

# Deaths involving coronavirus (COVID-19) in Scotland

Week 4  
(25 January 2021 to 31 January 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 4 of 2021

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

There were fewer registrations than usual in weeks 52 and 53 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 may be higher than normal as registrars deal 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 and gives a clearer indication of the trend at the end of the year.

## **Key Findings**

### COVID deaths

- As at the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, there have been a total of 8,347 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 4 (25 January to 31 January), there were 440 where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. This is a decrease of 12 deaths on the previous week.
- Of deaths involving COVID-19 in the latest week:
  - 68% (301 deaths) were aged 75+, and 14% (63 deaths) were aged under 65.
  - 48% were male (210 deaths) and 52% female (230 deaths).
  - There were 106 deaths in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area, 68 in Lanarkshire and 57 in Lothian.
  - At council level, the highest number of deaths occurred in Glasgow City (67), North Lanarkshire (40) and City of Edinburgh (40).
  - The majority of deaths (68%) occurred in hospitals (301 deaths), with 97 deaths in care homes, 38 at home or in non-institutional settings and 4 in other institutions.

## All-cause deaths and excess deaths

### Measuring excess deaths in 2021

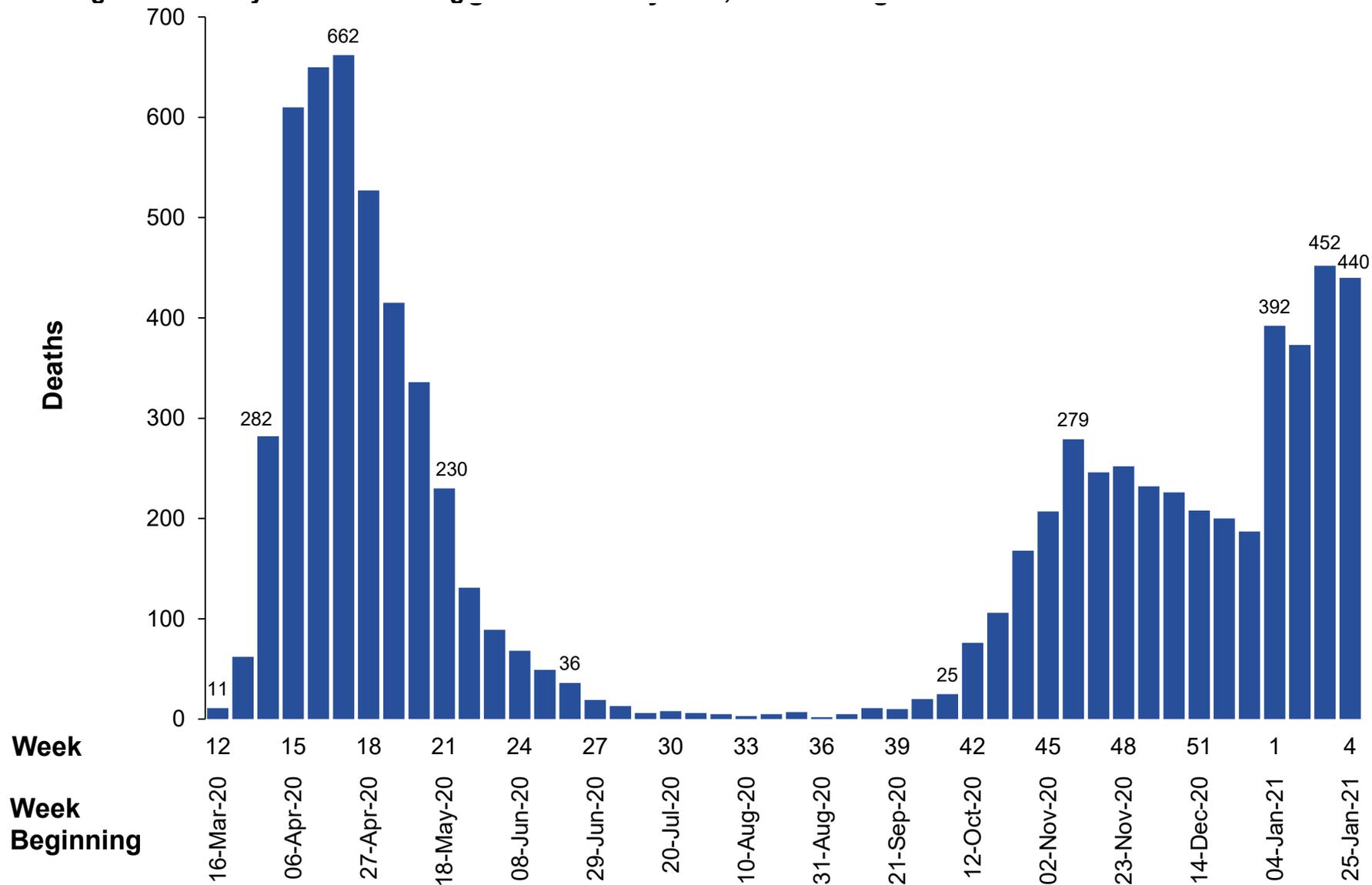
Excess deaths are calculated by comparing the current year to the five year average from previous years. This average is based on the actual number of death registrations recorded for each corresponding week in the previous five years. Moveable public holidays, when registration offices are closed, affect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

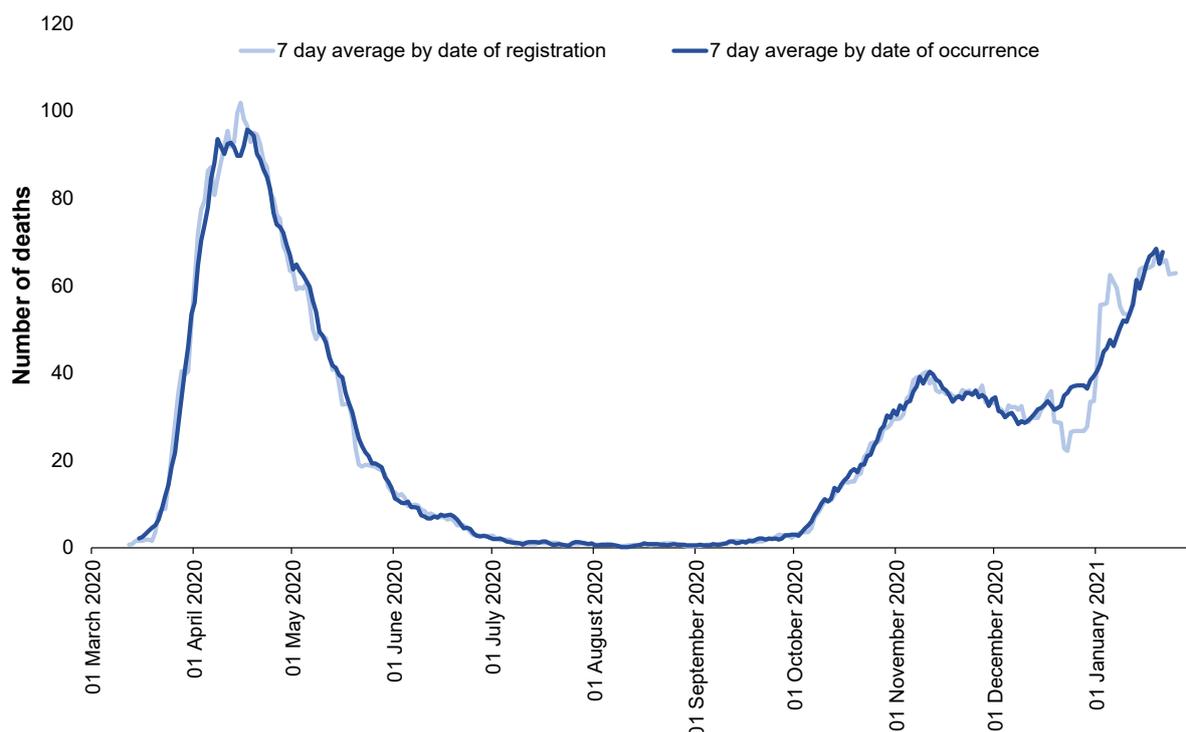
As excess deaths are a key measure of the effect of the pandemic, it is not appropriate to compare the 2021 figure against the 2016-2020 average as that average will be affected by the pandemic with higher deaths in Spring 2020. We have therefore decided to continue to use the 2015-2019 average to measure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

- The provisional total number of deaths registered in Scotland in week 4 of 2021 (25 January to 31 January) was 1,593.
- The average number of deaths registered in the corresponding week over the five year period between 2015 and 2019 was 1,317, so there were 276 (21%) more deaths registered in week 4 of 2021 compared to the average.
- In week 4 there were 13 fewer deaths in care homes compared to the average (4% below average), 168 excess deaths at home or in non-institutional settings (50% above average) and 117 excess deaths in hospitals compared to the average (18% above average).
- There were 276 excess deaths across all settings in the latest week. The number of deaths where COVID-19 was the underlying cause (385) was higher than the total number of excess deaths because deaths from respiratory causes (-100), dementia (-34), circulatory causes (-27) and cancer (-4) were all below average for this time of year.

**Figure 1: Weekly deaths involving COVID-19 in Scotland, week 12 2020 to week 4 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 have been increasing throughout January.

This report includes all deaths which were registered by 31st January. 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 24th January 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

<b>Breakdown</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>When Added</b>	<b>Latest Period Covered</b>	<b>Date Last updated</b>
<a href="#">Age group</a>	Weekly	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Sex</a>	Weekly	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Location</a>	Weekly	15 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Health Board</a>	Weekly	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Local Authority</a>	Weekly	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Excess deaths by cause</a>	Weekly	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Excess deaths by cause and location</a>	Weekly	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	Week 4	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021
<a href="#">Age-standardised mortality rates – Scotland</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	December	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Age-standardised mortality rates – sub-Scotland</a>	Monthly	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	March – Dec combined	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Leading causes of death</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	December	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Pre-existing conditions</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	December	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Deprivation</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	March – Dec combined	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Urban Rural</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	March – Dec combined	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Daily occurrences by location of death</a>	Monthly	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	December	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Occupation</a>	Monthly	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	March – Dec combined	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Intermediate Zone</a>	Monthly	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	March – Dec combined	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<a href="#">Ethnic Group</a>	One-off	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	March to mid-June	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2020

## National Records of Scotland

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Preserving the past – We look after Scotland’s national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.

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.

For media enquiries, please contact [communications@nrscotland.gov.uk](mailto:communications@nrscotland.gov.uk)

For all other enquiries, please contact [statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk](mailto:statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk)