

Provisional death counts and excess mortality, January 2021 to March 2023

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In its commitment to keep Canadians informed of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, today Statistics Canada is releasing new and updated provisional data on deaths, excess mortality and causes of death from the Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database. This includes an update to the [Provisional deaths and excess mortality in Canada dashboard](#), which brings recent insights into the trends in excess mortality together with interactive data visualization tools.

Statistics Canada will continue to update its dashboard regularly, using the most up-to-date information received from the provinces and territories.

Note to readers

The data released today are provisional, as they are not based on all the deaths that occurred during the reference period because of reporting delays and because they do not include data for Yukon. Provisional death counts are based on what is reported to Statistics Canada by provincial and territorial vital statistics registries. Provisional death estimates have been adjusted to account for incomplete data where possible. The numbers of excess deaths discussed in this analysis refer to provisional estimates. Information on the methods used can be found in the "Definitions, data sources and methods" section of the [Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database](#).

The provisional death counts and estimates released today may not match figures from other sources, such as media reports, or counts and estimates from provincial and territorial health authorities and other agencies.

There are several ways to measure excess mortality, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. There are also several challenges that come with measuring excess mortality, most importantly properly estimating the number of expected deaths that would occur in a non-COVID-19 context as a basis for comparison with current death counts. Significant variations may be observed from year to year in the annual death counts, especially in the least-populated provinces and the territories. Moreover, yearly death counts may be affected by changes in the composition of the population, particularly regarding age and changes in mortality rates (e.g., reduced mortality). In the Canadian context, with an aging and growing population, the number of deaths has been increasing steadily in recent years, so a higher number of deaths in 2021 and 2022 would be expected, regardless of COVID-19.

A second challenge is the difficulty of collecting timely death counts. Taking these considerations into account, the method chosen by Statistics Canada to estimate expected deaths—which has also been adopted by organizations in several other countries, including the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—is adapted from an infectious disease detection algorithm that has been largely used in the context of mortality surveillance in recent years.

More information on excess mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada is available in the article ["Excess mortality in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic."](#)

Starting in September 2022, Quebec implemented electronic death registration, leading to timelier reporting of deaths in the province. While Statistics Canada has been adjusting the number of weekly deaths for reporting delays, the magnitude of these adjustments may no longer be applicable in Quebec.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3233](#).

Available tables: [13-10-0768-01](#), [13-10-0783-01](#), [13-10-0784-01](#), [13-10-0792-01](#) and [13-10-0810-01](#).

The [Life expectancy and deaths statistics](#) portal, presenting information related to death in Canada, was updated today. It features the [Provisional deaths and excess mortality in Canada dashboard](#), which brings recent insights into the trends in excess mortality together with interactive data visualization tools.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).