

Club Vita's Top Charts

April 2020

Issue 19: Impact of COVID-19 on 2020 cumulative deaths (up to 10 April)

Question:

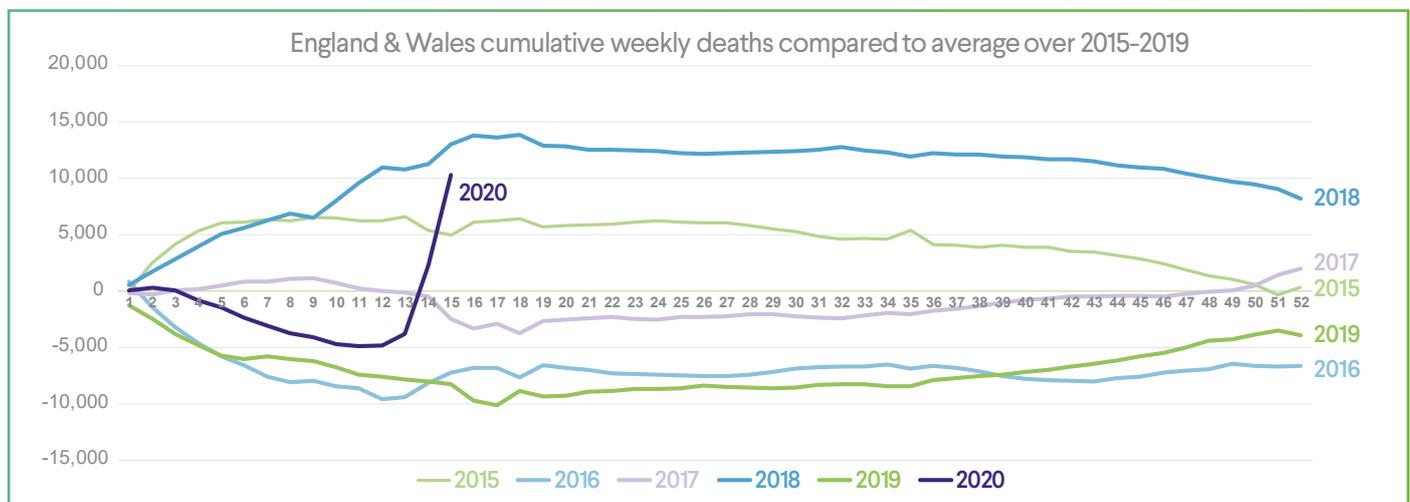
How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected cumulative deaths in England & Wales in 2020?

Answer:

The pandemic has had a marked effect on the number of deaths occurring in England & Wales. After a relatively light 2019, 2020 began with relatively few deaths in the first quarter. However, that has all changed in a matter of weeks.

The chart below shows the cumulative weekly deaths in England & Wales for each year from 2015, relative to the average over 2015 to 2019. Note that the ageing England & Wales population means we would actually expect the number of deaths to increase each year, all else being equal.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, 2020 was shaping up to be a good year. The number of deaths in the first quarter was well below the five-year average. However, we can see a sharp increase over the three weeks up to the 10th of April, primarily (but not exclusively) due to COVID-19. This has transformed 2020 into a potentially heavy year of mortality. And these numbers are likely to increase further before we get the pandemic under control. Where the year ends up compared to other years, along with when and how the virus is brought under control, and whether it is thought to be a one-off event, will be critical in deciding how appropriate current actuarial models are for predicting future longevity.



Source: Club Vita analysis of ONS weekly death data for England & Wales available at 21 April 2020, covering deaths registered in the period up to 10 April 2020

Key takeaways:

- 2020 had been shaping up to be a year of light mortality.
- In a three week period from 20 March to 10 April the cumulative deaths have increased by one third
- The period up to now and the next few weeks are likely to be make this chart look even worse.

The key questions are:

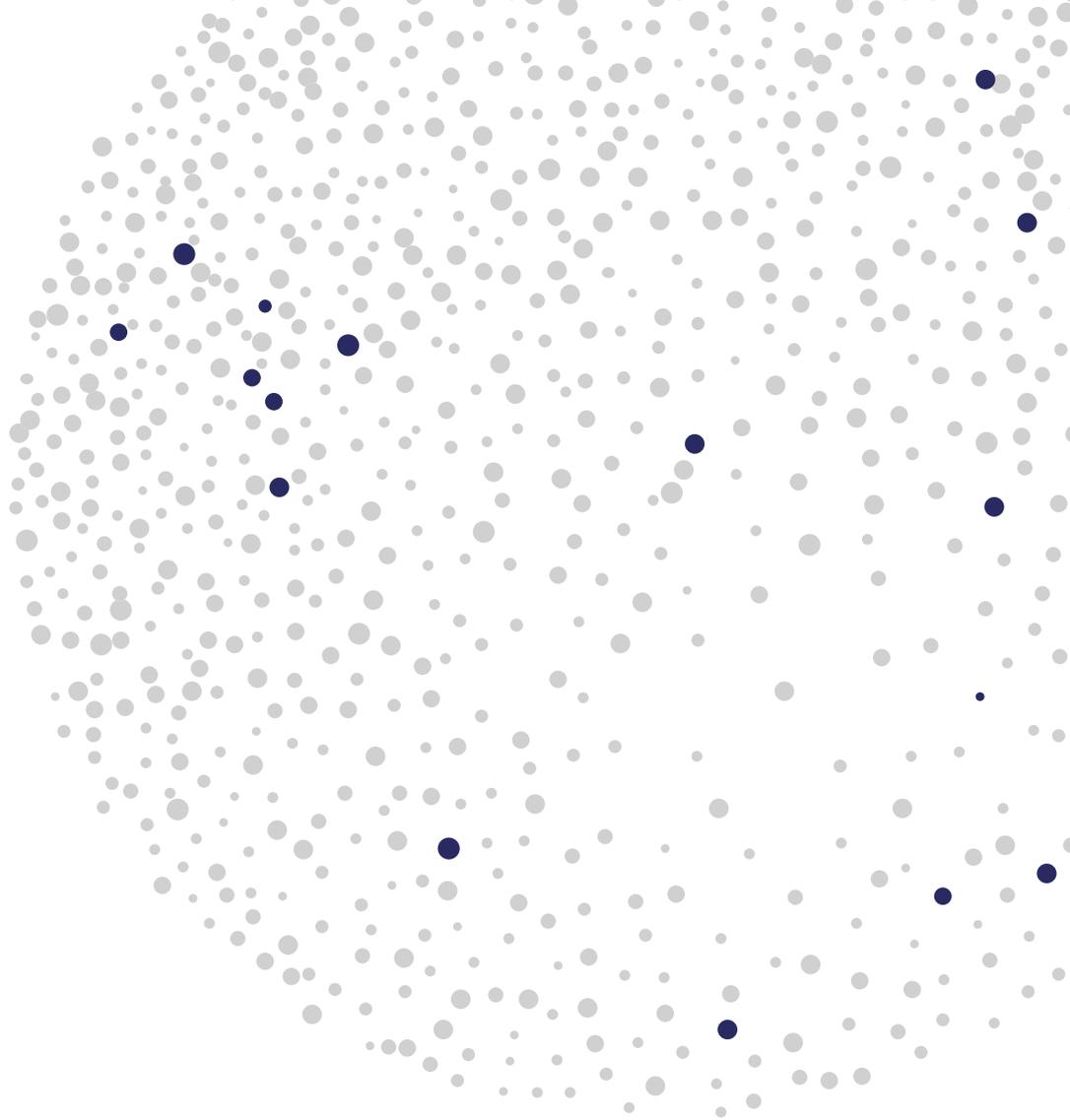
- Where will 2020 end up?
- Is the pandemic a one-off event, or a new annual occurrence (similar to seasonal flu)?
- How should we allow for this year of data in models of future longevity?

What do you think?

Please post your questions in our **Friends of Club Vita** discussion group on LinkedIn.



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