

The results of this review need to be widely discussed and considered by all those involved in and concerned with the national and local response to COVID-19. However, it is already clear that relevant guidance, certain aspects of recording and reporting of data, and key policies should be adapted to recognise and wherever possible mitigate or reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the population groups that are shown in this review to be more affected by the infection and its adverse outcomes.

As the numbers of new COVID-19 cases decrease, monitoring the infection among those most at risk will become increasingly important. It seems likely that it will be difficult to control the spread of COVID-19 unless these inequalities can be addressed.

Age and sex

COVID-19 diagnosis rates increased with age for both males and females. When compared to all cause mortality in previous years, deaths from COVID-19 have a slightly older age distribution, particularly for males.

Working age males diagnosed with COVID-19 were twice as likely to die as females. Among people with a positive test, when compared with those under 40, those who were 80 or older were seventy times more likely to die. These are the largest disparities found in this analysis and are consistent with what has been previously reported in the UK.

These disparities exist after taking ethnicity, deprivation and region into account, but they do not account for the effect of comorbidities or occupation, which may explain some of the differences.

Geography

The regional pattern in diagnosis rates and death rates in confirmed cases among males were similar. London had the highest rates followed by the North West, the North East and the West Midlands. The South West had the lowest. For females the North East and the North West had higher diagnosis rates than London, while London had the highest death rate.

Local authorities with the highest diagnosis and death rates are mostly urban. Death rates in London from COVID-19 were more than three times higher than in the region with the lowest rates, the South West. This level of inequality between regions is much greater than the inequalities in all cause mortality rates in previous years.