
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

Geraint Davies MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 April 2023

Dear Mr Davies,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many people died from alcoholism in (a) England and (b) North Ireland in each year since 2018 **(181813)**.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes statistics on alcohol-specific deaths in the UK in collaboration with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Cause of death is defined using the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th edition (ICD-10). More information on the process of death certification and cause of death coding is available in the *User guide to mortality statistics*¹.

It is usually not possible at the time of death to ascertain whether a death was caused by dependant alcohol use or non-dependant alcohol use. Alcoholism does not have a specific definition within the WHO classification system. As such we are unable to say how many deaths were the direct result of alcoholism.

The cause of death which is likely closest to a cause of alcoholism would be '*F10 Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of alcohol*'. Table 1 shows the number of deaths in England and Northern Ireland with this underlying cause of death registered in the period 2018 to 2021 (figures for 2022 are not yet available). However, many deaths that have resulted from dependant alcohol use will fall outside of this category.

Table 2 shows the number of deaths from causes that are defined as 'alcohol-specific', meaning causes of death that can only have been a consequence of alcohol use. The alcohol-specific definition is used by the ONS to measure alcohol harm, but it does not include all deaths that can be attributed to alcohol. The number of deaths for each individual cause within the alcohol-specific definition are available in the datasets accompanying the '*Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK*' bulletin².

The full extent of deaths that can be attributed to alcohol is very difficult to estimate. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) publishes figures on alcohol-

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/methodologies/userguidetomortalitystatisticsjuly2017>

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/alcohol-specific-deaths-in-the-uk/2021-registrations>

attributable mortality in England³ based on 'alcohol-attributable fractions'. These fractions were revised in 2021 after a review of the latest research, and consequently the only year for which an estimate is available is 2021, with an estimated 20,970 deaths in England. No estimates are currently available for Northern Ireland.

My team would be happy to discuss these figures in more depth if that would be useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Diamond', written in a cursive style.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

³<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/local-alcohol-profiles/data#page/4/qid/1938132984/pat/159/par/K02000001/ati/15/are/E92000001/iid/93763/age/1/sx/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>

Table 1: Number of deaths with an underlying cause of ‘Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of alcohol’ (ICD-10 code F10), 2018 to 2021, England and Northern Ireland ^{4, 5}

Year of death registration	England	Northern Ireland
2018	569	85
2019	575	75
2020	641	69
2021	714	68

Source: Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Table 2: Number of alcohol-specific deaths, 2018 to 2021, England and Northern Ireland ^{4, 5, 6}

Year of death registration	England	Northern Ireland
2018	5,698	284
2019	5,820	336
2020	6,984	351
2021	7,558	351

Source: Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Table 3: Number of alcohol-attributable deaths, 2018 to 2021, England and Northern Ireland ^{4, 5, 7}

Year of death registration	England	Northern Ireland
2018	n/a	n/a
2019	n/a	n/a
2020	n/a	n/a
2021	20,970	n/a

Source: Office for Health Improvements and Disparities

⁴ Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year.

⁵ Figures exclude deaths of non-residents

⁶ The International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Edition (ICD-10) codes used in the definition of an alcohol-specific death are listed in the datasets accompanying the annual bulletin:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/alcohol-specific-deaths-in-the-uk/2021-registrations>

⁷ The ICD-10 codes used in the definition of an alcohol-attributable death, and information about alcohol-attributable fractions, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-attributable-fractions-for-england-an-update>