

# UK COVID-19 related deaths top 60,000, according to Financial Times

Robert Stevens  
13 May 2020

The true COVID-19 death toll in Britain is more than 60,000—almost double the figure claimed by the Johnson government—according to studies based on new data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

Yesterday, the government reported another 627 deaths in its daily briefing, taking official fatalities to 32,490. Its figures are compiled by the Department of Health and Social Care and only include deaths where a person has tested positive for COVID-19. Another 3,403 new coronavirus infections were reported, taking total infections to 226,463.

The Tories' grossly manipulated official figures are still the highest in Europe and second only to the United States globally. But the ONS reported yesterday that in the week ending May 1, there had been 17,953 deaths recorded in England and Wales—8,012 higher than the average of the past five years for the same week. In the six weeks since the pandemic, 108,345 deaths were registered by the ONS for the two countries, 46,494 more than the five-year average. Of these 35,044 were registered as coronavirus deaths—several thousand higher than the government's own figures.

The *Financial Times*, which has tracked “excess deaths” to draw up its own “conservative estimate,” reported that yesterday's ONS data “represented the seventh consecutive week that deaths exceeded normal levels and once equivalent figures from Scotland and Northern Ireland were included, takes total mortality across the UK during the pandemic to 50,979.”

It concluded, “The FT model now estimates that slightly more than 60,000 more people will have died than normal from the start of the outbreak to May 11, based on the excess deaths to date and the latest daily figures from hospital deaths.”

The ONS figures substantiate evidence of the horrific

number of deaths in care homes. In the week ending May 1, 6,409 deaths were registered from people in care homes. This is more than three times the normal rate of 2,019 death registrations in England and Wales' care homes over the previous five years.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the ONS has recorded 19,900 more deaths in care homes than normal for the time of year in England and Wales. The FT reports, “Evidence is growing that the virus became seeded among the most vulnerable and frail and elderly people in social care after hospitals discharged sick people into the care system without being tested for COVID-19 to build capacity in hospitals that was not then needed.”

Another national newspaper, *The Times*, concluded that “the coronavirus death toll may already be 61,000 ... up to 50 percent higher than official figures.” Its modelling is also based on the number of excess deaths reported to “take into account both direct coronavirus deaths and those who have died because of related reasons, including those who did not seek treatment for other conditions.” It concludes that modelling based on excess death figures is the most accurate and “show us that abnormally high numbers are dying due to the epidemic, whether directly or indirectly.”

The *Times* calculates that since the pandemic started to May 1 there were “50,976 excess deaths across the UK: 46,556 in England and Wales, 3,716 in Scotland and 704 in Northern Ireland.” Because it takes around four days to register death, “most of those deaths will have happened by April 27.”

Acknowledging that the exact number of deaths of COVID-19 outside hospitals is unknown, and based on the estimate “that between 40 and 60 percent of all COVID-19 deaths happen in hospitals,” the *Times* analysis “scaled the hospital data up so that it best fits

the latest figures for the number of excess deaths.”

The newspaper reports, “[W]e have conservatively estimated the death toll for the last four days by assuming that it [the death toll in England and Wales] is roughly 60 percent of what it was a week ago. This process was repeated for Scotland and Northern Ireland, which gives us a total of 61,000 excess deaths in the UK.”

The *Times* noted that “Our model is also subject to regular revisions: yesterday [Monday] we estimated that today’s ONS release would show another 7,000 excess deaths, when in fact the total was 8,000.”

According to the *Daily Mail*, at least 45,550 have died in the UK directly from coronavirus, based on an estimated death rate from infection that could be as high as 1.73 percent. Professor Paul Hunter from the University of East Anglia believes that COVID-19 could cause up to 560,000 deaths in the UK if half of the population were infected.

The ONS figures were published as Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced that the UK’s furlough scheme would be extended until the end of October. The government will continue to pay 80 percent of the wages of at least 7 million workers (around a fifth of the entire workforce)—in a continuing boon to the corporations—up to a monthly cap of £2,500.

Extending the scheme for four months, Sunak announced that by November “we will have provided eight months of support to British people and businesses.” The Job Retention Scheme (JRS) is another subvention to big business that has already cost at least £14 billion a month. Sunak noted, “We have provided billions of pounds of cash grants, tax cuts and loans for over 1 million businesses, tens of billions of pounds of deferred taxes ...” What he did not say was that many of the largest corporations, including more than a quarter of the FTSE 250 firms, are also wallowing in this government largesse.

Sunak made clear that the scheme will remain as it is only until the end of July but will be amended from August until the end of October to “provide greater flexibility to support the transition back to work.” From then, “We will *ask* employers to start sharing with the Government the cost of paying people’s salaries.”

The suggestion is that Sunak will then cut the government contribution towards furlough pay to 60 percent, while asking employers to stump up 20 percent

out of their own pockets.

After wishing Sunak “a very happy birthday” in parliament, Scottish National Party Shadow Chancellor Alison Thewliss tweeted in response to Sunak’s announcement, “After July, it sounds like support under JRS will drop to 60 percent with businesses having to meet the 20 percent. This will be problematic for many businesses who are struggling to survive and building up debt.”

It is almost certain that business will refuse to make up the 20 percent shortfall.

Sunak said the government will work out the “technical details of implementing part-time furloughing” in the days ahead. This has long been insisted on by the Labour Party and trade unions, in their discussions with the government over how to enforce a “mass return to work.”

In her response, Labour Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds said, “I welcome the flexibility mentioned. We have asked for that repeatedly; it applies in many other countries” and pleaded, “Will the chancellor work with me, trade unions, businesses, local authorities” on the scheme.

On behalf of the trade union bureaucracy, Len McCluskey retweeted a message from the Unite union backing the Tories and claiming that Johnson’s Thatcher-worshipping government could be relied on to protect workers in alliance with big business. It stated, “We’ll need to look at the detail when published but today’s announcement is a message again to employers that the government will stand behind them if they stand behind their workers. There should be no rush to redundancies.”

The Trades Union Congress said of Sunak’s measures, “Crucially, the chancellor answered TUC calls for greater flexibility in the scheme by announcing that, from August, organisations could have furloughed workers back part-time to restart their businesses.”



To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**