

Statistical bulletin

Avoidable mortality in England and Wales: 2021 and 2022

Deaths from causes considered treatable or preventable given timely and effective healthcare or public health interventions in those aged under 75 years.

Contact:
Health and Society team
health.data@ons.gov.uk
+44 207 592 8692

Release date:
18 June 2024

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Avoidable mortality in England and Wales](#)
3. [Avoidable mortality by cause](#)
4. [Avoidable mortality data](#)
5. [Glossary](#)
6. [Measuring the data](#)
7. [Strengths and limitations](#)
8. [Related links](#)
9. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

- In 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively, 22.3%, 23.8% and 21.8% of total deaths (all ages) in England and Wales were considered avoidable: in 2021 there were 139,495 avoidable deaths out of 585,484 total deaths, and in 2022 there were 125,612 avoidable deaths of 576,027 total.
- The age-standardised avoidable mortality rates (ASMR) for England and Wales in 2022 were 238.1 and 273.8 per 100,000 people, respectively; lower than 2020 (257.7 and 289.6 per 100,000) but still higher than 2019 (221.5 and 262.0 per 100,000 people, respectively).
- Neoplasms (cancers) remained the leading cause of avoidable mortality in England and Wales in 2022, though the neoplasm ASMR has steadily declined since 2001 for both nations.
- In England, the avoidable ASMR for children and young people (aged 0 to 19 years) has been rising since 2020: in 2022, it was 9.6 per 100,000 people, compared with 8.1 in 2020 and 9.1 in 2019; for Wales, the rate for children and young people was 8.7 per 100,000 people in 2022.
- In England, the 2022 treatable mortality ASMR (83.1 deaths per 100,000 people) is higher than the 2019 or 2021 rates (80.6 and 80.2 deaths per 100,000 people respectively).

Scottish Government has identified a discrepancy in their avoidable mortality definition. The ONS has agreed with Scotland and Northern Ireland that this release will cover England and Wales. We will publish an update including Scotland, Northern Ireland and UK figures.

2 . Avoidable mortality in England and Wales

Avoidable deaths are defined as either preventable or treatable for those aged under 75 years, in line with the international avoidable mortality definition.

In 2022, 21.7% of all deaths in England and 22.7% of all deaths in Wales were considered avoidable (117,498 deaths of 540,333 in England, and 8,114 of 35,694 deaths in Wales). In 2021, 23.8% of all deaths in England and 24.5% in Wales were considered avoidable (130,641 deaths out of 549,349 for England, and 8,854 out of 36,135 for Wales).

In 2022, these were 238.1 and 273.8 deaths per 100,000 people in England and Wales, respectively, both lower than 2021 figures. The age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) for avoidable deaths in 2021 were 263.3 deaths per 100,000 people in England, and 296.9 deaths per 100,000 people in Wales (Figure 1).

Of the avoidable deaths in 2022 in England and Wales, 65.1% could be attributed to conditions considered preventable (81,791.5 deaths), and of avoidable deaths in 2021, 69.5% could be attributed to preventable conditions (96,893 deaths).

For both England and Wales separately, the preventable mortality ASMR in 2021 was higher than 2020, the 2022 ASMR was lower than 2021, but the 2022 ASMR remained higher than 2019 rates. As with the rates observed prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the preventable mortality ASMR in Wales remains higher than the England rate for these latest years.

Of the avoidable deaths in 2021 in England and Wales, 30.5% could be attributed to treatable conditions (42,602 deaths), and of avoidable deaths in 2022, 34.9% could be attributed to treatable conditions (43,820.5 deaths). Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been assigned as a preventable cause of death, in line with the international avoidable mortality definition.

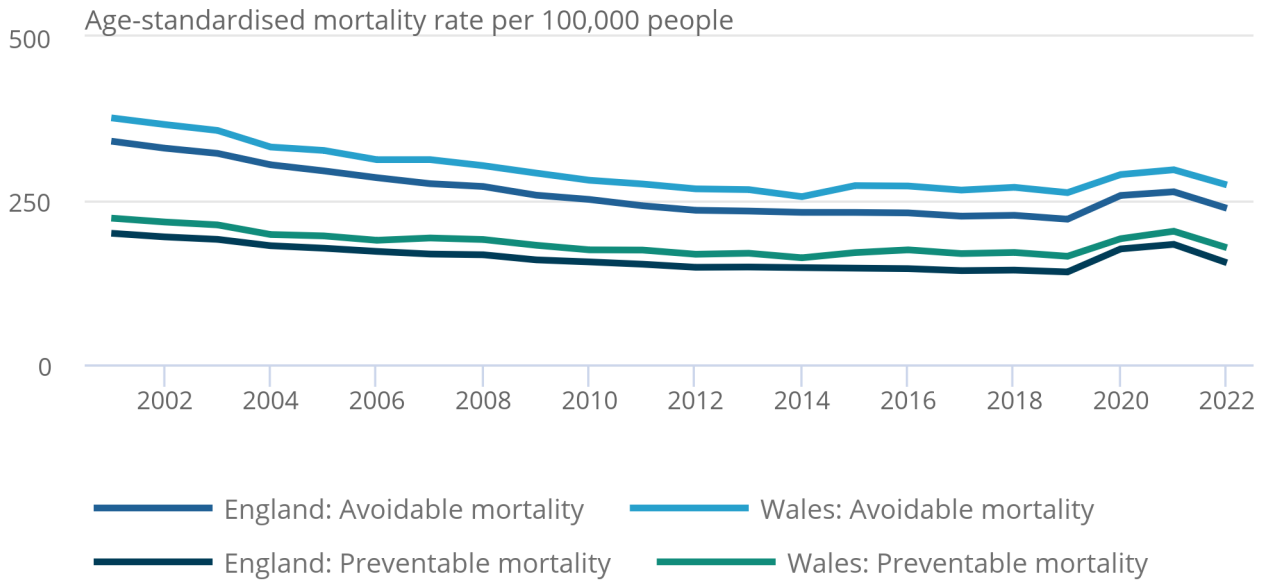
As with years prior to the pandemic, England's 2021 and 2022 treatable mortality ASMRs are lower than the rates in Wales for the same years. In England, the 2022 treatable mortality ASMR (83.1 deaths per 100,000 people) is higher than the 2019 or 2021 rates (80.6 and 80.2 deaths per 100,000 people, respectively).

Figure 1: Avoidable and preventable mortality rates have reduced in 2022, but remain above pre-pandemic rates

Age-standardised avoidable mortality rates per 100,000 people, England and Wales, 2001 to 2022

Figure 1: Avoidable and preventable mortality rates have reduced in 2022, but remain above pre-pandemic rates

Age-standardised avoidable mortality rates per 100,000 people, England and Wales, 2001 to 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Age-standardised mortality rates are expressed per 100,000 people and standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population.
2. Deaths of non-residents are excluded.
3. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

3 . Avoidable mortality by cause

A new category, “Provisional assignment of new diseases”, was created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the international definition of avoidable mortality in 2020, to include COVID-19 as an avoidable cause of death. There are no other causes of death within the category. COVID-19 is classified as a preventable cause of death, as it can be mainly avoided through effective interventions before its onset. Both England and Wales had higher rates of avoidable age-standardised mortality rate (ASMR) for COVID-19, in 2021, than their 2020 rates, with 42.1 deaths per 100,000 people in England and 38.5 deaths per 100,000 people in Wales. Rates were much lower in 2022, with 9.7 deaths per 100,000 people and 9.5 deaths per 100,000 people in England and Wales, respectively.

Neoplasms (cancers) are classified as an avoidable cause of death. Some cancers, including lung, liver and skin cancers, are classified as preventable. Others, including breast cancer and testicular cancer, are classified as treatable. This means these causes of death are considered to be avoidable through timely and effective healthcare interventions after their onset.

Neoplasms remain the leading cause of avoidable mortality, but the avoidable mortality rates for neoplasms have continued to decline in England and Wales (Figure 2). In 2022, the ASMR for neoplasms was 75.3 per 100,000 people in England and 84.1 per 100,000 people in Wales, compared with 79.0 and 89.1 in 2019, respectively.

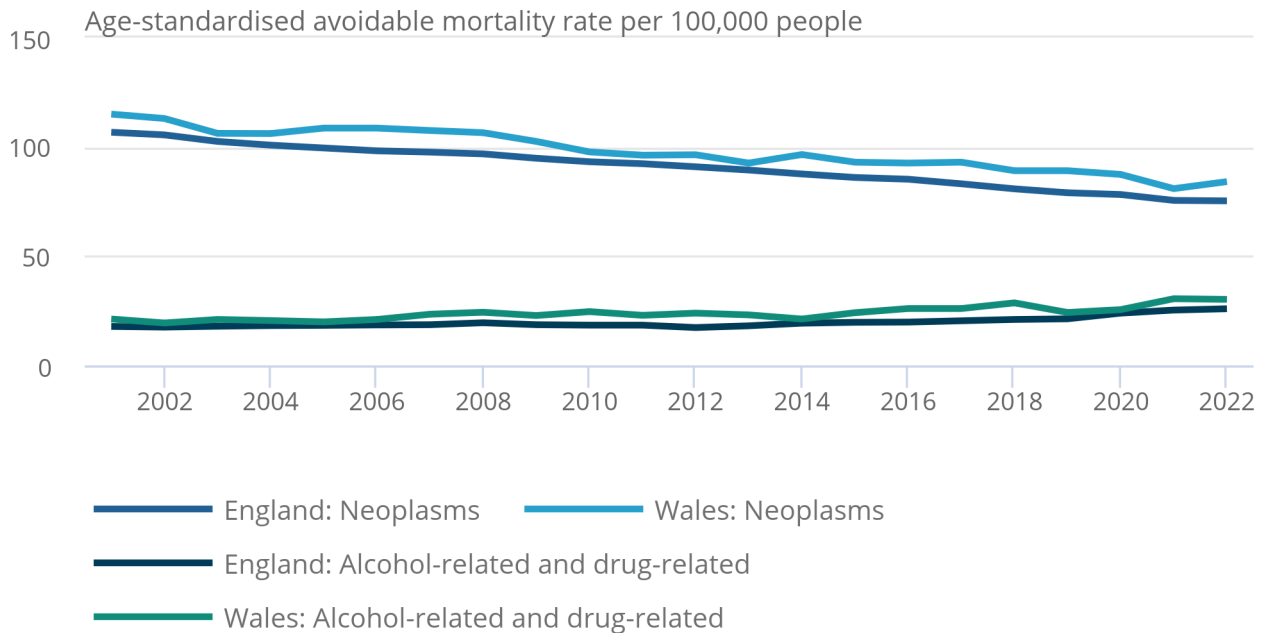
The mortality rate for alcohol-related and drug-related deaths has continued to increase in England and Wales. In England, the ASMR for alcohol-related and drug-related deaths was 25.9 per 100,000 people in 2022, compared with 21.3 in 2019. In Wales, the ASMR for alcohol-related and drug-related deaths was 30.2 per 100,000 people in 2022, compared with 24.2 in 2019.

Figure 2: Deaths from neoplasms remain the leading cause of avoidable mortality despite general decline

Age-standardised avoidable mortality rates per 100,000 people by cause of death, England and Wales, 2001 to 2022

Figure 2: Deaths from neoplasms remain the leading cause of avoidable mortality despite general decline

Age-standardised avoidable mortality rates per 100,000 people by cause of death, England and Wales, 2001 to 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Age-standardised mortality rates are expressed per 100,000 people and standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population.
2. Deaths of non-residents are excluded.
3. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

4 . Avoidable mortality data

[Avoidable mortality in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 18 June 2024

Annual age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) for causes considered avoidable, treatable and preventable in England and Wales, 2001 to 2022.

[Avoidable mortality in England and Wales - children and young people](#)

Dataset | Released 18 June 2024

Annual age-standardised mortality rates for causes considered avoidable, treatable and preventable in England and Wales for children and young people (aged 0 to 19 years), 2001 to 2022.

[Avoidable mortality in England and Wales - supplementary data tables](#)

Dataset | Released 18 June 2024

Supplementary annual data for England and Wales for 2001 to 2022: standardised years of life lost (SYLL) because of causes considered avoidable; age-standardised avoidable, treatable and preventable mortality rates with and without deaths from ischaemic heart disease (IHD); and number of avoidable, treatable and preventable deaths by sex and age.

[Avoidable mortality by local authorities in England and unitary authorities in Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 18 June 2024

Age-standardised mortality rates for causes considered avoidable, treatable and preventable by local authorities in England and unitary authorities in Wales: three-year aggregates, from 2001 to 2022.

[Avoidable mortality by Integrated Care Boards in England and Health Boards in Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 18 June 2024

Annual age-standardised mortality rates for causes considered avoidable, treatable and preventable by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in England and Health Boards in Wales in 2001 to 2020, and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in England and Health Boards in Wales in 2021 to 2022.

5 . Glossary

Preventable mortality

Preventable mortality refers to causes of death that can be mainly avoided through effective public health and primary prevention interventions (that is, before the onset of diseases or injuries, to reduce incidence).

Treatable mortality

Treatable mortality refers to causes of death that can be mainly avoided through timely and effective healthcare interventions, including secondary prevention and treatment (that is, after the onset of disease, to reduce case-fatality).

Avoidable mortality

Avoidable mortality refers to deaths that are preventable or treatable.

Age-standardised mortality rates

Age-standardised mortality rates are used to allow comparisons between populations that may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

6 . Measuring the data

Figures are calculated using death registration data for England and Wales held by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), published in our [Deaths registered in England and Wales bulletin](#).

Defining avoidable mortality

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Avoidable mortality in the UK QMI](#).

7 . Strengths and limitations

A strength of avoidable mortality is:

- the avoidable mortality definition used by the Office for National Statistics means that our statistics are internationally comparable as well as comparable between local administrations and over time at national and subnational level

A limitation of avoidable mortality is:

- that cause-of-death data do not account for coding changes that occurred in 2011 and 2014

Accredited official statistics

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in [the Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be labelled "Accredited official statistics".

For more on accredited official statistics, read the [Office for Statistics Regulation guidance](#).

8 . Related links

[Socioeconomic inequalities in avoidable mortality in England: 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 March 2022

Avoidable mortality in England, using measures of multiple deprivation to measure socioeconomic inequalities.

[Socioeconomic inequalities in avoidable mortality in Wales: 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 March 2022

Avoidable mortality in Wales, using measures of multiple deprivation to measure socioeconomic inequalities.

[Avoidable mortality in Scotland](#)

Report | Released 10 November 2022

Information on the numbers of deaths which are classified as avoidable.

[Health inequalities annual report - Department of Health Northern Ireland](#)

Report | Released 27 March 2024

Annual publication presenting a comprehensive analysis of health inequality gaps between the most and least deprived areas of Northern Ireland, and within health and social care trust and local government district areas.

[Deaths registered in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 December 2023

Registered deaths by age, sex, selected underlying causes of death and the leading causes of death. Contains death rates and death registrations by area of residence and single year of age.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 18 June 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Avoidable mortality in England and Wales: 2021 and 2022](#)