

Analysis of COVID-19 deaths by disability

Disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to have died with COVID-19 between March 2020 and January 2021.

Analysis of COVID-19 deaths by disability was made possible by linking information on death registrations to data on [long-term health problems and disabilities](#) from Scotland's Census 2011. The study population includes people usually resident in Scotland in March 2011, who were still alive, resident in Scotland, and aged 30 or over in March 2020. Information on deaths registered between 16 March 2020 and 31 January 2021 was linked to census records for the study population. Further information on this approach and the strengths and weaknesses of this analysis is provided at the end of this section.

For this analysis, people are counted as disabled if they reported in Scotland's Census 2011 that their daily activities were limited a little, or limited a lot, by a health problem or disability lasting, or expected to last, at least 12 months. This includes problems that are related to old age. In the analysis, these two categories are referred to as "disabled – limited a little" and "disabled - limited a lot" respectively. People reporting no limitation are referred to as "non-disabled".

Deaths of disabled people accounted for almost 6 in 10 (58%) deaths involving COVID-19 in the study population (4,333 of 7,490 deaths). For comparison, almost 2 in 10 (18%) people in the study population were disabled, as defined above. This suggests that disabled people have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

After adjusting for age, disabled women whose daily activities were limited a lot were 3.2 times as likely to die with COVID-19 compared to non-disabled women. Disabled men whose daily activities were limited a lot were 3.0 times as likely to die with COVID-19 compared to non-disabled men.

For disabled people whose daily activities were limited a little, there was a smaller, but still significant, difference. After adjusting for age, disabled women whose daily activities were limited a little were 1.8 times as likely to die with COVID-19 compared to non-disabled women. Disabled men whose daily activities were limited a little were 1.8 times as likely to die with COVID-19 compared to non-disabled men.

Figure 3 shows age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) by sex and disability category. ASMRs allow populations with different age structures to be compared fairly. Because health problems and disabilities are more common in older populations, it is important to adjust for age in this way.