

**Subject:** Request for clarification of the statistical reporting of COVID-19 deaths.

**FOI reference:** 202100182995

**Date received:** 22 March 2021

**Date responded:** 29 March 2021

**Information requested:**

“Whilst there are several areas of the reporting I have concerns with, one area in particular features a frequent recurrence of seemingly poor arithmetic, OR there is a particular reason behind reporting in such a way - and that is the information I am interested in.

I would very much appreciate some further insight into why the decision has been taken to continuously report this statistic in this way, what benefit you believe it adds to the overall reporting of these very important statistics, and if how this can be justified as completely clear and transparent to readers.

As an example I will use the latest **Deaths involving coronavirus (COVID 19) in Scotland** 17 March 2021 update:

Of deaths involving COVID-19 in the latest week:

- 64% were aged 75+ (67 deaths), and 20% were aged under 65 (21 deaths).

Clearly you can see this particular example adds up to 84%.

Why does this line not cover the entire population and state the statistical FACT that '80% were aged over 65'?

Why is this reported in this way?”

**NRS Response:**

The weekly tables published as part of our COVID deaths publication contain a breakdown by seven age groups, as well as 14 health boards and 32 local authorities. These are available on the “Data and Charts” link on the NRS website here: [Deaths involving coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/deaths-involving-coronavirus-covid-19-in-scotland)

In the report, the key findings are summarised from that week’s figures rather than report on every single figure. This applies to the health board and council area figures as well as age groups. The two or three areas with the highest numbers of deaths are mentioned rather than list each and every one of them.

By picking out one or two age groups (or health boards or council areas) in the report, NRS are not hiding the figures for the other groups as these are freely available to view in the tables.