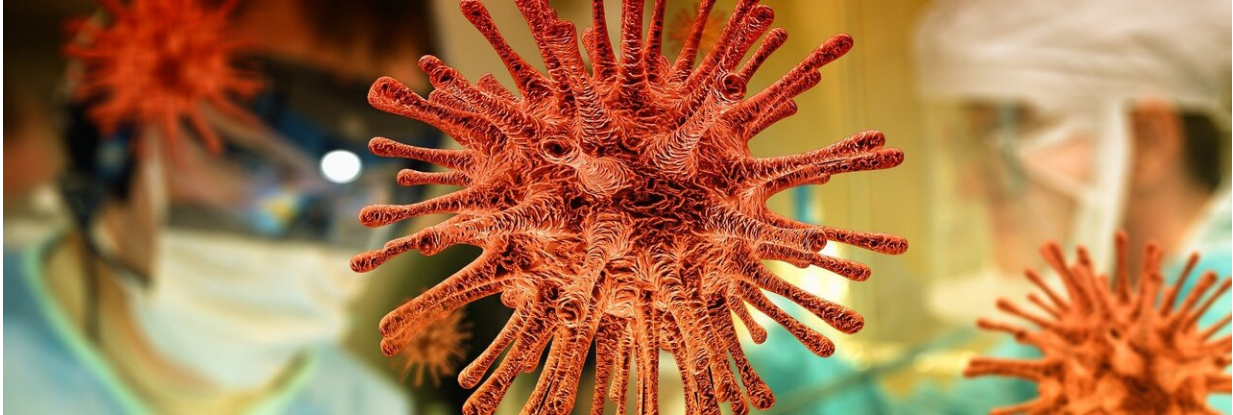


UK says virus-related deaths rise to 48,000

June 2 2020



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The number of suspected and confirmed deaths from coronavirus in Britain has risen to 48,000, official data showed Tuesday.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures tallied all fatalities in which COVID-19 was suspected or mentioned on death certificates up to May 22.

The total of 48,106 is significantly higher than the government's latest daily figure of 39,369, which only includes deaths where the patient tested positive for coronavirus.

By either measure, the toll is Europe's worst and puts Britain behind only

the United States in officially announced deaths, although each country has different reporting lags and methods.

The data also showed there had been 56,308 more deaths in England and Wales than the five-year average since the outbreak took hold in March.

But in the week ending May 22, there were 2,589 mentions of "novel coronavirus" on death certificates in England and Wales—the lowest since the seven days to March 27.

Britain is one of the last European countries to start easing its stay-at-home restrictions, which were imposed on March 23.

Some younger children returned to school in England on Monday while some shops were allowed to reopen.

However, some critics say the government is moving too quickly while infection rates and deaths remain high.

Separately, England's public health agency on Tuesday published a new report confirming previous evidence that the outbreak is hitting ethnic minorities the hardest.

People of Bangladeshi origin had around twice the risk of dying than white British people, even accounting for age, sex, deprivation and region—although not accounting for comorbidities, occupation or obesity.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said coronavirus had "emphasised the existing health inequalities in the country", and promised further work on the issue.

He said the report was timely given global protests over the death of

George Floyd in the United States, adding: "Black lives matter.

"And I want to say this to everyone who works in the National Health Service and in social care: I value the contribution that you make, everybody equally.

"And I want to say it right across society too. I want to thank you."

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