UK recorded 50,000 more excess deaths in 2022 than in 2019

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There were more excess deaths in Britain in 2022 than almost all of the past 70 years. According to an analysis by the *Times,* more than 50,000 more people died last year than in 2019. Excluding the first two years of the pandemic (2020/21), this was the highest excess death toll since 1951.

Citing data from the statistics offices of the countries of the United Kingdom, the newspaper reported, "Overall the 656,735 UK deaths last year were 51,159 above the pre-Covid five-year average. The figure was exceeded only in four years prior to 1951 since records began 130 years ago."

It reported 1,600 more deaths than usual during Christmas week, due to "long waits for ambulances, cold weather and surging flu infections" that "increased mortality rates by a fifth.

"Figures from the Office for National Statistics yesterday [January 11] showed the third consecutive week of more than 1,000 excess deaths in England and Wales and confirmed that last year one of the highest death totals in Britain was recorded."

Excess deaths are rising among all age groups. Stuart McDonald, a partner at LCP Health Analytics who works on the Faculty of Actuaries' Continuous Mortality Investigation, commented, "Had we not just had two years of very extreme mortality, 2022 would really stand out… At the start of the year we were seeing fewer deaths among older people because a lot of those people had frankly already died [of COVID], but it was clear even then that we were seeing higher deaths among younger people. Since the spring and beyond we've had fairly consistently high levels at all ages."

While the UK saw tens of thousands more deaths last year due to COVID (around 40,000), the excess deaths, concluded the *Times* study, were prominently not due directly to COVID.

Years of brutal austerity, including the slashing of the National Health Service (NHS) budget, which was underfunded by £400 billion over the last decade, have resulted in many people dying earlier. In December 2022, ambulance response times were the longest since new call categories were introduced in 2017.

Cambridge University statistician Professor David Spiegelhalter said it was "very difficult to divide up the causes of the excess, but I find evidence around delayed admissions compelling".

The *Times* reported Speigelhalter saying that since the summer "there had been more than 40,000 excess deaths in England and Wales. Adjusting for an ageing population and subtracting Covid 'still leaves an average of around 450 excess non-Covid deaths each week since June.'"

According to Spiegelhalter, "multiple factors will be contributing to this: early flu, Covid, the impact of disrupted care in the pandemic, and the acute crisis in the NHS".

The excess death analysis of the *Times* backs up the recent estimation by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) President, Dr. Adrian Boyle, who said that Accident and Emergency (A&E) delays and problems with urgent and emergency care are leading to 300-500 additional deaths per week.

NHS England said it did not accept the RCEM figures on excess deaths, but the BBC noted, "it's roughly what you get if you multiply the number of people waiting long periods in A&E with the extra risk of dying estimated to come with those long waits (of between five and 12 hours)."

Another study by the *Economist* magazine published last week concluded that hundreds of deaths per week were taking place, with extended waiting times a key factor. It concluded , "Our model suggests that an

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additional 3,400 A&E-associated deaths occurred between August and November 2022 compared with a scenario in which waiting times remained at 2019 levels. At around 260 per week, that number is below the ballpark figure from the RCEM, but would still account for one-quarter of the excess deaths in England over that period."

The *Financial Times* provided further evidence of surging excess deaths in an analysis by chief data reporter John Burn-Murdoch in December. It noted, "Life expectancy has stagnated, with Britain arcing away below most other developed countries, and avoidable mortality — premature deaths that should not occur with timely and effective healthcare — rising to the highest level among its peers…"

The author found, "In the last decade Britain has dropped away from its peers on overall health spend, while investment in healthcare infrastructure halved between 2010 and 2013. This left the NHS with less spare capacity than any other developed country when the pandemic hit. This proved a huge drag on productivity, leaving UK health workers hamstrung by shortages of beds and equipment."

He concluded, "The impacts have been stark, from ballooning waiting lists and worsening A&E performance to a rise in avoidable deaths and stalling life expectancy." These were due to "The effects of the Conservative austerity programme during the Cameron-Osborne years," that "have been steadily accumulating over the past decade, but this winter that trickle has become a torrent."

The COVID pandemic is far from over, with even the Conservative government's own manipulated measure of COVID deaths now passing 200,000 (202,157), due to a surge in winter deaths. In the last 14 days, according to Worldometers, and using government data, nearly 1,700 people have died in Britain from a disease that everyone is being told to live with and which is not being tested for or monitored.

That right-wing publications such as the *Times*, *Economist* and *Financial Times* cannot ignore the terrible impact of a decades-long social offensive by the ruling elite which was accelerated during the pandemic, attests to real state of class relations.

Their findings are in line with studies showing that hundreds of thousands of people have died since the onset of mass austerity imposed by successive governments following the 2008 global financial crash. A 2019 study, based on years of data before the pandemic, titled "Premature mortality attributable to socioeconomic inequality in England between 2003 and 2018: an observational study," was compiled by the University College London and published in *The Lancet Public Health.* It found that between 2003 and 2018, there were 877,000 dead victims of rocketing social inequality. The authors concluded that "nearly 900,000 deaths in England could have been avoided in a more equal society, according to a UCL study of 2.5 million premature deaths over the last 16 years."

The ruling class has deliberately run down the National Health Service for decades. Their agenda now centres on using the crisis of their own creation to insist that nothing can be done to save the NHS, with privatisation and sell-off of its most profitable sectors the only option.

Last week's *Daily Telegraph* comment by Fraser Nelson was indicative of the frothing response in ruling circles who have never reconciled themselves to the post-war consensus of a welfare state with the NHS its jewel in the crown. He declared, "the NHS is a central plank of our national secular religion. It goes to the heart of our modern understanding of Britishness, a symbol of the supposed 'fairness' of our social-democratic, post-war identity… this 75-year experiment in health socialism has failed appallingly, culminating in a surge in excess deaths, waiting lists that aren't worthy of a civilised nation, inhumane strikes, intolerable delays for ambulances, explicit rationing and underpaid, demoralised, overworked staff."

Nelson insisted, "We must move to a mixed public-private system, as in almost every other country, based around a competing social insurance model, a mix of for-profit and charitable ownership, some user charges to prevent abuse and waste…"

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