

Weekly Deaths in Northern Ireland

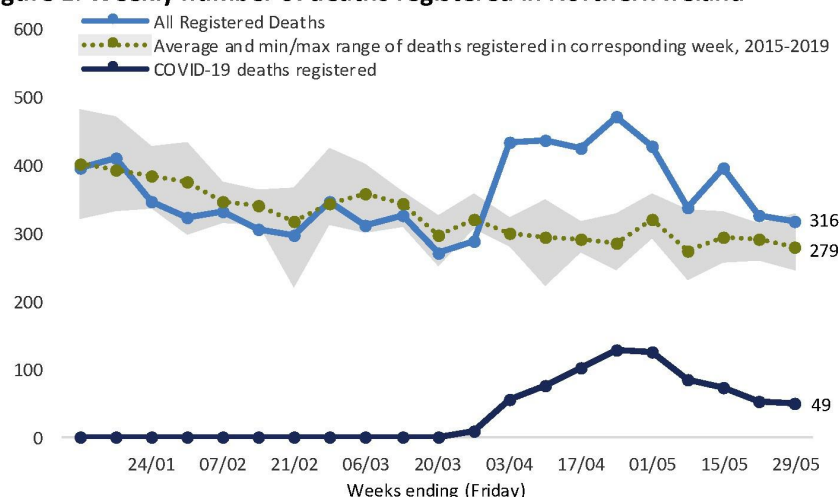
Death Registration Statistics including COVID-19 by Date of Death

Week ending 29th May 2020 (Week 21)

Section 1: Deaths by Date of Registration

For the ninth consecutive week, there were more deaths registered in Northern Ireland in week 21 than there have typically been in the same week in recent years.

Figure 1: Weekly number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland



Key Points – Date of Registration

- The provisional number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland in the week ending 29th May 2020 (week 21) was 316; nine less than in week 20 and 37 more than the 5-year average of 279 (Table 1).
- Around a third (33.2%) of all deaths in week 21 were classified as ‘respiratory’ (105). Please note that all COVID-19 related deaths have been included in this classification.
- There have been 7,515 deaths registered in the year-to-date, 32.4% of which (2,436) were classified as ‘respiratory’. The number and proportion of respiratory deaths is higher in the year-to-date than the 5-year average (2,092; 30.6%) (Table 2).
- Forty-nine deaths mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate were registered in week 21, accounting for 15.5% of all deaths in that week and bringing the total number of COVID-19 related deaths registered in calendar year 2020 to 754. This is the fifth consecutive weekly fall in the number of registered COVID-19 related deaths.
- In the calendar year to 29th May, males and females accounted for similar proportions of all deaths registered (males: 48.7%, females: 51.3%) and COVID-19 related deaths registered (males: 49.3%; female 50.7%) (Figure 2).
- In the calendar year to 29th May, the 75 years and over age-group accounted for two-thirds (66.8%) of all deaths and four-fifths (80.0%) of COVID-19 related deaths (Figure 3).
- For COVID-19 related deaths, those with an address in Belfast LGD accounted for 226 (30.0%) of the 754 deaths registered in the calendar year to 29th May (Figure 5).

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Background

Deaths occurring in Northern Ireland are registered on the Northern Ireland General Register Office's Registration System (NIROS). Daily extracts of registration records from NIROS are processed by the NISRA Vital Statistics Unit. Provisional data on deaths registered in each week (ending on a Friday) are compiled at the end of the following week*.

Cause of death coding to the [ICD-10 classification](#) is carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on NISRA's behalf on a quarterly basis. This means that quarterly statistics are the first output to report deaths according to underlying cause. These statistics are currently available up to [Quarter 3 2019](#) with Quarter 4 2019 scheduled for publication on 30th June.

To meet user needs, NISRA publish timely but provisional counts of death registrations in Northern Ireland in the weekly deaths provisional dataset. Weekly totals are presented alongside a 5-year weekly average as well as the lowest and highest number of deaths for the same week over the last five years. To allow time for registration and processing, these figures are published seven days after the week ends.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, from 3rd April 2020 the NISRA weekly deaths release has been supplemented with the numbers of respiratory deaths (respiratory deaths include any death where Pneumonia, Bronchitis, Bronchiolitis or Influenza are mentioned on the death certificate); and deaths relating to COVID-19 (that is, where COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, including in combination with other health conditions).

Background Changes to the death certification and registration process during the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of changes have been made to the usual process of certifying and registering a death which have been enabled by the Coronavirus Act 2020. More detail is available from the Department of Health website <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/covid-19-guidance-surrounding-death>. This includes guidance to medical practitioners on how to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) in COVID-19 related cases. In relation to who can complete the MCCD, upon which these weekly statistics are based, usual practice is that the MCCD must be signed by a doctor (Dr A) who has seen the deceased within the last 28 days or refer the case to the coroner. However, in the pandemic situation, if Dr A is unable to complete the MCCD or it is impracticable for them to do so, another practitioner (Dr B) from the same hospital or GP practice, can complete the MCCD, provided the deceased died as a result of a natural illness and Dr B can state, to the best of their knowledge and belief, the cause of death. In the event that neither Dr A nor Dr B is able to complete the MCCD, any medical practitioner (Dr C) can complete it, as long as the death was as a result of a natural illness and they can state the cause of the death, to the best of their knowledge and belief. Dr C does not have to have treated the deceased within the last 28 days. Coroners' cases will still be treated in the usual way - more detail on this is available on page 3 of the quality and methodology background information for NI death statistics at https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Northern%20Ireland%20Death%20Statistics%20Quality%20Assessment_0.pdf.

The process by which an informant registers a death has also been adapted. Usual practice is that the informant attends their local Registration Office to register a death, bringing the MCCD with them. During the pandemic, the MCCD can be sent to the General Register Office (GRO) electronically, directly from the hospital or General Practitioner certifying the death. Information required from the informant can be provided to GRO by telephone and no signature is required from the informant.

The content of this bulletin will be kept under review and more detail may be presented over the coming weeks.

* Bank Holidays could affect the number of registrations made within those weeks.

Latest death registration statistics

Table 1 shows that the provisional number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland in the week ending 29th May 2020 (week 21) was 316; 9 less (-2.8%) than in week 20, and 37 more (+13.3%) than the 5-year average of 279.

Over the last nine weeks, 939 'excess deaths' (i.e. deaths above the average for the corresponding week in previous years) have been registered in Northern Ireland, with the number of excess deaths in the year to date totalling 680. In terms of the year-to-date figures (weeks 1 to 21), the total number of deaths registered (7,515) is higher (+9.9%) than the 5-year average (6,835).

Table 1: All Deaths registered¹ weekly in Northern Ireland, 2020^P

		2020 ^P	Previous 5 Years: 2015 - 2019 ^P			'Excess Deaths'	939 'excess deaths' over these 9 weeks
Registration week	Week ending (Friday)	Total number of deaths registered in week	Average number of deaths registered in corresponding week ²	Range		No. of deaths above 5-year average ²	
				Minimum	Maximum		
13	10/04/2020	434	298	280	323	136	
14	10/04/2020	435	295	221	350	140	
15	17/04/2020	424	290	270	316	134	
16	24/04/2020	470	284	245	327	186	
17	01/05/2020	427	320	292	357	107	
18	08/05/2020	336	274	230	335	62	
19	15/05/2020	396	295	256	330	101	
20	22/05/2020	325	290	259	315	35	
21	29/05/2020	316	279	245	328	37	
Year-to-date (week 1-21) Total		7,515	6,835			680	

Note: statistics for the full year are available in the [accompanying spread sheet](#). P Weekly published data are provisional.

1 These data are based on registration dates of deaths, not occurrences. The majority of deaths are registered within five days in Northern Ireland.

2 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Table 2 shows that the number of death registrations mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate increased from 1 in week 11 to 128 in week 16, and has then fallen for five consecutive weeks to 49 in week 21 (754 in total).

In week 21, 33.2% of all deaths registered mentioned terms relating directly to respiratory causes on the death certificate. These are given as 'respiratory' deaths in the table below and are provided to aid comparison with the COVID-19 statistics (COVID-19 deaths are also included in the respiratory category).

There have been 2,436 respiratory deaths registered in the year-to-date. The number and proportion (32.4%) of respiratory deaths is higher in the year-to-date than the 5-year average (2,092, 30.6%).

Table 2: COVID-19 and respiratory deaths registered¹ weekly in Northern Ireland, 2020^P

Registration week	Week ending (Friday)	2020 ^P				Previous 5 Years: 2015 - 2019 ^P	
		Total number of deaths registered in week	COVID-19 ² deaths registered in week	Respiratory ³ deaths registered in week (2020 ^P)		Average number of respiratory deaths registered in corresponding week ⁴	
				N	%	N	%
11	20/03/2020	271	1	84	31.0%	95	32.0%
12	27/03/2020	287	9	77	26.8%	98	30.7%
13	03/04/2020	434	55	129	29.7%	91	30.4%
14	10/04/2020	435	76	162	37.2%	87	29.5%
15	17/04/2020	424	101	179	42.2%	81	28.0%
16	24/04/2020	470	128	206	43.8%	78	27.5%
17	01/05/2020	427	124	180	42.2%	88	27.5%
18	08/05/2020	336	84	130	38.7%	80	29.2%
19	15/05/2020	396	74	136	34.3%	74	25.2%
20	22/05/2020	325	53	90	27.7%	80	27.6%
21	29/05/2020	316	49	105	33.2%	79	28.3%
Year-to-date (week 1-21) Total		7,515	754	2,436	32.4%	2,092	30.6%

Note: Statistics for the full year are available in the [accompanying spread sheet](#)

^P Weekly published data are provisional.

¹ These data are based on registrations of deaths, not occurrences. The majority of deaths are registered within five days in Northern Ireland.

² COVID-19 deaths include any death where Coronavirus or COVID-19 (suspected or confirmed) was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate.

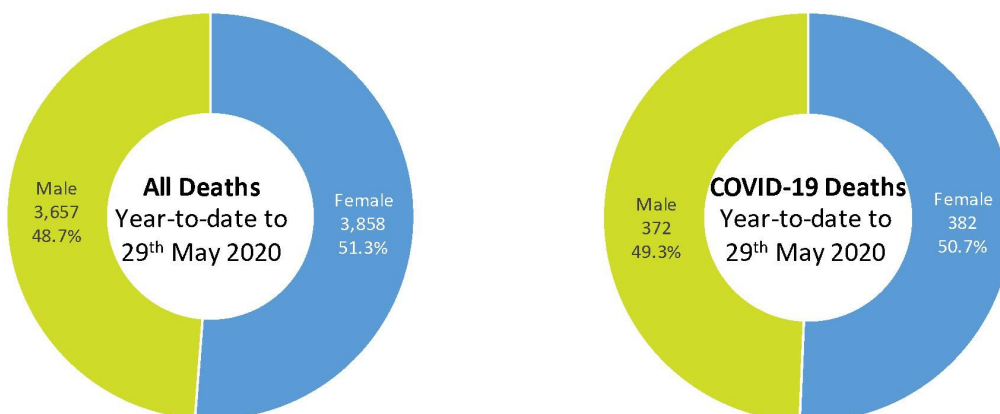
³ Respiratory deaths include any death where terms directly relating to respiratory causes were mentioned anywhere on the death certificate (this includes COVID-19 deaths). This is not directly comparable to the ONS figures relating to 'deaths where the underlying cause was respiratory disease'.

⁴ Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Deaths registered by sex

In the calendar year to 29th May 2020, males and females accounted for a similar proportion of all deaths registered (males: 48.7%, females: 51.4%) and COVID-19 related deaths registered (males: 49.3%; female 50.7%). A weekly breakdown by sex is provided in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#).

Figure 2: All deaths and COVID-19 deaths registered by sex, year-to-date 2020

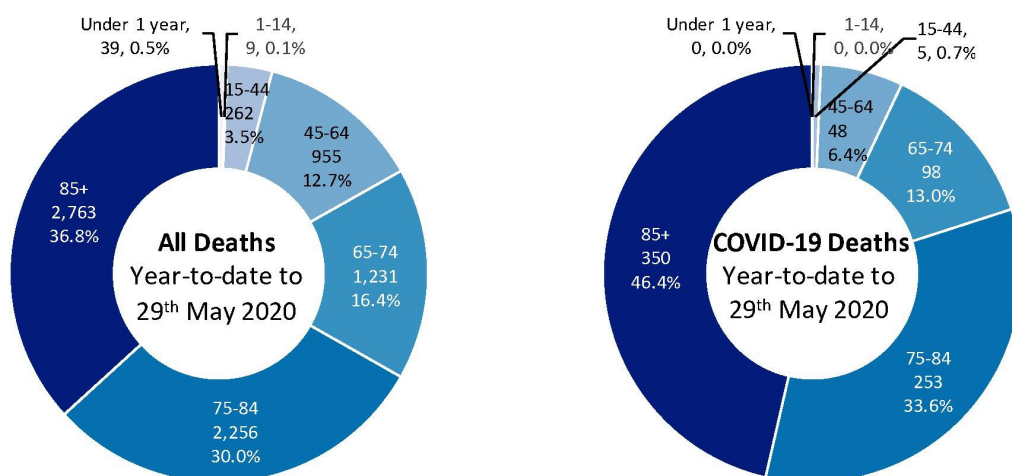


Deaths registered by age-group

In the calendar year to 29th May the 75 years and over age-group accounted for two-thirds (66.8%) of all deaths and four-fifths (80.0%) of COVID-19 related deaths.

The 43 COVID-19 related deaths registered among those aged 75+ in week 21 (see [accompanying spreadsheet](#)) equated to 20.1% of all deaths registered for this age-group during the week, while the six COVID-19 related deaths registered among those aged 45-74 equated to 6.5% of all deaths for this age-group in week 21.

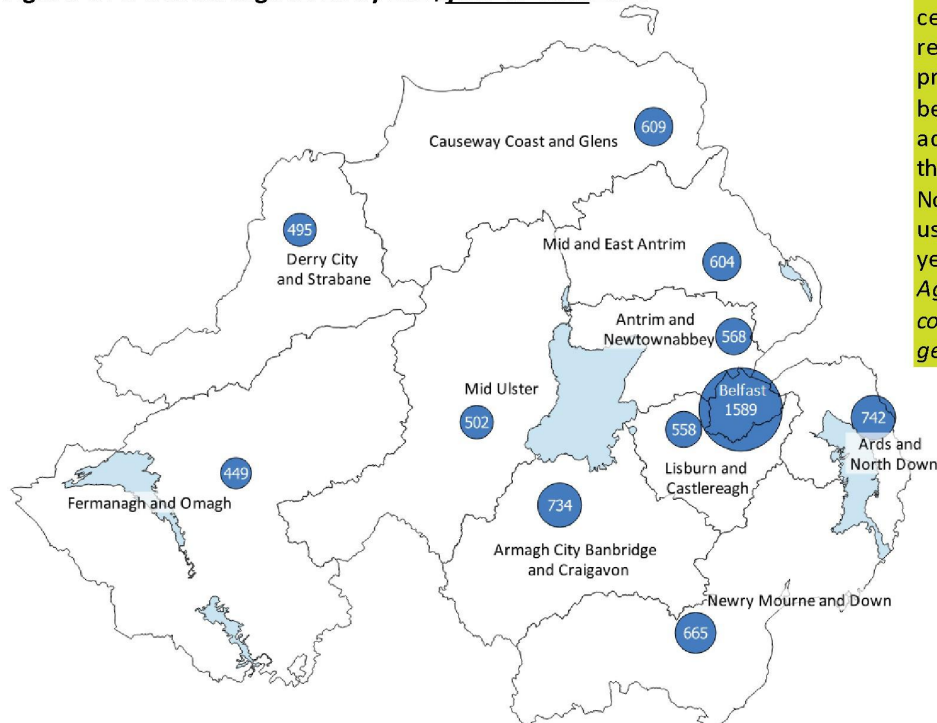
Figure 3: All deaths and COVID-19 deaths registered by age-group, year-to-date 2020



Deaths registered by Local Government District*

Those with an address* in Belfast Local Government District (LGD) accounted for around one in five of all 7,515 deaths registered in the calendar year to 29th May 2020 (1,589; 21.1%).

Figure 4: All deaths registered by LGD, year-to-date 2020



* The LGD data provided is based on the usual address of the deceased, recorded on the death certificate. Where the deceased was usually resident in NI and a home address was provided, the deceased's usual postcode has been mapped to an LGD area. If the usual address of the deceased was not provided or the deceased was usually resident outside of Northern Ireland, the place of death address is used (this is approximately 0.4% of deaths per year). *Crude mortality rates are not provided. Age standardised rates will be provided in due course to enable comparisons across different geographical areas.*

For COVID-19 related deaths, those with an address* in Belfast LGD accounted for 226 (30.0%) of the 754 deaths registered in the calendar year to 29th May. Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the fewest number of COVID-19 related deaths registered up to 29th May (16).

Figure 5: COVID-19 deaths registered by LGD, year-to-date 2020

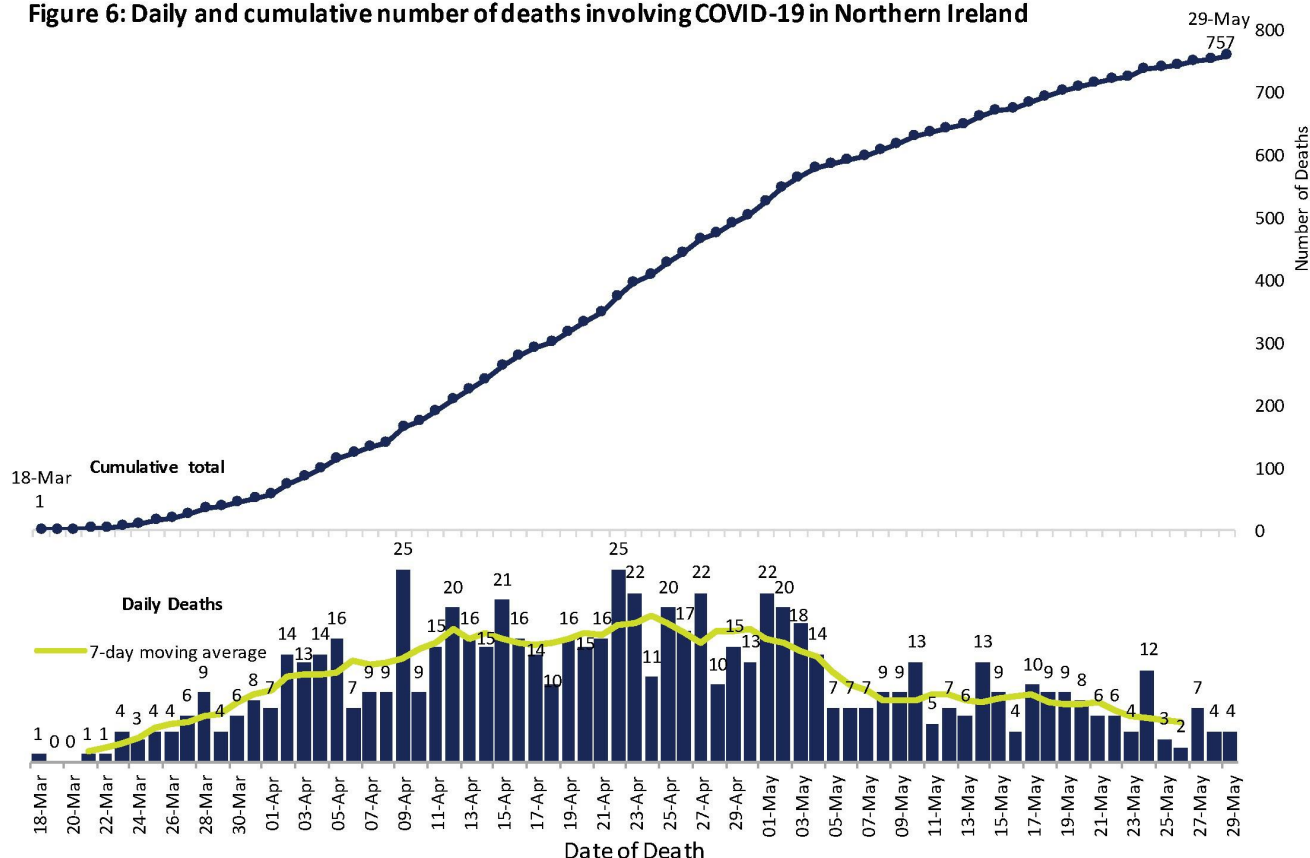


Section 2: COVID-19 Deaths by Date of Death

Because of the rapidly changing situation, this section of the bulletin provides provisional, updated totals of COVID-19 deaths occurring (based on the date of death) up to 29th May, taking account of the latest available death registrations up to and including 3rd June 2020.

Overall, 757 COVID-19 related deaths had occurred in Northern Ireland by 29th May, 36 of which occurred in the week ending 29th May. Thursday 9th April and Wednesday 22nd April saw the greatest number of COVID-19 deaths (25) occurring in a single day. A simple 7 day moving average shows the trend in COVID deaths by smoothing daily fluctuations.

Figure 6: Daily and cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland



Key Points –COVID-19 deaths based on date of death¹

- 757 deaths mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate have occurred in total, to 29th May (including those registered up to and including 3rd June).
- The comparative number of deaths reported by the Department of Health (DoH) to 29th May² was 528 (see page 9 for definitions).
- Of the 757 total deaths involving COVID-19 occurring up to 29th May, 381 (50.3%) occurred in hospital³, 328 (43.3%) occurred in care homes, eight (1.1%) occurred in hospices and 40 (5.3%) occurred at residential addresses or another location (Figure 7).
- The 328 deaths in care homes and hospices involved 78 separate establishments.
- In the week ending 29th May, nine (25.0%) of the 36 COVID-19 related deaths were in care homes, down from 26.9% in the previous week.

¹The majority of deaths are registered within five days in NI; data based on date of death are subject to ongoing change.

²Responsibility for reporting daily death figures moved from the Public Health Agency to the Department of Health on 19th April. Figures based on deaths that occurred up to 29th May but including revisions to 3rd June, to account for delayed notifications.

³To aid comparison, the most recent Registrar General Annual Report notes that in 2018, 48% of all deaths occurred in hospital and 19% in care/ nursing homes: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/registrar-general-annual-report-2018-deaths>

COVID-19 deaths occurring by place of death

Of the 757 total deaths involving COVID-19 occurring up to 29th May, 381 (50.3%) occurred in hospital, 328 (43.3%) occurred in care homes, eight (1.1%) occurred in hospices and 40 (5.3%) occurred at residential addresses or another location.

Figure 7: Cumulative number of COVID-19 related deaths occurring by Place of Death in Northern Ireland, to 29th May 2020

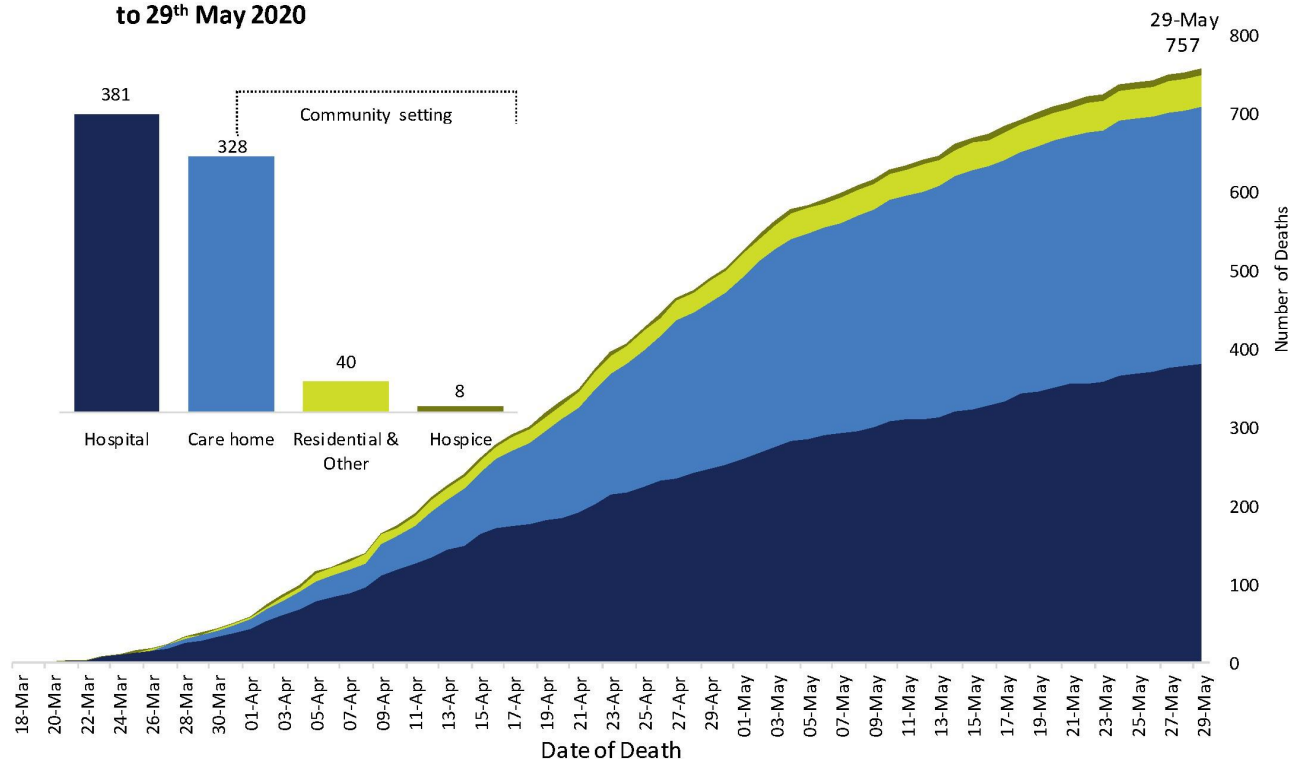


Table 3: Number of COVID-19 related deaths occurring each week, by Place of Death to 29th May 2020

Week ending	Hospital		Care home ¹		Hospice		Residential & 'Other'		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
20/03/2020	1	100.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100%
27/03/2020	17	73.9%	4	17.4%	1	4.3%	1	4.3%	23	100%
03/04/2020	43	70.5%	14	23.0%	1	1.6%	3	4.9%	61	100%
10/04/2020	57	64.0%	25	28.1%	-	-	7	7.9%	89	100%
17/04/2020	57	48.7%	53	45.3%	1	0.9%	6	5.1%	117	100%
24/04/2020	43	37.4%	66	57.4%	-	-	6	5.2%	115	100%
01/05/2020	41	34.5%	72	60.5%	1	0.8%	5	4.2%	119	100%
08/05/2020	37	45.1%	39	47.6%	1	1.2%	5	6.1%	82	100%
15/05/2020	28	45.2%	32	51.6%	1	1.6%	1	1.6%	62	100%
22/05/2020	32	61.5%	14	26.9%	2	3.8%	4	7.7%	52	100%
29/05/2020	25	69.4%	9	25.0%	-	-	2	5.6%	36	100%
Total	381	50.3%	328	43.3%	8	1.1%	40	5.3%	757	100%

¹Includes deaths in care homes only. Care home residents who have died in a different location will be counted elsewhere in this table.

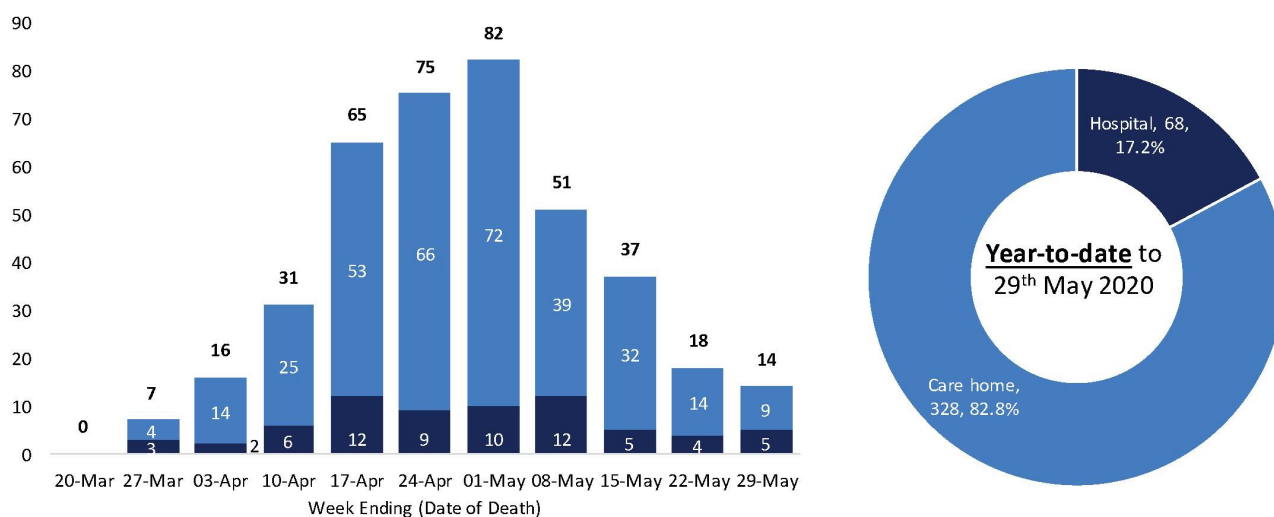
COVID-19 deaths of care home residents by place of death

This section refers to deaths of care home residents, where either (a) the death occurred in a care home, or (b) the death occurred elsewhere but the place of usual residence of the deceased was recorded as a care home. It should be noted that the statistics will not capture those cases where a care home resident died in hospital or another location and the usual address recorded on their death certificate is not a care home. However, no assumptions can be made about where or when the deceased contracted COVID-19 (and all figures include probable or suspect cases).

Based on the definition above, there have been 396 deaths of care home residents involving COVID-19 in the year to date to 29th May 2020, which is 52.3% of all COVID-19 related deaths. Of the 396 deaths, 82.8% (328) occurred in a care home, with the remaining 68 occurring in hospital (Figure 8).

Of the total deaths involving COVID-19 which occurred in hospital (381) (Table 3), 17.8% (68) were accounted for by care home residents. (Further information in Table 9 of [accompanying spreadsheet](#))

Figure 8: Care home residents: COVID-19 deaths occurring by place of death, weekly and year-to-date 2020



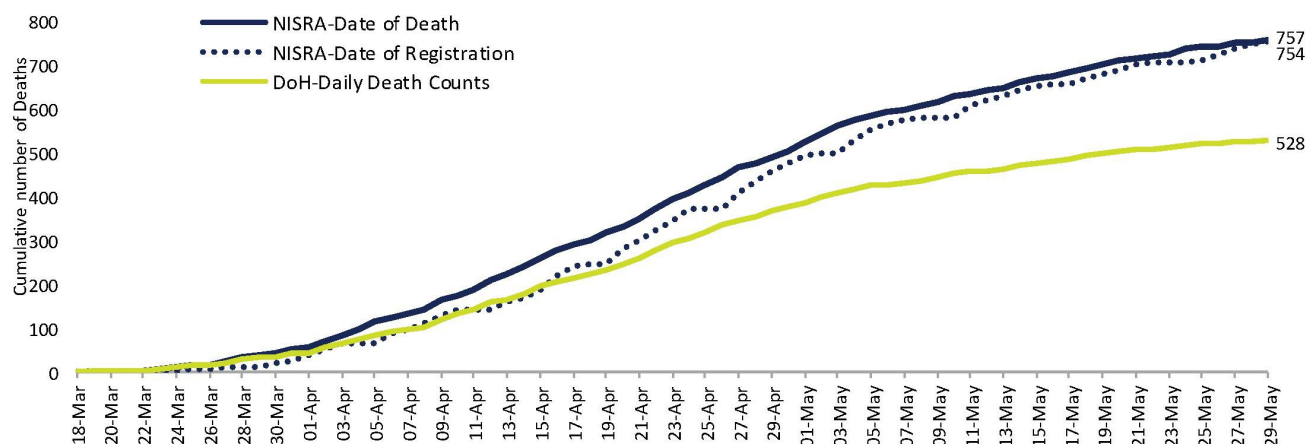
Differences between NISRA's death registration statistics and the Department of Health's daily statistics

- The **daily Northern Ireland Government updates** provided by the Department of Health (DoH) (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news>) count the number of deaths reported by health trusts, where the deceased had a positive test for COVID-19 and died within 28 days, whether or not COVID-19 was the cause of death. DoH figures will not capture all deaths that do not meet this definition. These data are important because they are available earlier, and therefore give a quicker indication of what is happening day by day and are broadly comparable with the figures released daily in other parts of the United Kingdom (UK). The DoH **reported 528 deaths associated with COVID-19 by 29th May 2020**. This figure includes revisions up to 3rd June to account for delayed notifications. Responsibility for reporting the daily updates moved from the Public Health Agency (PHA) to the DoH on 19th April.
- NISRA weekly provisional death statistics, which are based on death registration information collected by the General Register Office, count all deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate by the doctor who certified the death, whether or not COVID-19 was the primary underlying cause of death. The figures include cases where the doctor noted that there was suspected or probable coronavirus infection involved in the death. As a result the weekly totals will usually be higher than the relevant daily figures - because the DOH daily updates only include those who have tested positive for the virus. The NISRA figures also include all deaths that occur outside hospital. They are comparable with weekly statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics and National Records Scotland. **NISRA figures published today show the total number of COVID-19 related deaths registered by 29th May 2020 was 754**. Deaths statistics based on date of registration will be subject to only minimal change.
- However, by analysing the registration based data using the **date the death occurred** (rather than date of registration with the General Register Office), the statistics show that **757 deaths associated with COVID-19 had occurred by 29th May**. This figure is based on deaths registered up to 3rd June 2020 and is the most appropriate figure to use to understand additional deaths beyond those reported via the DoH's daily bulletin. However it is also subject to ongoing change as not all deaths which occurred by 29th May will have been registered at the time of publishing these statistics.

Figure 9 below graphically demonstrates the cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland using different data sources up to 29th May 2020.

The latest NISRA figures show that, by 29th May 2020, 757 deaths had occurred involving COVID-19, based on registrations up to 3rd June 2020. DoH figures available for the same period show a total of 528 deaths.

Figure 9: Cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland using different data sources up to 29th May 2020¹



¹Responsibility for reporting daily figures moved from the PHA to the Department of Health on 19th April. These figures are based on deaths that occurred up to 29th May and include revisions up to 3rd June, to account for delayed notifications.

Links to relevant publications

Deaths registered weekly in England & Wales

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths>

Weekly Data on Deaths Registered in Scotland

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/weekly-and-monthly-data-on-births-and-deaths-registered-in-scotland>

Vital statistics (Central Statistics Office, Ireland)

<https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/birthsdeathsandmarriages/>

Northern Ireland Department of Health daily COVID-19 figures

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news> and [daily dashboard](#)

Number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and risk in the UK

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

COVID-19 Health Surveillance Monitor (Ireland)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/0039bc-view-the-covid-19-coronavirus-dashboard-showing-the-latest-stats-and/>

List of Tables

Data accompanying this bulletin are available from the [NISRA website](#) in Excel format. The spread sheet includes the following tables.

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Contact Details

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