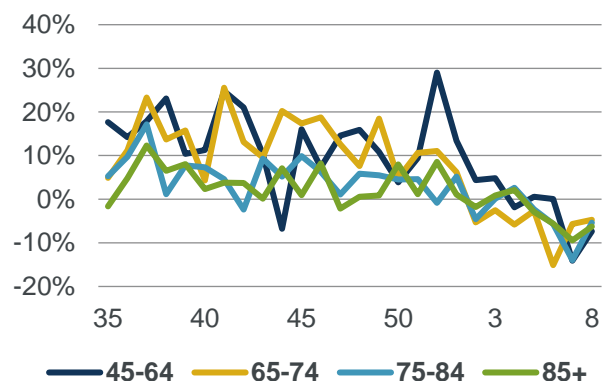
**Chart 7: Excess as a proportion of expected in each week – females (see text for details)**



**Chart 8: Recent detail of Chart 6 – males**



**Chart 9: Recent detail of Chart 7 – females**





## Results – Excess deaths for the United Kingdom

The previous sections of this report are based on registered deaths data for England & Wales to 25 February 2022, published by the ONS. In this section we extend our analysis to the United Kingdom as a whole.

We estimate that the numbers of excess deaths from the start of the pandemic to 25 February 2022 are:

- 107,200 for England & Wales<sup>2</sup>; and
- 119,000 for the United Kingdom.

The numbers of excess deaths since week 1 of 2022 (1 January 2022) are –1,100 for England & Wales and –1,400 for the United Kingdom; i.e. during this period there have been fewer deaths than expected.

As in earlier sections, excess deaths compare registered deaths to those that we would have seen if standardised mortality rates were the same as in the corresponding period in 2019. Our calculations use data for all-cause mortality from National Records Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in addition to the ONS data.

The figures above do not include deaths that occurred after 25 February 2022. We note that UKHSA publishes daily data published for deaths of people within 28 days of a positive test result for COVID-19. The UKHSA data shows 710 COVID-19 deaths reported for the UK in week 9 of 2022 (26 February to 4 March 2022), compared to 845 in week 8 of 2022.

## Data sources

The provisional weekly deaths are available from:

- ONS (England & Wales)  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/weeklyprovisionalfiguresondeathsregisteredinenglandandwales>
- NRS (Scotland)  
<https://data.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/data.html>
- NISRA (Northern Ireland)  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/weekly-deaths>

The daily UKHSA data for deaths of people within 28 days of a positive test result for COVID-19 are available from <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths>

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<sup>2</sup> The cumulative figures since the start of the pandemic are for deaths registered from week 10 of 2020 onwards; i.e. from 29 February 2020.



## Reliances and limitations

The purpose of the weekly mortality monitor is to provide regular updates on standardised mortality in England & Wales during the coronavirus pandemic, adjusting ONS data to allow for changes in the size and age of the population.

The CMI aims to produce high-quality outputs and takes considerable care to ensure that the mortality monitor and the accompanying spreadsheet of results are accurate. However:

- We cannot guarantee their accuracy (see the Disclaimer).
- There is a reliance on the data published by third parties, particularly the ONS data which is described as “provisional”.
- We have also applied judgement and assumptions in deciding on the calculation methods and the presentation of results.
- Anyone using the results of the mortality monitor should ensure that it is appropriate for their particular use, and note that care is needed when estimating full year experience from partial year experience. This is particularly true during the coronavirus pandemic.

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