

Change in the registration of covid-19 associated deaths

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Antallet covid-19 assosierte dødsfall stiger til 2 169 på grunn av endringer i hvordan disse registreres. Endringen i registreringen har ikke endret totaldødeligheten i Norge, som fortsatt er på et normalt nivå.

Until week 10 2022, the monitoring of covid-19 associated deaths has only included deaths with a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 sample in the MSIS registry. Surveillance is now being changed to include deaths without a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 test in MSIS, with retroactive effect from the start of the pandemic. The new definition means that a total of 2169 deaths have now been registered. There are 357 more deaths than there would be with the old definition. The increase is primarily due to deaths in 2022, especially in the last six weeks (Figure 1).

The changed test criteria from the end of January 2022 have led to fewer people with detected covid-19, especially in rapid tests, being registered in the MSIS register. Rapid tests taken by health personnel in health institutions are still subject to notification to MSIS, but this appears to be an under-reporting. This in turn has led to several deaths in recent weeks not having a positive test in MSIS, even though they are registered with a covid-19 diagnosis in the Cause of Death Register. This is especially true of deaths in nursing homes. To avoid underreporting, the monitoring is therefore changed to also include deaths without a positive test in MSIS.

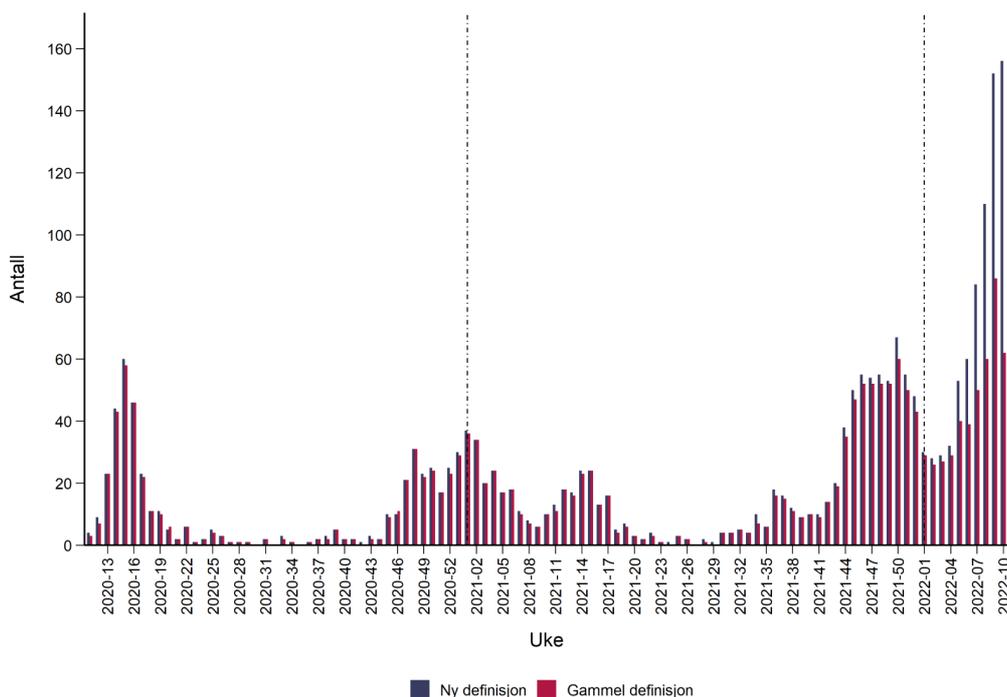


Figure 1: Number of covid-19 associated deaths per date of death (in weeks according to old and new definition, 16 March 2020 - 13 March 2022. Source: National Institute of Public Health.

A record number of infected people also cause more covid-19 associated deaths than before

Although it may appear that the peak of infection has been reached, Norway has an ongoing major outbreak of the omicron variant at present. 156 deaths have so far been registered in week 10 after 152 in week 9, which is the highest number in a week so far in the pandemic.

- It is not surprising that there are more covid-19 deaths now than in previous waves. This is because we have a significantly higher infection pressure now, says Frode Forland, director of FHI. Although omikron appears to be less fatal than previous varieties, there are relatively more deaths when so many are infected.

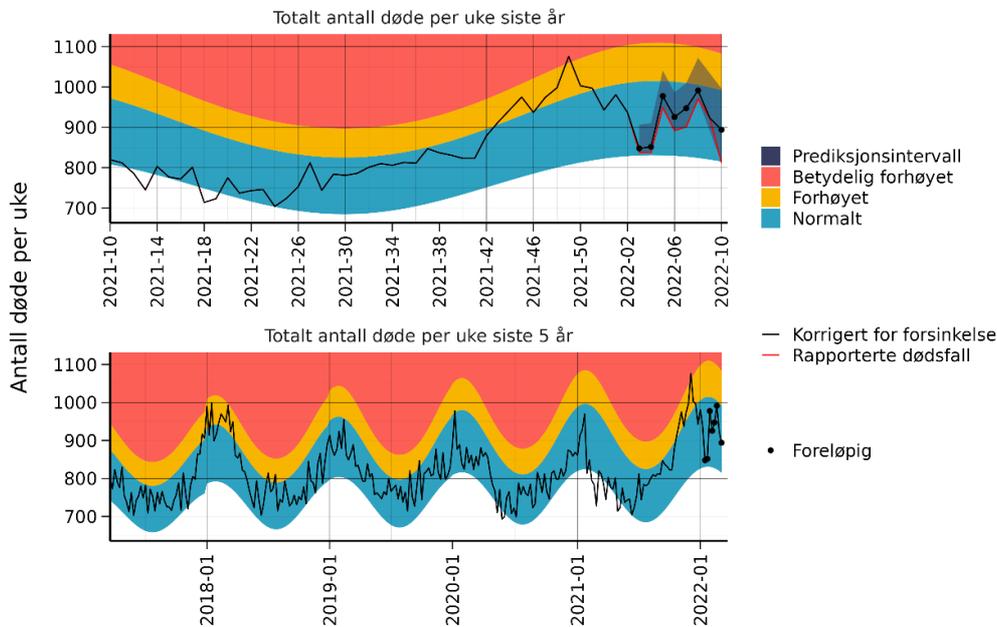
The expected total number of deaths in Norway has been normal since the New Year

The change in the registration of covid-19 associated deaths has not changed the total mortality in Norway (figure 3).

- The number of deaths, regardless of cause of death, has been at a normal level in Norway since just before the new year, says Frode Forland. This applies to the population as a whole, but also to the age group 65 years and older.

In week 8, there is a *preliminary* signal of more deaths than expected in the age group 85 years and older. It is too early to say whether the signal will stand when the figures become more complete.

More deaths than expected ("excess mortality") have been registered in eight weeks in the months before the turn of the year. Beyond this, the number of weekly deaths has been at the expected and below the expected level, throughout the pandemic.



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Figure 3: Total number of deaths in Norway per week last year and last 5 years, all age groups. Source: NorMOMO with figures from the National Register through the Disease Pulse .

Definitions:

New definition of a covid-19 associated death:

- Deaths where covid-19 (ICD-10 code U071, U072, U099, U109) is stated on the death certificate.

Previous definition of a covid-19 associated death:

- Deaths where covid-19 (ICD-10 code U071, U099, U109) is stated on the death certificate AND where the deceased is registered with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test in MSIS.