Deaths involving coronavirus (COVID-19) in Scotland

Week 41 (11 October 2021 to 17 October 2021)

Published on 20 October 2021

This statistical report includes provisional 2021 statistics and finalised 2020 statistics on the number of deaths associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) and the total number of deaths registered in Scotland

Key Findings

Deaths involving COVID-19, weekly registrations

- As at the 17th of October, there have been a total of 11,406 deaths registered in Scotland where the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was mentioned on the death certificate. In the latest week there were 139 deaths, an increase of 8 deaths from the previous week.

- Of deaths involving COVID-19 in the latest week:

  - 78 were male, 61 were female.
  - 18 deaths were aged under 65, 29 were aged 65-74 and there were 92 deaths in people aged 75 or over.
  - Glasgow City (23 deaths), Fife (16 deaths) and North Lanarkshire (10 deaths) had the highest numbers of deaths at council level. In total, 26 (out of 32) council areas had at least one death last week.
  - 108 deaths were in hospitals, 19 were in care homes, and 11 were at home or in a non-institutional setting. One death occurred in another institutional setting.

Deaths from all causes, weekly registrations

- The total number of deaths registered in Scotland in week 41 of 2021 was 1,331. This was 252 more than the five year average for week 41 (23% above average).

- In week 41 there were 133 excess deaths at home or in non-institutional settings (48% above average), 97 more deaths in hospitals (17% above average) and 16 more deaths in care homes (7% above average) compared to the 2015-2019 average.

- There were 37 more deaths from dementia/Alzheimer's, 16 more from cancer and 10 more from circulatory causes compared to the five year average. Respiratory deaths were below average (-8) for this time of year. There were also 77 excess deaths from other causes. The number of deaths where COVID-19 was the underlying cause was 120.

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.

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 41 2021
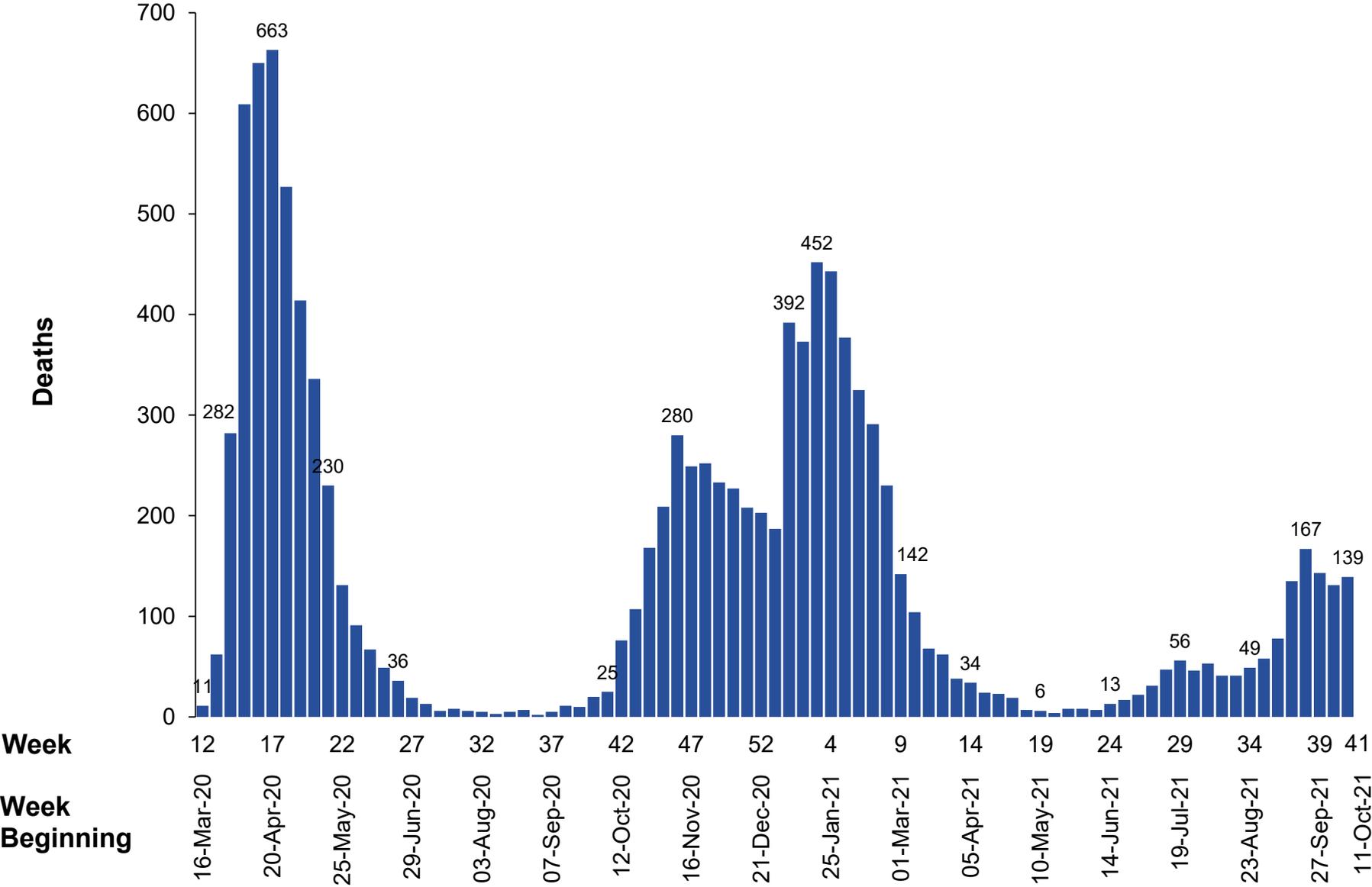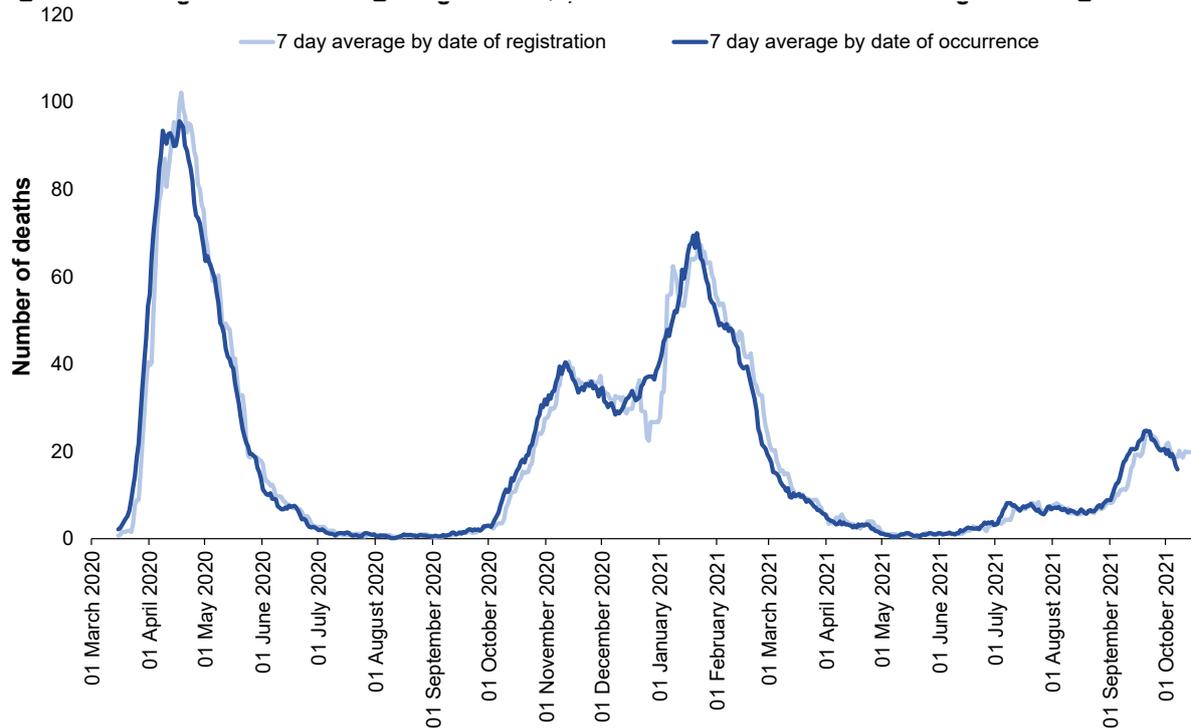
Figure 2: Deaths involving COVID-19, Date of Occurrence vs Date of Registration

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.

Daily deaths began to rise again in July 2021 and then rose through most of September, before falling into the beginning of October.

This report includes all deaths which were registered by 17th October. 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 10th October 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, U07.2, U09.9 and U10.9.

- Figures include deaths where 'suspected' or 'probable' COVID-19 appears on the death certificate.

- From the week beginning 22 March 2021, new ICD-10 codes issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) were also used to code deaths involving COVID-19. U09.9 is used for 'post-COVID' conditions, when death occurred after acute or ongoing COVID-19. U10.9 is used in the rare cases where 'Kawasaki-like' syndrome is caused by COVID-19. Data back to March 2020 has been recoded to ensure consistency of the time series.

- 2021 data are provisional and subject to change in future weekly publications. They will be finalised in summer 2022. 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	8th April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Sex	Weekly	8th April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Location	Weekly	15th April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Health Board	Weekly	8th April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Local Authority	Weekly	22nd April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Excess deaths by cause	Weekly	22nd April 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Excess deaths by cause and location	Weekly	17th June 2020	Week 41	20th October 2021
Age-standardised mortality rates – Scotland	Monthly	13th May 2020	September 2021	11th October 2021
Age-standardised mortality rates – sub-Scotland	Monthly	17th June 2020	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Leading causes of death	Monthly	13th May 2020	September 2021	11th October 2021
Pre-existing conditions	Monthly	13th May 2020	September 2021	11th October 2021
Deprivation	Monthly	13th May 2020	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Urban Rural	Monthly	13th May 2020	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Daily occurrences by location of death	Monthly	13th May 2020	September 2021	11th October 2021
Occupation	Monthly	17th June 2020	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Intermediate Zone	Monthly	17th June 2020	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Deaths by ICD-10 codes	Monthly	16th June 2021	March 2020 – September 2021	11th October 2021
Ethnic Group	One-off	8th July 2020	March to mid-June	11th November 2020
Disability	One-off	24th March 2021	March to Jan	24th March 2021

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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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