

**OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE: Official Statistics embargoed until 9.30am on 18th November 2020.
For named Individuals only.**

STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE – Registrar General Quarter 3 (July – Sept 2020) provisional statistics on deaths by underlying cause & Excess Winter Mortality Provisional Statistics 2019/20



9:30am Wednesday 18th November 2020

Registrar General Quarter 3 (July – Sept 2020) provisional statistics on deaths by underlying cause & Excess Winter Mortality Provisional Statistics 2019/20

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has today published statistics covering 1) the Registrar General Quarter 3 deaths registered, classified by cause, gender and age Group and 2) Excess winter mortality provisional statistics for 2019/20.

The Registrar General statistics, which cover 1st July to 30th September, show there were a total of 3,815 deaths registered over the period. Covid-19 was the underlying cause of 53 of these deaths. This equates to 1.4 percent of the total deaths in the quarter and brings the total number of deaths in the calendar year 2020, where Covid-19 was the underlying cause of death, to 808.

In comparison, NISRA's weekly death statistics, which count the number of deaths where Covid-19 was *mentioned* on the death certificate, reported that in the calendar year to 30th September 2020, 902 deaths involved Covid-19. This means that Covid-19 was the underlying, primary cause of death in 89.6 percent of all deaths which mentioned Covid-19 on the death certificate.

The provisional number of deaths in the quarter which were due to cancer totalled 1,188, and accounted for 31.1 percent of the total deaths in the period, compared to an average of 28.3 percent over the previous 5 years. The provisional total number of deaths due to cancer in 2020 year to date is 3,490, 3.2 per cent higher than for the same period last year.

The provisional number of deaths from ischaemic heart disease and respiratory conditions (excluding Covid-19) in Quarter 3 2020 totalled 397 (10.4 percent of all deaths) and 315 (8.3 per cent) respectively. On average over the last five years 10.5% of annual deaths have been due to ischaemic heart disease and 13.4% due to respiratory conditions.

The number of deaths due to suicide (including deaths as a result of intentional self-harm and events of undetermined intent) totalled 60 (1.6 per cent of all deaths in the quarter) bringing the

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total for the calendar year 2020 to 162. This compares with 155 deaths due to suicide for the same period of 2019.

Excess Winter Mortality: Provisional Statistics 2019/20

The separate report on Excess Winter Mortality includes information on the provisional number of deaths that took place in Northern Ireland in the winter months of December 2019 to March 2020, compared with the non-winter months (including the preceding August to November 2019 and the following April to July 2020).

There were 5,802 deaths in Northern Ireland in the four months of winter 2019/20 (December to March). Comparing this with the average for the two adjacent 4-month periods, the seasonal increase in mortality in winter 2019/20 was an estimated 600. This was 40 more than the corresponding value of 560 for the previous winter (2018/19) but was one of the lowest levels of EWM in the last ten winters.

The full impact of Covid-19 on mortality in Northern Ireland is still unfolding, but we can approximate what the excess winter mortality would have been if the pandemic had not happened, by removing all deaths where Covid-19 was the underlying cause of death from the analysis and re-calculating EWM. This results in the estimate of excess winter mortality for 2019/20 increasing to 910, which is more in line with estimates for previous years. (This is because the effect of Covid-19 in 2020 was to inflate the number of deaths usually seen in the non-winter period, particularly April to July, which in turn has led to a winter seasonal increase (600) that was lower than usual.)

Excess winter mortality (EWM) continued to be higher in females compared with males, with females counting for 53.3 per cent (320) and males counting for 46.7 per cent (280) of the excess winter mortality in 2019/20.

Respiratory diseases (not including Covid-19) continued to be the leading cause of excess winter deaths, accounting for 51.7 per cent of the excess winter mortality in 2019/20.

In Northern Ireland, deaths in the winter months were 11.4 per cent higher than in the adjacent non-winter months – this proportion is the EWM Index (EWMI). The Health & Social Care Trust with the highest EWMI was the Western Trust, with 18.6 per cent more deaths occurring in the winter months. In comparison, in the South Eastern Trust, 6.3 per cent more deaths occurred in the winter months, than in the non-winter months.

The highest regional EWMI in 2019/20 was in the Mid-Ulster Local Government District, where 25.9 per cent more deaths occurred in the winter months than in the non-winter months. Antrim

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& Newtownabbey had the lowest EWMI, with 3.8 per cent more deaths occurring in the winter months.

NISRA

November 2020

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The 'Registrar General Quarterly Report' is a routine output which usually includes a range of provisional statistics including numbers of deaths registered in the period by underlying cause of death, as well as the number of births, marriages and civil partnerships. The Quarter 3 report is being published with a reduced level of detail (deaths by underlying cause only) at this time in order to meet growing user demand for more up to date statistics particularly in relation to Covid-19 as an underlying cause of death. Quarter 2 statistics on births, marriages and civil partnerships registered in Northern Ireland can be found at:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/registrar-general-quarterly-tables-2020>
2. Differences between NISRA's weekly provisional COVID-19 death statistics and the quarterly totals reported here are as follows:
 - 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.
 - Statistics quoted in the Quarterly Report are presented based on the **underlying cause** of death, which have been classified using the tenth revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ICD10). The code used for 'COVID-19' is U07. As a result the weekly totals will usually be higher than the quarterly figures quoted - because the weekly mentions include cases which go on to be coded as not having COVID-19 as the underlying cause of death.
3. Death Statistics in Northern Ireland are based on deaths which have been registered with the General Register Office (GRO). There are some situations where the registration of the death can be delayed, specifically where the death has been accidental, unexpected or suspicious, and must be referred to the Coroner. A death which is suspected to be suicide must therefore be referred to the Coroner and can only be registered after the Coroner has completed his/her

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investigation. The time taken to carry out this investigation can result in a delay in registration. Given the delay in registration of suicide deaths, these deaths may not appear in published statistics until subsequent years.

4. Excess Winter Mortality is a statistical measure of the increase in mortality during winter months (December to March) compared with non-winter months (preceding August to November and following April to July). The Excess Winter Mortality index is calculated as the number of excess winter deaths divided by the average non-winter expressed as a percentage.
5. Further details on Excess Winter Mortality in Northern Ireland statistics, including detailed methodology can be found at:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/cause-death/excess-winter-mortality>
6. Data in this report should not be confused with ‘excess deaths’, which is distinctly different from Excess Winter Mortality, and reported separately. NISRA published Excess Mortality and Covid-19 Related Deaths in Northern Ireland March to June 2020 on 28th July 2020. Estimates in that report are based on estimates of **Excess Mortality**, the difference between actual deaths in 2020 and the expected number of deaths in **this period** based on the average number of deaths observed in the **same period over the previous five years**. This measure is distinctly different from Excess Winter Mortality, which is a measure of seasonality within a 12-month period.
7. 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.
8. All media queries to Department of Finance Press Office at dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk or on Tel: 028 90816724. The Executive Information Service operates an out of hours service for media enquiries between 1800hrs and 0800hrs Monday to Friday and at weekends and public holidays. The duty press officer can be contacted on 028 9037 8110.
9. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:
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E-mail: demography@nisra.gov.uk
Responsible Statistician: Deborah Lyness