

# Weekly Deaths in Northern Ireland

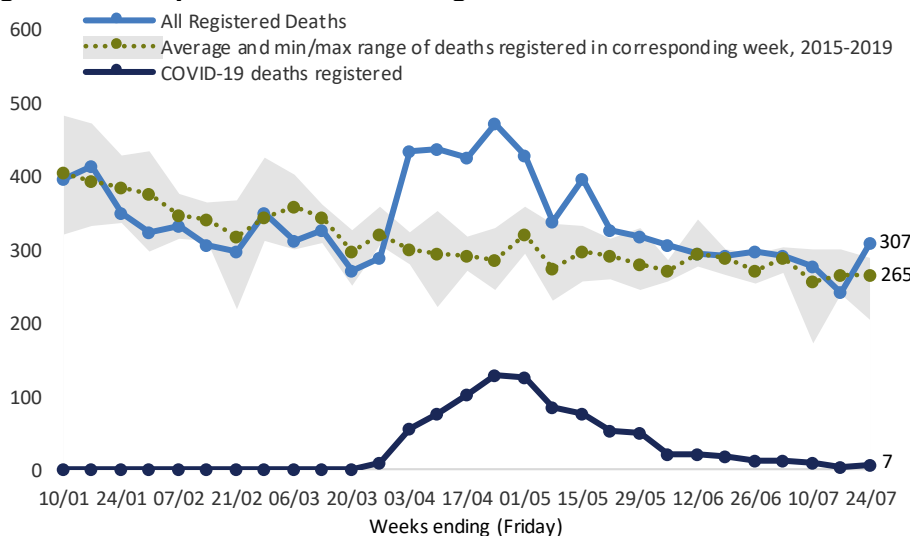
## Death Registration Statistics including COVID-19 by Date of Death

Week ending 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (Week 29)

### Section 1: Deaths by Date of Registration

In week 29, there were more deaths registered in Northern Ireland than there have typically been in the same week in recent years.

Figure 1: Weekly number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland



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### Key Points – Date of Registration

- The provisional number of total deaths registered in Northern Ireland in the week ending 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (week 29) was 307; 67 more than in week 28 and 42 more than the 5-year average of 265 (Table 1).
- Around one fifth (19.5%) of all deaths in week 29 were classified as ‘respiratory’ (60). Please note that all COVID-19 related deaths have been included in this classification.
- There have been 9,807 deaths registered in the year-to-date, 30.1% of which (2,951) were classified as ‘respiratory’. The number and proportion of respiratory deaths is higher in the year-to-date than the 5-year average (2,653; 29.4%) (Table 2).
- Seven deaths mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate were registered in week 29, accounting for 2.3% of all deaths in that week and bringing the total number of COVID-19 related deaths registered in calendar year 2020 to 853.
- In the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July, males and females accounted for similar proportions of all deaths registered (males: 48.7%, females: 51.3%) and COVID-19 related deaths registered (males: 49.8%; female: 50.2%) (Figure 2).
- In the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July, the 75 years and over age-group accounted for two-thirds (65.4%) of all deaths and four-fifths (80.1%) of COVID-19 related deaths (Figure 4).
- For COVID-19 related deaths, those with an address in Belfast LGD accounted for 245 (28.7%) of the 853 deaths registered in the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July (Figure 6).

## 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 4 2019](#) with Quarter 1 2020 scheduled for publication on the 6<sup>th</sup> August and Quarter 2 2020 scheduled for publication on the 17<sup>th</sup> September.

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.

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, from 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 has treated the deceased within the last 28 days but 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%200.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 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (week 29) was 307; 67 more (27.9%) than in week 28, and 42 more (15.8%) than the 5-year average of 265.

**Table 1: All Deaths registered<sup>1</sup> weekly in Northern Ireland, 2020<sup>P</sup>**

Registration week	Week ending (Friday)	2020 <sup>P</sup>	Previous 5 Years: 2015 - 2019 <sup>P</sup>		'Excess Deaths' No. of deaths above 5-year average <sup>2</sup>	
		Total number of deaths registered in week	Average number of deaths registered in corresponding week <sup>2</sup>	Range		
				Minimum		Maximum
13	03/04/2020	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
22	05/06/2020	304	271	256	284	33
23	12/06/2020	292	293	275	340	-1
24	19/06/2020	290	286	265	300	4
25	26/06/2020	295	270	252	292	25
26	03/07/2020	289	288	266	303	1
27	10/07/2020	275	255	172	300	20
28	17/07/2020	240	264	237	298	-24
29	24/07/2020	307	265	203	288	42
<b>Year-to-date (week 1-29) Total</b>		<b>9,807</b>	<b>9,026</b>			<b>781</b>

**1,040**  
*'excess deaths'*  
over these  
17 weeks

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 The 5-year average is not a whole number so comparisons with 2020 week-on-week can vary by up to one death due to rounding.

Over the last seventeen weeks, 1,040 '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 781. In terms of the year-to-date figures (weeks 1 to 29), the total number of deaths registered (9,807) is 8.6% higher than the 5-year average (9,026).

**Figure 2: Weekly number of deaths registered above or below 5-year average (2015-2019), to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

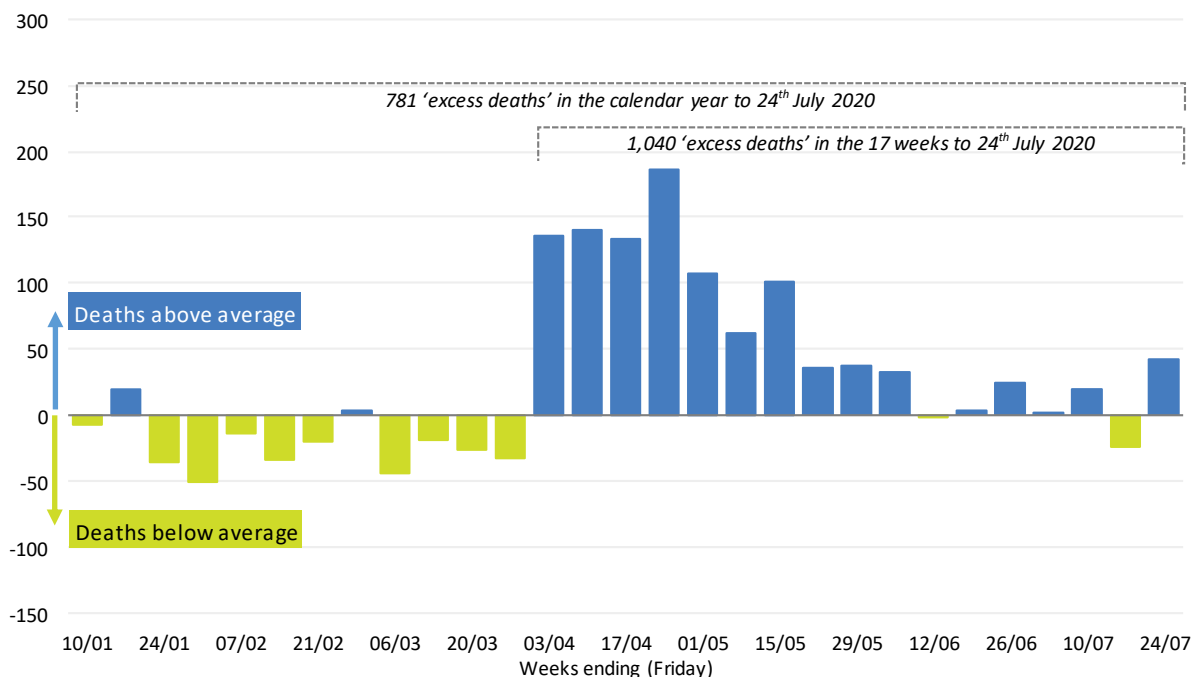


Table 2 shows that the number of death registrations mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate increased from one in week 11 to 128 in week 16, then fell for six consecutive weeks to 20 (week 22). In the latest week (week 29) seven COVID-19 related deaths were registered, up from two in the previous week (853 in total).

In week 29, 19.5% of all deaths registered mentioned terms relating directly to respiratory causes on the death certificate. (COVID-19 deaths are also included in the respiratory category). The number and proportion of respiratory deaths is below the 5-year average for the same week.

There have been 2,951 respiratory deaths registered in the year-to-date. This total number and proportion (30.1%) of respiratory deaths is higher in the year-to-date than the 5-year average (2,653 29.4%).

**Table 2: COVID-19 and respiratory deaths registered<sup>1</sup> weekly in Northern Ireland, 2020<sup>P</sup>**

Registration week	Week ending (Friday)	2020 <sup>P</sup>				Previous 5 Years: 2015 - 2019 <sup>P</sup>	
		Total number of deaths registered in week	COVID-19 <sup>2</sup> deaths registered in week	Respiratory <sup>3</sup> deaths registered in week (2020 <sup>P</sup> )		Average number of respiratory deaths registered in corresponding week <sup>4</sup>	
				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%
22	05/06/2020	304	20	64	21.1%	71	26.2%
23	12/06/2020	292	21	69	23.6%	78	26.6%
24	19/06/2020	290	17	68	23.4%	71	24.8%
25	26/06/2020	295	12	79	26.8%	75	27.9%
26	03/07/2020	289	11	63	21.8%	71	24.6%
27	10/07/2020	275	9	61	22.2%	62	24.5%
28	17/07/2020	240	2	51	21.3%	70	26.7%
29	24/07/2020	307	7	60	19.5%	61	23.0%
<b>Year-to-date (week 1-29) Total</b>		<b>9,807</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>2,951</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>2,653</b>	<b>29.4%</b>

Note: Statistics for the full year are available in the [accompanying spread sheet](#) <sup>P</sup> Weekly published data are provisional.

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

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

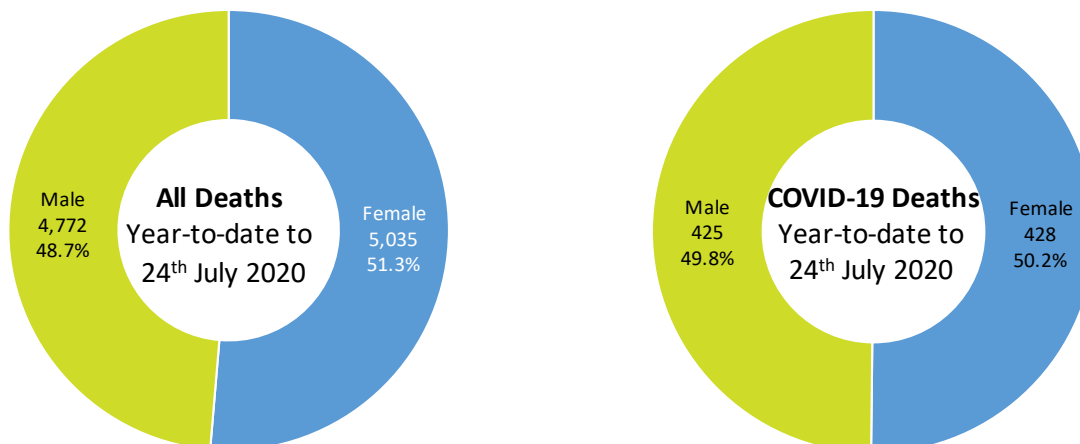
<sup>3</sup> Respiratory deaths include any death where terms directly relating to respiratory causes were mentioned anywhere on the death certificate (this includes COVID-19 deaths). This is not directly comparable to the ONS figures relating to 'deaths where the underlying cause was respiratory disease'.

<sup>4</sup> Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Deaths registered by sex

In the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020, males and females accounted for a similar proportion of all deaths registered (males: 48.7%, females: 51.3%) and COVID-19 related deaths registered (males: 49.8%; female 50.2%). A weekly breakdown by sex is provided in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#).

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

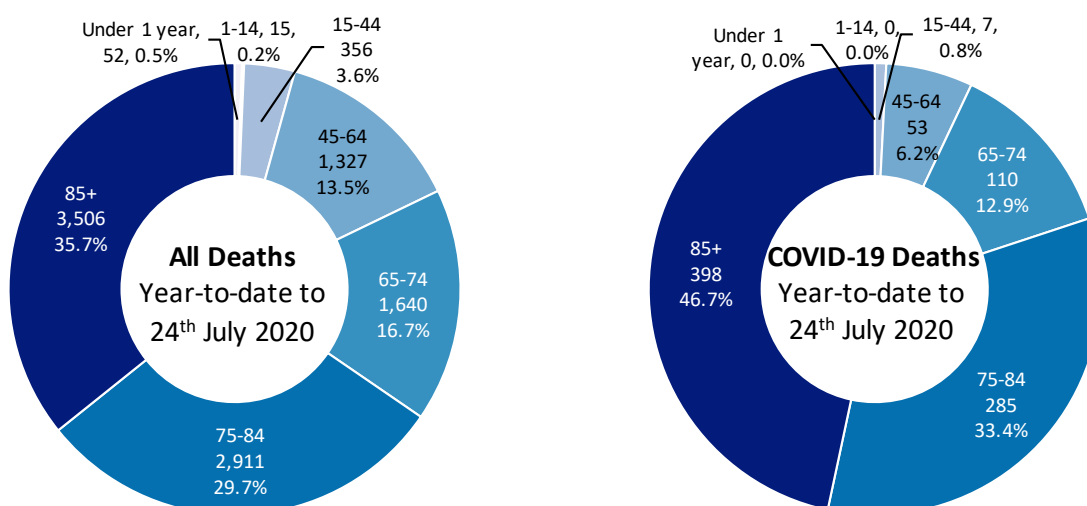


## Deaths registered by age-group

In the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July, the 75 years and over age-group accounted for two-thirds (65.4%) of all deaths and four-fifths (80.1%) of COVID-19 related deaths.

The seven COVID-19 related deaths registered among those aged 75+ in week 29 (see [accompanying spreadsheet](#)) equated to 3.9% of all deaths registered for this age-group during the week (notably down from a peak of 34.8% in week 17).

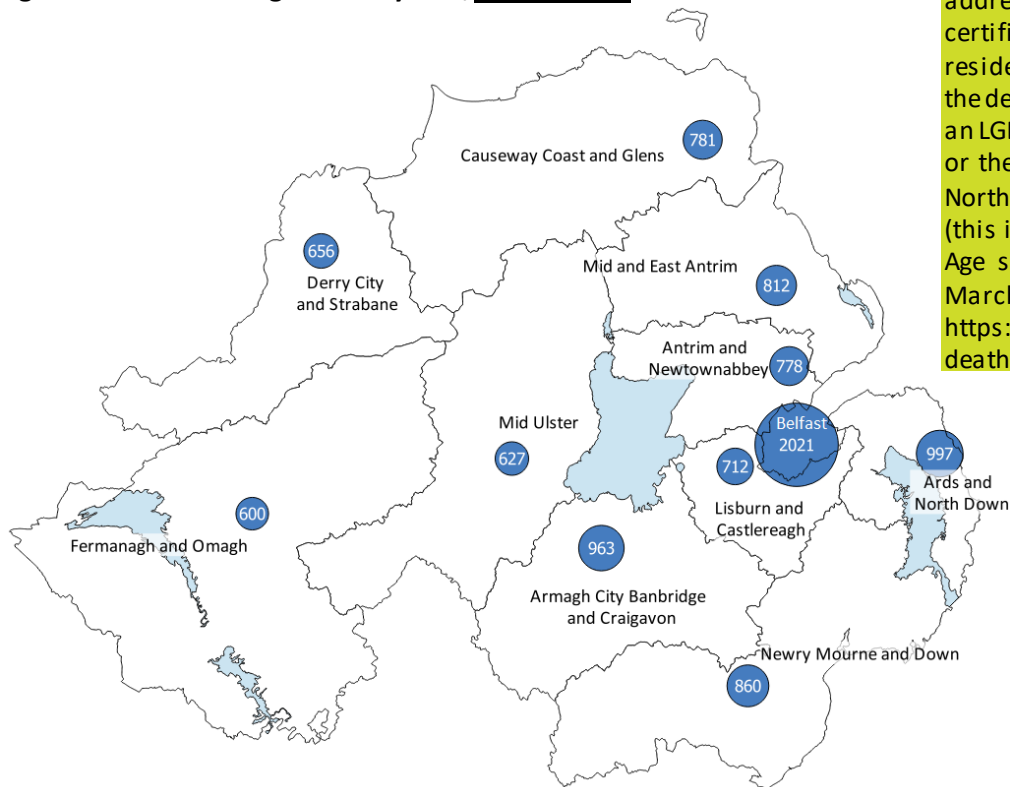
**Figure 4: All deaths and COVID-19 deaths registered by age-group, year-to-date 2020**



## Deaths registered by Local Government District\*

Those with an address\* in Belfast Local Government District (LGD) accounted for around one in five of all 9,807 deaths registered in the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (2,021; 20.6%).

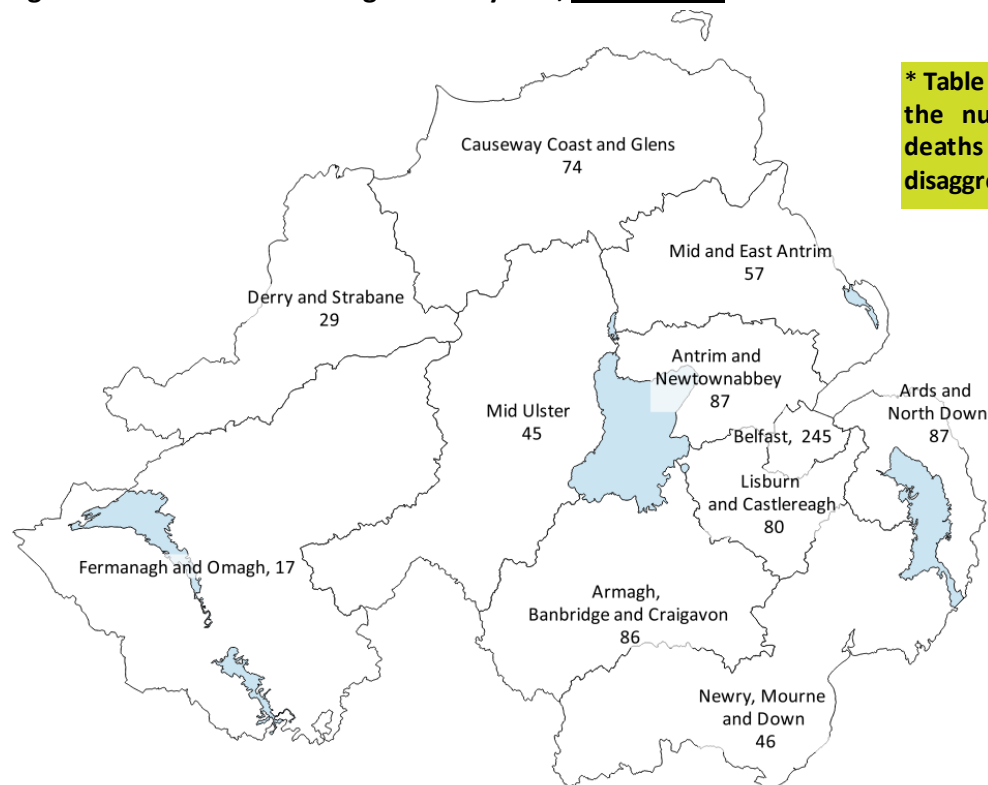
**Figure 5: All deaths registered by LGD, year-to-date 2020**



\* The LGD data provided are 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 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). Age standardised mortality rates for the period March - May 2020 are available at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/monthly-deaths>.

For COVID-19 related deaths, those with an address\* in Belfast LGD accounted for 245 (28.7%) of the 853 deaths registered in the calendar year to 24<sup>th</sup> July. Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the fewest COVID-19 related deaths registered up to 24<sup>th</sup> July (17).

**Figure 6: COVID-19 deaths registered by LGD, year-to-date 2020**



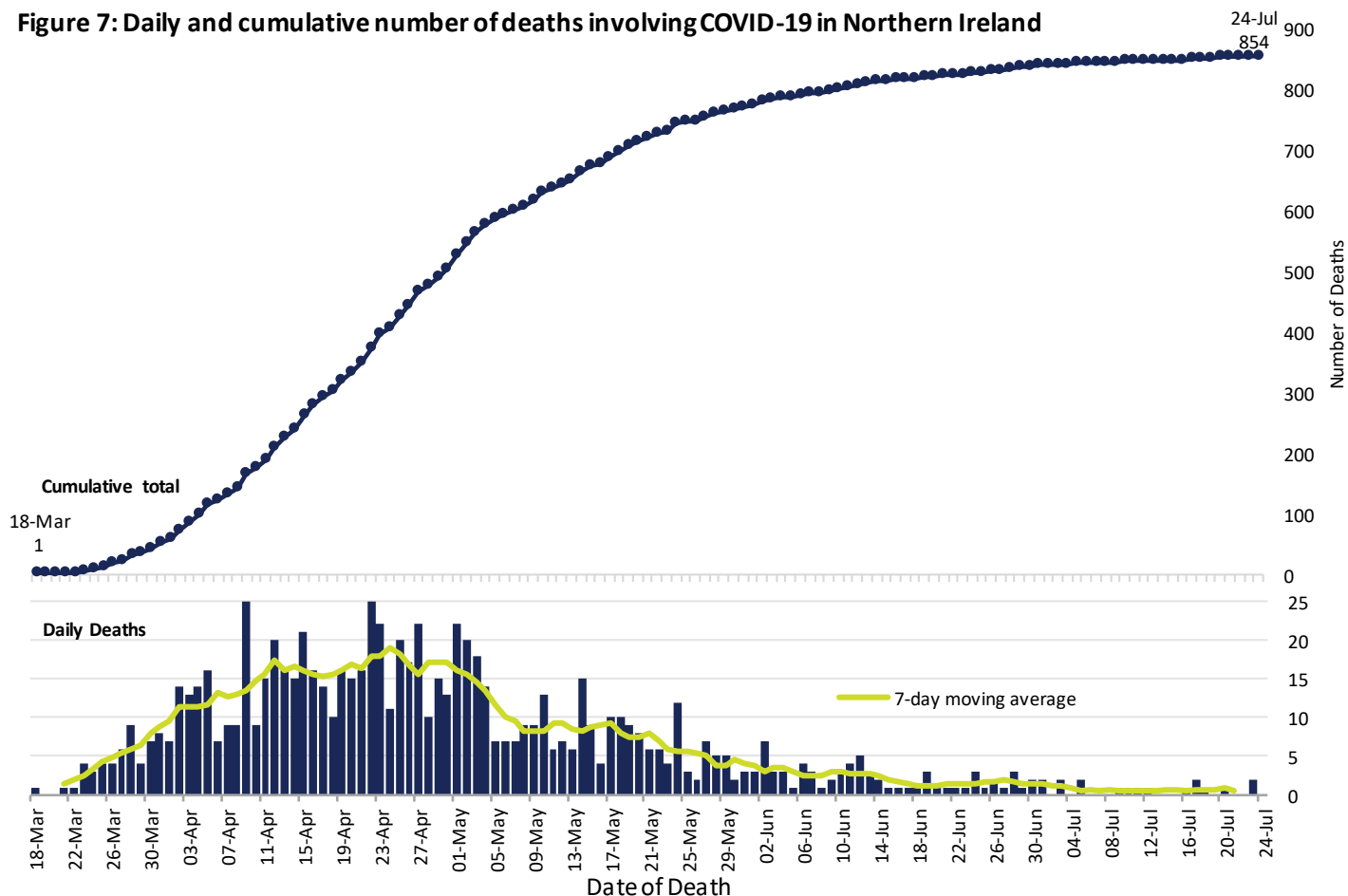
\* Table 7 in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) shows the numbers of weekly registered COVID-19 deaths which took place in care homes, disaggregated by Local Government District.

## Section 2: COVID-19 Deaths by Date of Death

This section of the bulletin provides provisional, updated totals of COVID-19 deaths occurring (based on the date of death) up to 24<sup>th</sup> July, taking account of the latest available death registrations up to and including 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Overall, 854 COVID-19 related deaths had occurred in Northern Ireland by 24<sup>th</sup> July, four of which occurred in the week ending 24<sup>th</sup> July. Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April and Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 7: Daily and cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland



### Key Points –COVID-19 deaths based on date of death<sup>1</sup>

- 854 deaths mentioning COVID-19 on the death certificate have occurred in total, to 24<sup>th</sup> July (including those registered up to and including 29<sup>th</sup> July).
- The comparative number of deaths reported by the Department of Health (DoH) to 24<sup>th</sup> July<sup>2</sup> was 556 (see page 9 for definitions).
- Of the 854 total deaths involving COVID-19 occurring up to 24<sup>th</sup> July, 448 (52.5%) occurred in hospital<sup>3</sup>, 349 (40.9%) occurred in care homes, eight (0.9%) occurred in hospices and 49 (5.7%) occurred at residential addresses or another location (Figure 8).
- The 357 deaths in care homes and hospices involved 81 separate establishments.
- In the week ending 24<sup>th</sup> July, two of the four COVID-19 related deaths were in a care home.

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

<sup>2</sup>Responsibility for reporting daily death figures moved from the Public Health Agency to the Department of Health on 19<sup>th</sup> April. Figures based on deaths that occurred up to 24<sup>th</sup> July but including revisions to 29<sup>th</sup> July, to account for delayed notifications.

<sup>3</sup>To 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 854 total deaths involving COVID-19 occurring up to 24<sup>th</sup> July, 448 (52.5%) occurred in hospital, 349 (40.9%) occurred in care homes, eight (0.9%) occurred in hospices and 49 (5.7%) occurred at residential addresses or another location.

Figure 8: Cumulative number of COVID-19 related deaths occurring by Place of Death in Northern Ireland, to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020

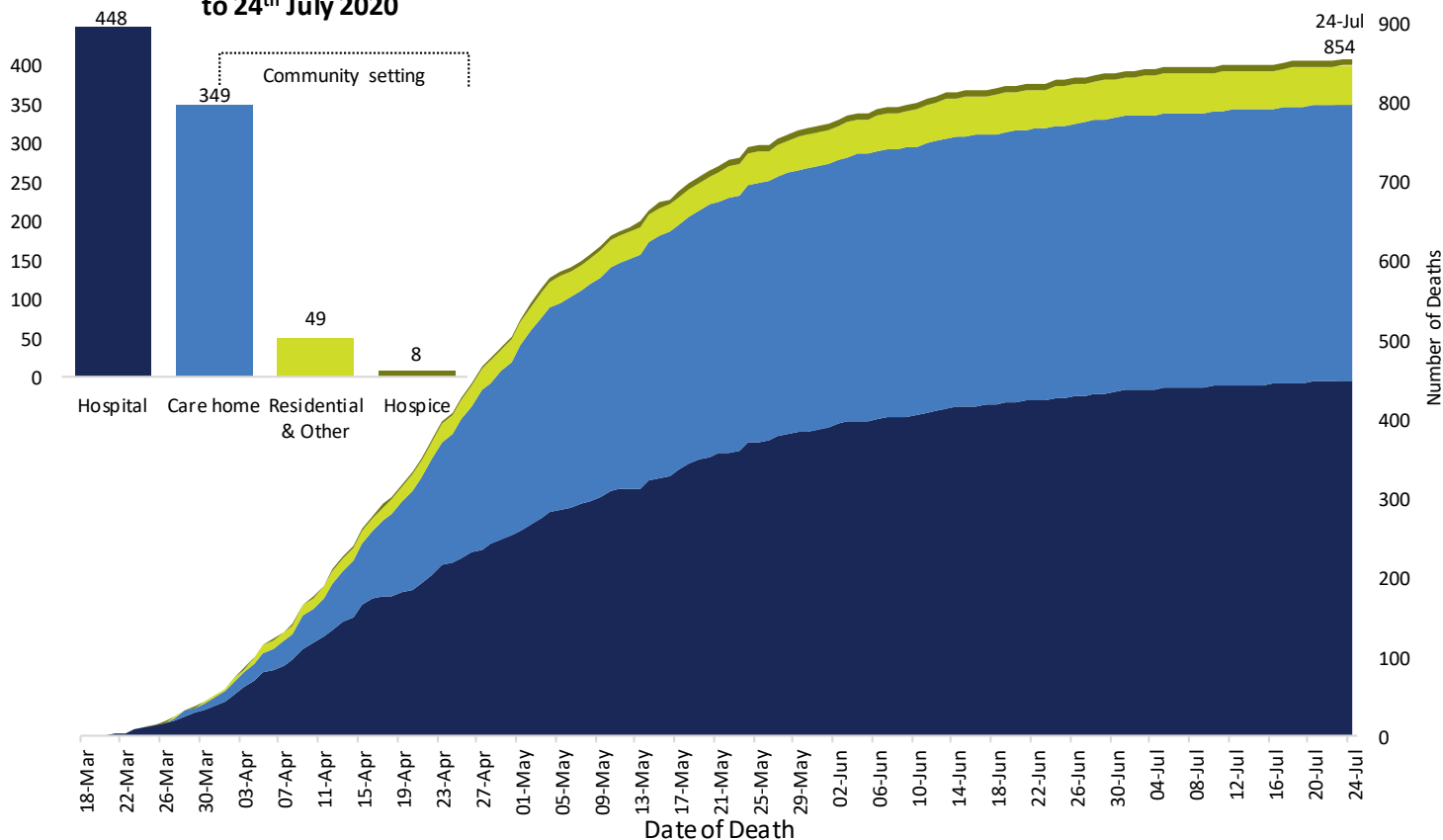


Table 3: Number of COVID-19 related deaths occurring each week, by Place of Death to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Week ending	Hospital		Care home <sup>1</sup>		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	69.4%	14	22.6%	1	1.6%	4	6.5%	62	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	30	46.2%	33	50.8%	1	1.5%	1	1.5%	65	100%
22/05/2020	32	60.4%	15	28.3%	2	3.8%	4	7.5%	53	100%
29/05/2020	25	65.8%	11	28.9%	-	-	2	5.3%	38	100%
05/06/2020	15	68.2%	5	22.7%	-	-	2	9.1%	22	100%
12/06/2020	12	54.5%	5	22.7%	-	-	5	22.7%	22	100%
19/06/2020	11	91.7%	-	-	-	-	1	8.3%	12	100%
26/06/2020	8	80.0%	2	20.0%	-	-	-	-	10	100%
03/07/2020	9	81.8%	2	18.2%	-	-	-	-	11	100%
10/07/2020	3	75%	1	25%	-	-	-	-	4	100%
17/07/2020	5	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	100%
24/07/2020	2	50%	2	50%	-	-	-	-	4	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>40.9%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>100%</b>

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



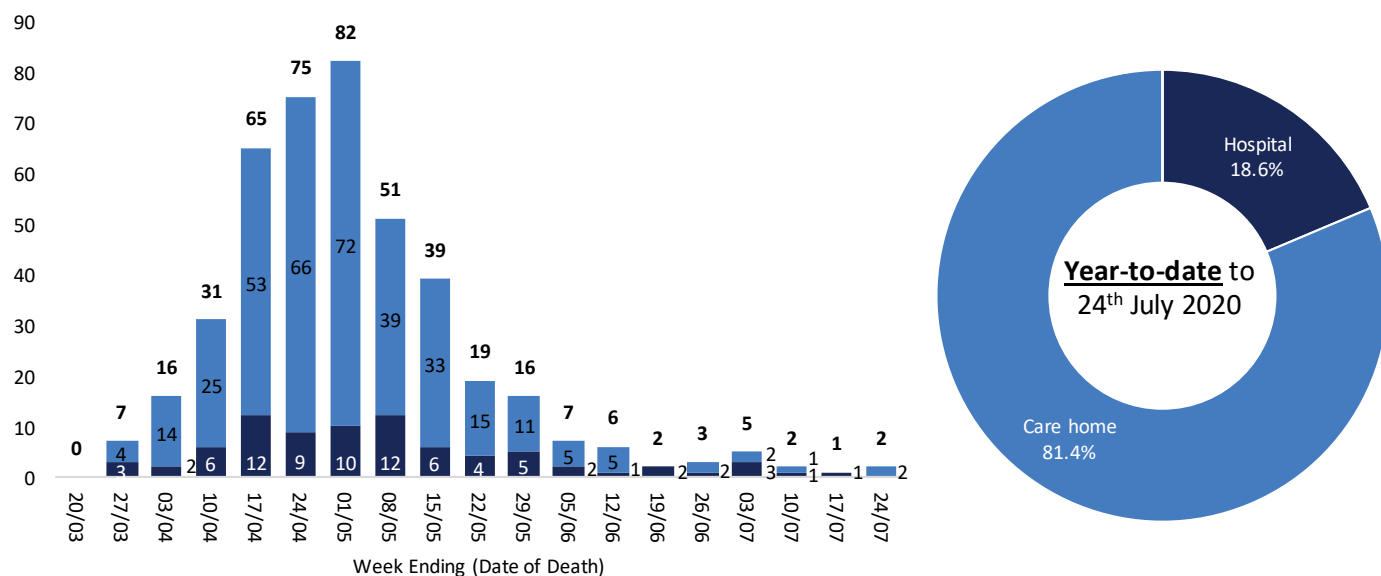
## COVID-19 deaths of care home residents by place of death

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. In relation to part (b) of this definition, 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 429 deaths of care home residents involving COVID-19 in the year to date to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020, which is 50.2% of all COVID-19 related deaths. Of the 429 deaths, 81.4% (349) occurred in a care home, with the remaining 80 occurring in hospital (Figure 9).

Of the total deaths involving COVID-19 which occurred in hospital (448) (Table 3), 17.9% (80) were accounted for by care home residents. (Further information in Table 9 of [accompanying spreadsheet](#))

**Figure 9: Care home residents: COVID-19 deaths occurring by place of death, weekly and year-to-date 2020**



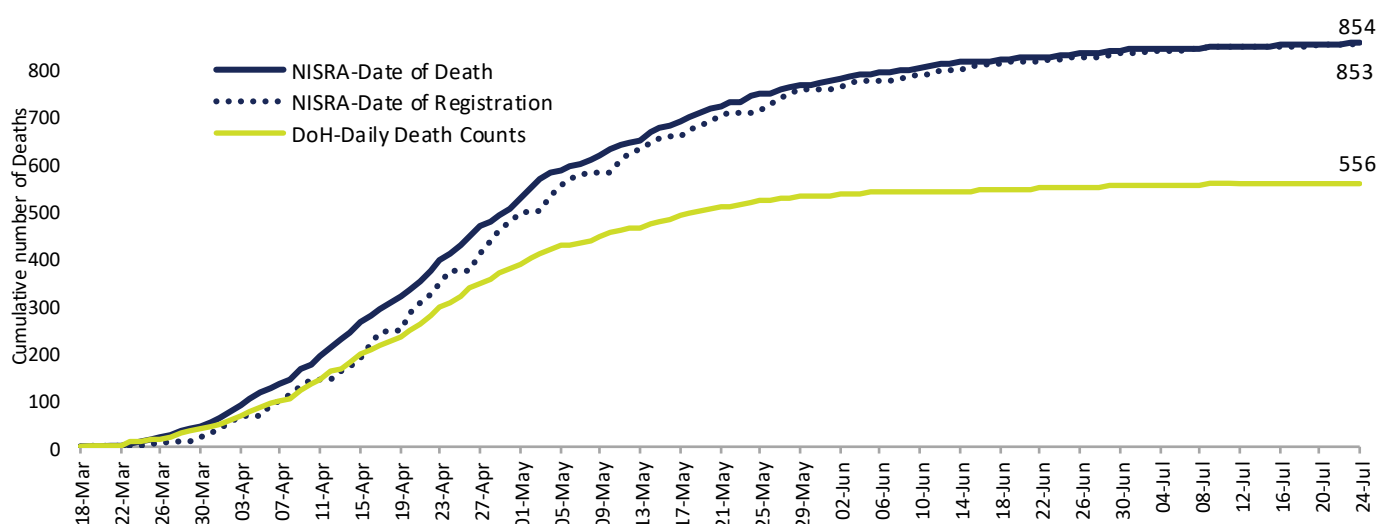
## Differences between NISRA's death registration statistics and the Department of Health's daily statistics

- 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 556 deaths associated with COVID-19 by 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020**. This figure includes revisions up to 29<sup>th</sup> July to account for delayed notifications. Responsibility for reporting the daily updates moved from the Public Health Agency (PHA) to the DoH on 19<sup>th</sup> 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 include all deaths that occur outside hospital and 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 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 was 853**. Deaths statistics based on date of registration will be subject to only minimal change.
- 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 **854 deaths associated with COVID-19 had occurred by 24<sup>th</sup> July**. This figure is based on deaths registered up to 29<sup>th</sup> July 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 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 will have been registered at the time of publishing these statistics.

Figure 10 below graphically demonstrates the cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland using different data sources up to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

The latest NISRA figures show that, by 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 854 deaths had occurred involving COVID-19, based on registrations up to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020. DoH figures available for the same period show a total of 556 deaths.

Figure 10: Cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Northern Ireland using different data sources up to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for reporting daily figures moved from the PHA to the Department of Health on 19<sup>th</sup> April. These figures are based on deaths that occurred up to 24<sup>th</sup> July and include revisions up to 29<sup>th</sup> July, 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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Table 3: Deaths registered in Northern Ireland, by Local Government District (LGD), 2020

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- are well explained and readily accessible
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