

Deaths involving coronavirus (COVID-19) in Scotland

Week 9
(01 March 2021 to 07 March 2021)



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This statistical report includes provisional statistics on the number of deaths associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) and the total number of deaths registered in Scotland, for week 9 of 2021

Key Findings

COVID deaths

- As at the 7th of March, there have been a total of 9,725 deaths registered in Scotland where the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was mentioned on the death certificate.
- Of the total number of deaths registered in week 9 (01 March to 07 March), there were 141 where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. This is a decrease of 89 deaths on the previous week.
- Of deaths involving COVID-19 in the latest week:
 - 54% (76 deaths) were aged 75+, and 25% (35 deaths) were aged under 65.
 - 52% were male (73 deaths) and 48% female (68 deaths).
 - There were 34 deaths in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area, 26 in Lanarkshire and 22 in Forth Valley.
 - At council level, the highest number of deaths occurred in Glasgow City (19), North Lanarkshire (17) and Falkirk (13).
 - The majority of deaths (84%) occurred in hospitals (119 deaths), with 14 deaths in care homes and 8 at home or in non-institutional settings.

Data for weeks 52, 53 and 1 are affected by the Christmas Period

There were fewer registrations than usual in weeks 52 and 53 of 2020 due to public holidays. Week 52 contained one public holiday for 25 December, and week 53 contained two public holidays, 28 December and 1 January. As a result, death registrations were likely to be lower than the actual number of deaths that occurred in these weeks.

Registrations for week 1 were higher than normal as registrars dealt with backlogs from the previous weeks, although it should be noted that there was also a public holiday in this week (4 January).

Care should therefore be taken in interpreting weekly data around the turn of the year as it is affected by public holidays and won't give a reliable indication of the trend. Figure 2 in this report provides analysis of deaths by date of occurrence (as well as date of registration) and gives a clearer indication of the trend at the end of the year.

All-cause deaths and excess deaths

- The provisional total number of deaths registered in Scotland in week 9 of 2021 (01 March to 07 March) was 1,196.
- The average number of deaths registered in the corresponding week over the five year period between 2015 and 2019 was 1,165, so there were 31 (3%) more deaths registered in week 9 of 2021 compared to the average.
- In week 9 there were 70 fewer deaths in care homes compared to the average (26% below average), 121 excess deaths at home or in non-institutional settings (39% above average) and 18 fewer deaths in hospitals compared to the average (3% below average).
- There were 31 excess deaths across all settings in the latest week. The number of deaths where COVID-19 was the underlying cause (120) was higher than the total number of excess deaths because deaths from respiratory causes (-64), dementia and Alzheimer's (-32), cancer (-17) and circulatory diseases (-2) were all below average for this time of year.

Measuring excess deaths in 2021

Excess deaths are calculated by comparing the current year to the five year average from previous years. This average is based on the actual number of death registrations recorded for each corresponding week in the previous five years. Moveable public holidays, when registration offices are closed, affect the number of registrations made in the current week and in the corresponding weeks in previous years.

Usually, the previous five years are used to compare against the most recent year to calculate excess deaths. In 2020, excess deaths were measured by comparing the 2020 figure against the average for 2015-2019. For 2021 we would generally calculate excess deaths by comparing the 2021 figure against the average for 2016-2020.

As excess deaths are a key measure of the effect of the pandemic, it is not appropriate to compare the 2021 figure against the 2016-2020 average as that average will be affected by the pandemic with higher deaths in Spring 2020. We have therefore decided to continue to use the 2015-2019 average to measure excess deaths in 2021.

Figure 1: Weekly deaths involving COVID-19 in Scotland, week 12 2020 to week 9 2021

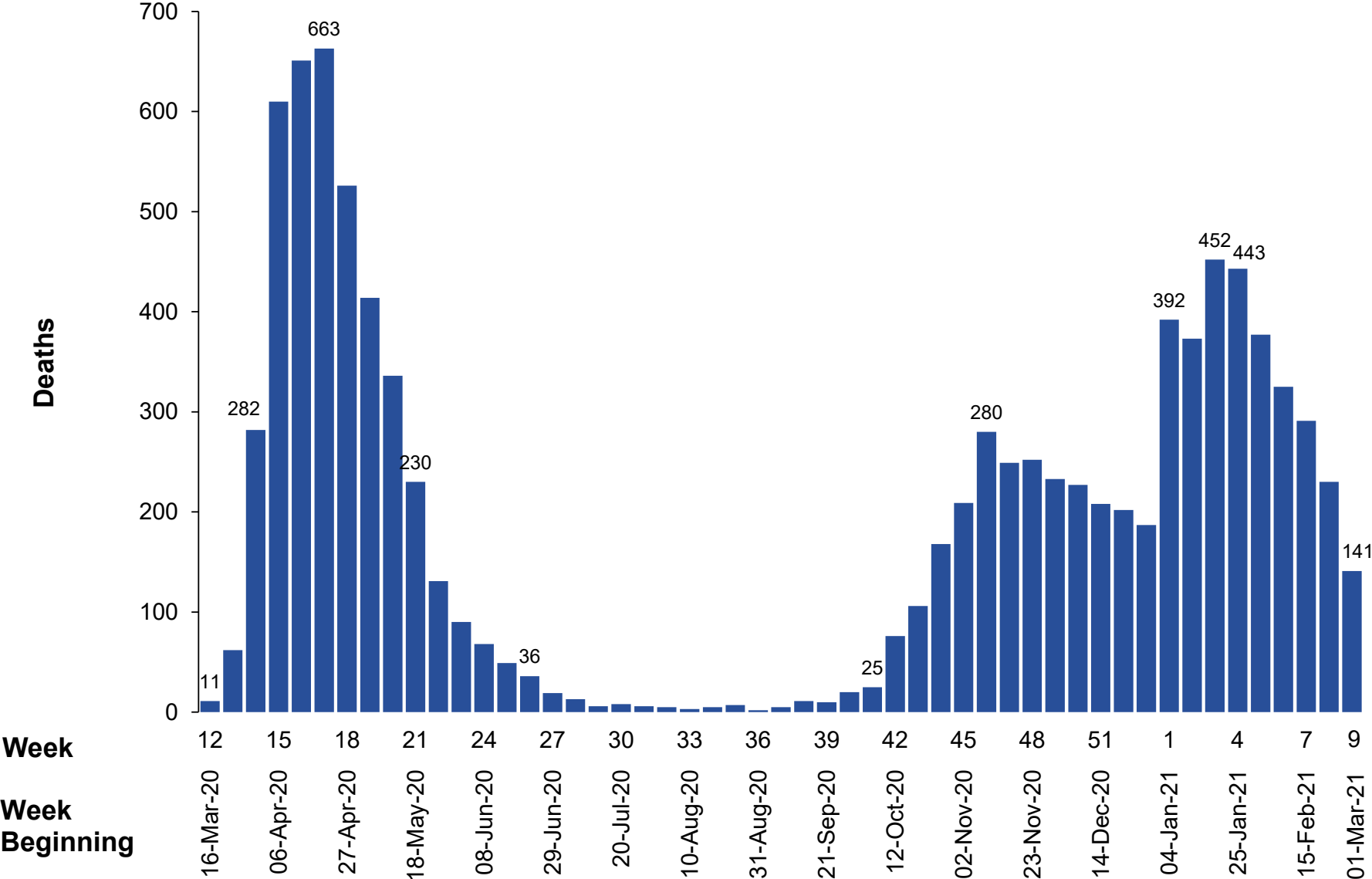
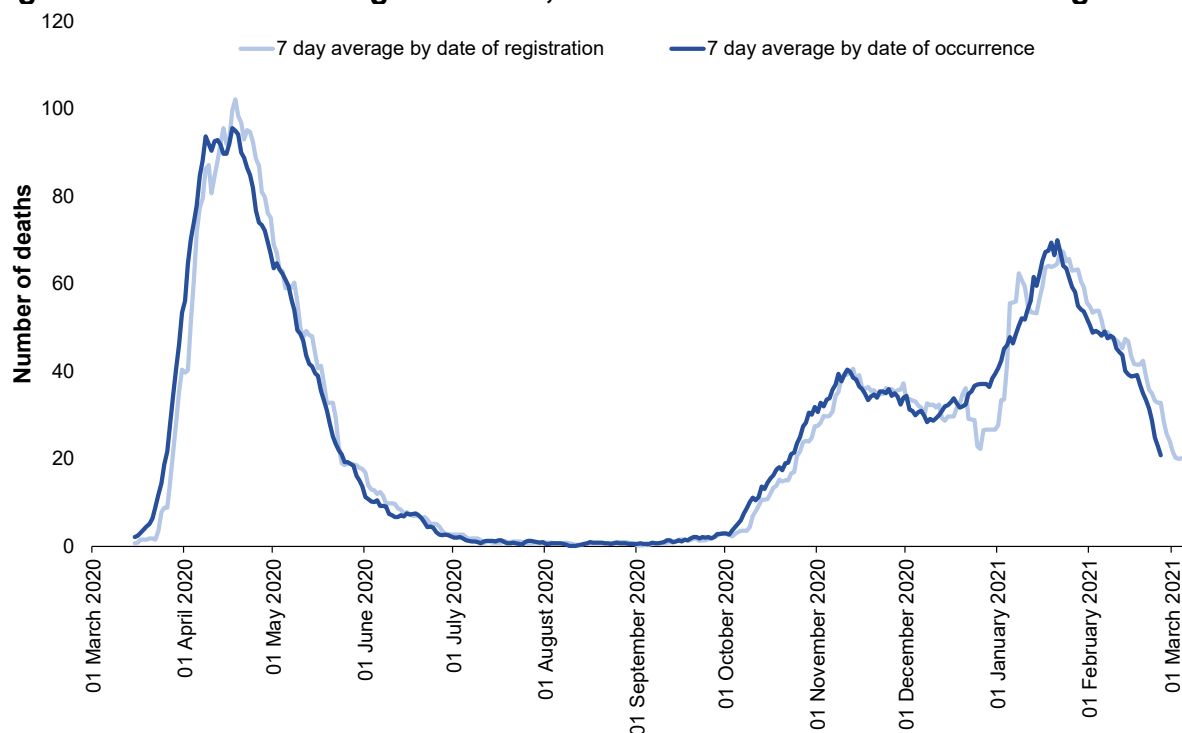


Figure 2: Deaths involving COVID-19, Date of Occurrence vs Date of Registration



The figures throughout this report are based on the date a death was registered rather than the date the death occurred. When someone dies, their family (or a representative) have to make an appointment with a registrar to register the death. Legally this must be done within 8 days, although in practice there is, on average, a 3 day gap between a death occurring and being registered. This gap can be greater at certain times of the year such as Easter and Christmas when registration offices are closed for public holidays.

In general, the trend in COVID-19 deaths by date of registration (the NRS headline measure) has a lag of around 3 days when compared with the figures on date of death. For most of the period examined the trend based on date of occurrence precedes that based on date of registration by around 3 days. However this changed over the Christmas period.

Based on date of registration, the trend which, had been falling since mid-November, continued to fall with a substantial dip around Christmas (as registration offices closed for public holidays) and then increased rapidly in early January as registration offices caught up with the backlog of registrations. The trend based on date of occurrence shows a different picture and indicates that deaths began to increase as early as mid-December, and continued to increase through most of January. Towards the end of January the seven day average for deaths by date of occurrence began to fall and has continued to fall since.

This report includes all deaths which were registered by 7th March. There will, however, be deaths which occurred before this date but were not yet registered. In order to include a more complete analysis based on date of occurrence, we need to wait an additional week to allow the registration process to fully complete. The trend

based on date of occurrence therefore only includes deaths which occurred by 28th February as the majority of these are likely to have been registered by now.

How do NRS compile these statistics?

- Weekly figures are based on the date of registration. In Scotland deaths must be registered within 8 days but in practice, the average time between death and registration is around 3 days.
- Figures are allocated to weeks based on the ISO8601 standard. Weeks begin on a Monday and end on a Sunday. Often weeks at the beginning and end of a year will overlap the preceding and following years (e.g. week 1 of 2020 began on Monday 30 December 2019) so the weekly figures may not sum to any annual totals which are subsequently produced.
- Deaths involving COVID-19 are defined as those where COVID-19 is mentioned on the death certificate, either as the underlying cause of death or as a contributory cause. Cause of death is coded according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Conditions 10th Revision (ICD-10). The relevant codes included in this publication are U07.1 and U07.2.
- Figures include deaths where 'suspected' or 'probable' COVID-19 appears on the death certificate.
- Data are provisional and subject to change in future weekly publications. The data will be finalised in June 2021. Reasons why the data might be revised later include late registration data being received once the week's figure have been produced or more information being provided by a certifying doctor or The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) on the cause of death.
- Certain user enquiries for ad-hoc analysis related to COVID-19 deaths have been published on our [website](#).
- The weekly publication includes breakdowns by sex, age, health board, local authority and location of death. It also includes an analysis of excess deaths by location and broad cause of death. We also publish a comprehensive and detailed analysis of mortality on a monthly basis.
- NRS mortality data (COVID-19 and excess deaths) continue to be made available on a weekly basis through the [Scottish Government's COVID-19 dashboard](#)

Index of available analysis on registered deaths involving COVID-19

Breakdown	Frequency	When Added	Latest Period Covered	Date Last updated
Age group	Weekly	8 th April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Sex	Weekly	8 th April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Location	Weekly	15 th April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Health Board	Weekly	8 th April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Local Authority	Weekly	22 nd April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Excess deaths by cause	Weekly	22 nd April 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Excess deaths by cause and location	Weekly	17 th June 2020	Week 9	10 th March 2021
Age-standardised mortality rates – Scotland	Monthly	13 th May 2020	January	17 th January 2021
Age-standardised mortality rates – sub-Scotland	Monthly	17 th June 2020	March – Jan combined	17 th January 2021
Leading causes of death	Monthly	13 th May 2020	January	17 th January 2021
Pre-existing conditions	Monthly	13 th May 2020	January	17 th January 2021
Deprivation	Monthly	13 th May 2020	March – Jan combined	17 th January 2021
Urban Rural	Monthly	13 th May 2020	March – Jan combined	17 th January 2021
Daily occurrences by location of death	Monthly	13 th May 2020	January	17 th January 2021
Occupation	Monthly	17 th June 2020	March – Jan combined	17 th January 2021
Intermediate Zone	Monthly	17 th June 2020	March – Jan combined	17 th January 2021
Ethnic Group	One-off	8 th July 2020	March to mid-June	11 th November 2020

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Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the Statistics section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the Scotland’s Census website.

We also provide information about future publications on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government ScotStat website.

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Enquiries and suggestions

Please get in touch if you need any further information, or have any suggestions for improvement.

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