

# STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE – Excess Winter Mortality Provisional Statistics 2020/21



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## Excess Winter Mortality Provisional Statistics 2020/21

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has today published statistics covering Excess winter mortality provisional statistics for 2020/21.

The report on Excess Winter Mortality (EWM) includes information on the provisional number of deaths that took place in Northern Ireland in the winter months of December 2020 to March 2021, compared with the non-winter months (including the preceding August to November 2020 and the following April to July 2021).

There were 6,340 deaths in Northern Ireland in the four months of winter 2020/21 (December to March). Comparing this with the average for the two adjacent 4-month periods, the seasonal increase in mortality in winter 2020/21 was an estimated 1,120. This was 590 more than the corresponding value of 530 for the previous winter (2019/20) and the second highest level of EWM since 1999/2000, with the exception of 2017/18 when the last big flu epidemic occurred.

The impact of Covid-19 on excess winter mortality in Northern Ireland in 2019/20 was to reduce the EWM total – because the majority of Covid-19 deaths had occurred in non-winter months (particularly April to July). However, the impact of Covid-19 on excess winter mortality in 2020/21 was reversed as it inflated the total number of winter deaths. By removing all deaths where Covid-19 was the underlying cause of death from the analysis and re-calculating EWM for 2020/21, the excess winter mortality reduced to 200.

Excess winter mortality (EWM) continued to be higher in females compared with males, with females accounting for 53.4 per cent (600) and males counting for 46.6 per cent (520) of the excess winter mortality in 2020/21.

The leading cause of excess winter deaths was 'all other causes' due to inclusion of Covid-19 in this category, accounting for 83.3 per cent of the excess winter mortality in 2020/21.

In Northern Ireland, deaths in the winter months were 21.4 per cent higher than in the adjacent non-winter months – this proportion is the EWM Index (EWMI). The Health & Social Care Trust with the highest EWMI was the Southern Trust, with 41.4 per cent more deaths occurring in the winter months. In comparison, the lowest EWMI was in the Belfast Trust where 7.7 per cent more deaths occurred in the winter months, than in the non-winter months.

The highest regional EWMI in 2020/21 was in the Mid-Ulster Local Government District, where 44.0 per cent more deaths occurred in the winter months than in the non-winter months. Ards & North Down had the lowest EWMI, with 7.3 per cent more deaths occurring in the winter months.

**NISRA**

**December 2021**

## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Death Statistics in Northern Ireland are based on deaths which have been registered with the General Register Office (GRO). There are some situations where the registration of the death can be delayed, specifically where the death has been accidental, unexpected or suspicious, and must be referred to the Coroner. A death which is suspected to be suicide must therefore be referred to the Coroner and can only be registered after the Coroner has completed his/her investigation. The time taken to carry out this investigation can result in a delay in registration. Given the delay in registration of suicide deaths, these deaths may not appear in published statistics until subsequent years.
2. Excess Winter Mortality is a statistical measure of the increase in mortality during winter months (December to March) compared with non-winter months (preceding August to November and following April to July). The Excess Winter Mortality index is calculated as the number of excess winter deaths divided by the average non-winter expressed as a percentage.
3. Further details on Excess Winter Mortality in Northern Ireland statistics, including detailed methodology can be found at:  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/cause-death/excess-winter-mortality>
4. Data in this report should not be confused with 'excess deaths', which is distinctly different from Excess Winter Mortality, and reported separately. NISRA published Excess Mortality and Covid-19 Related Deaths in Northern Ireland March to December 2020 in March 2021. Estimates in that report are based on estimates of **Excess Mortality**, the difference between actual deaths in 2020 and the expected number of deaths in **this period** based on the average number of deaths observed in the **same period over the previous five years**. This measure is distinctly different from Excess Winter Mortality, which is a measure of seasonality within a 12-month period.
5. Corresponding information for England and Wales is published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) and for Scotland by the [National Records of Scotland](#). Similar figures for the Republic of Ireland are available from the Central Statistics Office Ireland.
6. All media queries to Department of Finance Press Office at [dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk) or on Tel: 028 90816724. The Executive Information Service operates an out of hours service **For Media Enquiries Only** between 1800hrs and 0800hrs Monday to Friday and at weekends and public holidays. The duty press officer can be contacted on 028 9037 8110.
7. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:

Telephone: +44 (0)300 200 7836

E-mail: [demography@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:demography@nisra.gov.uk)

Responsible Statistician: Carly Gordon