

# STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE: EXCESS WINTER MORTALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND – 2010/11



9:30am – Tuesday, 29 November 2011

## Less deaths last winter

Despite the cold weather, last winter (December 2010 - March 2011) saw a fall in the number of deaths registered. There were 740 excess winter deaths in 2010/11, a decrease on the corresponding figure of 940 excess winter deaths in 2009/10.

These figures are included in excess winter mortality statistics released today by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Clearly the older population face higher mortality rates, but this NISRA report indicates that excess winter mortality also hits the eldest the hardest. The report also points to respiratory and circulatory diseases as having the greatest proportionate impact. Looking further back the impact of influenza on excess winter mortality is also a major feature – this is seen in statistics from 1999/2000 and 1989/1990 when the last two major influenza outbreaks happened in Northern Ireland.

Dr David Marshall from NISRA said:

*“There were 740 excess winter deaths in 2010/11. Although the winter of 2010/11 was particularly severe, the number of excess winter deaths fell compared to the previous winter. The largest number of excess winter deaths witnessed in recent years (1,830 deaths) coincided with an influenza epidemic in winter 1989/1990.”*

Further more detailed statistics are available in the full release at:

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/EWM/EWM\\_2010\\_11.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/EWM/EWM_2010_11.pdf)

## Summary

- The number of excess winter deaths is defined as the difference between the overall number of deaths which occurred in the winter months of December to March and the average number of deaths occurring in the preceding August to November, and the following April to July;
- in the winter period (December to March) of 2010/11 there were an extra 740 deaths in Northern Ireland, compared to the average for the non-winter periods (previous August to November and the following April to July). The corresponding figure for 2009/10 was 940 excess winter deaths;
- in winter 2010/11, two-thirds of excess winter deaths involved people aged 75 and over. Proportionately, excess winter deaths impacts hardest on people aged 85 and over;
- between 2009/10 and 2010/11 the excess winter mortality index decreased in all Health and Social Care Trusts except Belfast, which experienced a small increase. The South Eastern Trust had the highest excess winter mortality index last winter;
- circulatory diseases accounted for the largest number of excess winter deaths registered in 2010/11; however, respiratory causes had the highest excess winter mortality index (thus having the greatest proportionate impact) of all causes in 2010/11; and
- looking further back the impact of influenza on excess winter mortality is also a feature – this is seen in statistics from 1999/2000 (1,420 excess winter deaths) and 1989/1990 (1,830 excess winter deaths) when the last two major influenza outbreaks happened in Northern Ireland.

## NOTE FOR EDITORS

1. This information can also be accessed on the NISRA website at:  
<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp32.htm>
2. This statistical bulletin provides provisional statistics on a number of areas which have policy relevance. In particular, the number of excess winter deaths has implications for influenza planning and winter fuel payments.
3. In addition to the information in the excess winter deaths report, NISRA also today published the Annual Report of the Registrar General 2010. In this report there is an article entitled "Seasonality of Mortality in Northern Ireland" written by Dr Chris Morris, an independent social researcher.
4. Death figures are compiled from returns to local district registrars. All 2011 mortality statistics are provisional until final figures are published in the Annual Report of the Registrar General 2011. The results are based on analysis of all deaths registered within each time-period and some deaths may have occurred prior to the registration time-period recorded.
5. Corresponding information for England and Wales is published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) and for Scotland by the [National Records of Scotland](#). Similar figures for the Republic of Ireland are available from the Central Statistics Office Ireland.
6. All media inquiries should be directed to the DFP Press Office:  
Telephone: 028 9016 3388
7. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:  
Telephone: 028 9034 8160  
Fax: 028 9034 8161  
Email: [census.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:census.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk)  
Responsible Statistician: Dr David Marshall