

Main Points

- There were 6,352 deaths where dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the underlying cause in 2020, representing a 1.1% decrease (down by 69 deaths) on the previous year but more than three times the number of deaths in 2000. Dementia and Alzheimer's disease deaths are affected by a change in cause of death coding software at the beginning of 2017 – refer to the [methodology](#) document for more information on this.
- [Other NRS figures](#) show that the number of deaths where Alzheimer's disease and other dementias were mentioned increased in 2020, due to the increased number of older people dying with COVID-19 as the underlying cause, but with dementia as an underlying condition.
- As the population ages over time, it is not surprising that the number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease would increase. Even after accounting for the ageing population, there has still been a substantial increase in the rate of deaths over recent years. The age-standardised death rate shows what might have happened to the trend in the number of deaths if the population structure had remained the same over time (i.e. removing the impact of ageing). The number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease has increased at a greater rate than the age-standardised death rate for deaths where the underlying cause was dementia or Alzheimer's disease over the period 2000 to 2020 (216% compared with 124%). ([chart 1](#)).
- The number of female deaths (4,173) was almost twice the number of male deaths (2,179) in 2020 but the gap is narrowing in percentage terms as female deaths were nearer three times the number of male deaths in 2000 ([table 1](#)).
- The vast majority of dementia and Alzheimer's deaths occurred over the age of 80 ([table 2](#)) with the average age at death in 2020 being 86.8. The average age at death was higher for women (87.8) than for men (85.0).
- Overall, in 2020, the 90+ age group had the largest number of dementia and Alzheimer's deaths (2,211 deaths, which equates to 50.5 deaths per 1,000 population) followed by the 85-89 age group (1,832 deaths, representing 21.7 deaths per 1,000 population) and the 80-84 age group (1,303 deaths, 9.1 deaths per 1,000 population). For males, there were more deaths among 85-89 year olds than in any other age-group, and for females, the most deaths were seen among the 90+ age group.
- Table 3 and 4 give figures for each council and Health Board area. Figures for smaller areas can fluctuate from year to year, so care should be taken in interpreting and comparing these figures. More information on [fluctuations in death statistics](#) is available on our website.
- Most deaths from dementia or Alzheimer's disease in 2020 occurred in care homes (63% of males and 72% of females). Males were more likely to die in hospital than females (25% and 13% respectively). A relatively small proportion

of deaths occurred at home or in another non-institutional setting (12% for males, 14% for females).