

ANNEX A

FOI DoF/2021-0373

Request

Please can you tell me how many people have died from COVID-19 in Northern Ireland from 01/01/2020 to 31/07/2021, where COVID-19 was the sole or primary cause of death?

Response

I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested, however, this information is withheld under **Section 21** and **Section 22** of the Freedom of information Act, please see details below.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) collates data on registrations of death.

Your request has been interpreted as meaning deaths where Covid-19 was the *underlying* cause. This is defined as the disease or injury which initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death.

FOI Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means)

applies to the total deaths registered in Northern Ireland where Covid-19 was the underlying (primary) cause as data up to the end of June 2021 is accessible by other means. NISRA releases quarterly tables, which contain the total number of deaths in Northern Ireland where Covid-19 was the underlying cause.

These figures are provisional and can be found in table 1c of the quarterly Registrar General release at the link below. The total number of deaths registered where Covid-19 was the underlying cause can be found in column E of table 1c. The quarter 1 total is in row 93 and refers to deaths registered during January to March, and the quarter 2 total is in row 94 and refers to deaths registered during April to June.

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/registrar-general-quarterly-tables-quarter-2-2021>

FOI Exemption Section 22 (Information intended for future publication)

applies to total deaths registered in Northern Ireland in July 2021 where Covid-19 was the underlying cause. July 2021 deaths statistics are scheduled for publication in the Autumn of 2021 as part of the Q3 (July to September) provisional Registrar General report. Deaths by underlying cause relating to July specifically can be requested following this publication.

By applying **Section 22** Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test, which can be found attached at **Annex B**.

Annex B

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST				
Request Ref:	DoF/2021-0373	Requester:		Address: Email –
Request Summary:	COVID-19 death stats where it was the sole or primary cause of death			
Information Details:	Exemption Applied	Disclosure	Non-Disclosure	
		(Please complete both columns to show all factors have been considered)		
Please can you tell me how many people have died from COVID-19 in Northern Ireland from 01/01/2020 to 31/07/2021, where COVID-19 was the sole or primary cause of death.	S22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To show compliance with the FOI Act by disclosing information held by the Department as a Public Authority; There is a general public interest in the accountability, openness and transparency of government, and to promote public understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on deaths in Northern Ireland for July to September 2021 is scheduled for release in Autumn 2021, but a specific publication date has not yet been set. Data on deaths registered during July to September 2021 will appear within the Registrar General Provisional Quarter 3 2021 tables, as per the NISRA Vital Statistics Unit 2020/21 work-plan https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/vital-statistics-documentation. Although the specifically requested data will not be among the tables published (i.e. for July only), NISRA will be in a position to complete this analysis after publication. NISRA is currently carrying out standard internal quality assurance checks on this data which may result in the information requested being subject to ongoing change in the run-up to publication. It is in the public interest that the quality assurance process is concluded before making this information available to the public to ensure accuracy and consistency of messaging and thereby confidence in what we report. As the information requested is of notable interest to the wider public, it is important that it can be accessed by all interested parties at the same time in an accurate form. This is in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice which states: 'Statistics and data should be equally available to all, not given to some people before others. They should be published at a sufficient level of detail and remain publicly available.' 	
<p>PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: After weighing up the competing public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld from disclosure until the future date of publication (section 22[1]) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.</p> <p>NISRA Corporate Services Date: 26 August 2021</p>				