COVID-19 Daily Deaths

Frequently Asked Questions

**This guidance is correct at the time of publishing. However, as it is subject to updates, please use the hyperlinks to confirm you are accessing the most up-to-date data and information.**

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**1. How many deaths have there been where COVID-19 was the only cause of death?**

NHS England and NHS Improvement publish the number of patients who have died in hospitals in England and have tested positive for COVID-19 and whether or not they had a pre-existing condition. This can be found in the weekly file on our website <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-daily-deaths/>. However, these figures don’t state whether or not COVID-19 was the single cause of death.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) collect death certificate data which contains the cause of death for all deaths registered in England.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/weeklyprovisionalfiguresondeathsregisteredinenglandandwales>

**2. In the weekly deaths document, what are the pre-existing conditions that are included under “other”?**

When a trust notifies NHS England and NHS Improvement of a COVID-19 death, they can select pre-existing conditions from a drop-down list. If there is a condition present that is not covered by the list, they have the option to select "other".

We publish data on the specified conditions covered in the list, but we do not receive a more granular breakdown of the conditions marked as "other".

The specific conditions that are included, along with the date they were introduced into the data collection, are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date introduced** | **Condition** |
| 24-Mar | Received treatment for a Mental Health condition |
| 24-Mar | Learning Disability and or Autism |
|  |  |
| 31-Mar | Asthma |
| 31-Mar | Chronic Kidney Disease |
| 31-Mar | Chronic Neurological Disorder |
| 31-Mar | Chronic Pulmonary Disease |
| 31-Mar | Dementia |
| 31-Mar | Diabetes |
| 31-Mar | Rheumatological Disorder |
| 1-May | Ischaemic Heart Disease |
| 31-Mar | Other |

**3. Where can I find breakdowns of COVID-19 deaths by age, pre-existing condition and trust?**

COVID-19 deaths split by age and pre-existing condition can be found in the weekly file on our website <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-daily-deaths/>.

COVID-19 deaths split by age can also be found in the daily and total files along with a breakdown by trust.

**4. Why don’t the figures quoted by the media match the figures published here?**

The figures published by NHS England and NHS Improvement only cover deaths in hospitals in England. The government figures (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>) cover all deaths in the UK, including those that occur outside of hospitals (e.g. care homes). These are the main reasons for the differences in our figures.

We publish two sets of figures:

1. Positive test notifications. These figures include the deaths of anyone who has died having tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 28 days.
2. Death certificate notifications. These figures include the deaths of anyone who has died without testing positive in the last 28 days, but who has COVID-19 recorded as a primary or underlying cause of death on their death certificate.

The Office for National Statistics publish an alternative set of data that contains only cases where COVID-19 is recorded as a primary or underlying cause of death on their death certificate:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/weeklyprovisionalfiguresondeathsregisteredinenglandandwales>

Finally, the UK Statistics Authority have published a blog the explains the differences between the different figures available:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-challenges-of-counting-covid-deaths/>

**5. How long ago can a positive test be received for them to be included in the deaths?**

From Friday 19 June a death can only be recorded as a COVID-19 death where a positive test was received if this positive test was received within 28 days of their death. ​

**6. Why are some deaths recorded a long time after the date of death?**

There are several reasons that can cause delays in COVID-19 deaths being reported, such as cases being referred to a coroner’s enquiry and delays in receiving the death certificate (which will ensure the patient’s data is complete and accurate).

**7. Why do we include 'Received treatment for a mental health condition' and 'Learning disability and/or autism' as pre-existing conditions for a respiratory infection?**

People with learning disabilities and mental health conditions are a vulnerable section of the population. A decision was made to collect data to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on this group.

**8. How many people have been admitted to hospital for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic?**

Hospital activity in England is published on the COVID-19 Hospital Activity webpage: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/> . Alternatively, the official government statistics show the number of COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital across the UK here: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/healthcare>

**9. Please could you advise as to why COVID-19 would be mentioned on a death certificate if the person did not have a positive test result for COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is only recorded on the death certificate if the responsible clinician thinks there is sufficient evidence to list COVID-19 as an underlying or contributing cause of death. NHS England and NHS Improvement reports on deaths where there is no positive test result separately in the interests of clarity.

**10. Could you please explain why the table with number of deaths stops in early November / is not up to date?**

The daily publication files are fully populated up to the most recent day – we check this carefully before we upload. These files consist of large data tables, and some browsers and software are not able to display all the columns of data. This problem may be exacerbated if the data is being viewed on a phone. Typically when this problem arises the data tables are truncated at early November (some browsers or software can only show a maximum of 255 columns of data, and early November is around 255 from the beginning of March when the data set starts.).

NHS England and NHS Improvement now includes alternative formats of all the tables in the daily publications, in which the dates run vertically instead of horizontally. These are labelled Tab1a, Tab2a etc.

If the data in Tab1, Tab2 etc. appears to cut off at a certain point, please use Tab1a, Tab2a etc. to view the data, and you should be able to see the full data set once again.

**11. Why is Trust X not included in the latest daily deaths data?**

NHS England and NHS Improvement publish two files every day; the “daily deaths” file and the “total deaths” file.

The “daily deaths” file includes data for all trusts that have reported a death in the previous 24 hour period (4pm two days ago to 4pm the previous day). Only trusts that have reported a death on the COVID Patient Notification System (CPNS) in that time period are included in the “daily deaths” file.

The “total deaths” file includes all deaths reported on CPNS up to 4pm the previous day. All trusts are included in the “total deaths” file every day, even if no deaths had been reported on CPNS in the previous 24 hour period.

A trust may not be included in the “daily deaths” file on a particular day if it had not reported any deaths in the previous 24 hours, but it will always be included in the “total deaths” file.

**12. Why do you only include deaths within 28 days of a positive test? Why stop at 28 days?**

The methodology for counting deaths was agreed by the four Chief Medical Officers of the UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-wide-methodology-agreed-to-record-covid-19-deaths>. This measure is used consistently across the UK.