

Review of 2024 Mortality Rates



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“2024 saw record low mortality rates”

The Continuous Mortality Investigation (“CMI”) publish regular quarterly updates on the trends observed in mortality rates in England and Wales. Their analysis is based on the death data published by the Office of National Statistics (“ONS”) and the latest update provides some interesting observations on 2024.

2024 Headlines

Overall, mortality rates in 2024 have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, 2024 saw record low mortality rates, which were slightly lower than the previous record low in 2019.

Despite 2024 being a record-breaking year, mortality rates are still higher than where they were projected to have been by now, on the pre-pandemic projections.

The chart shows that overall mortality rates in 2024 were 5.1% lower than the 2014-2023 average. They were also 3.7% lower than the 2023 rates.

These record low mortality rates come with a caveat that a change in the process for registering deaths in England & Wales is estimated to have increased measured mortality improvements by 0.25% in 2024, compared to the position if no changes to the registration process had been made.

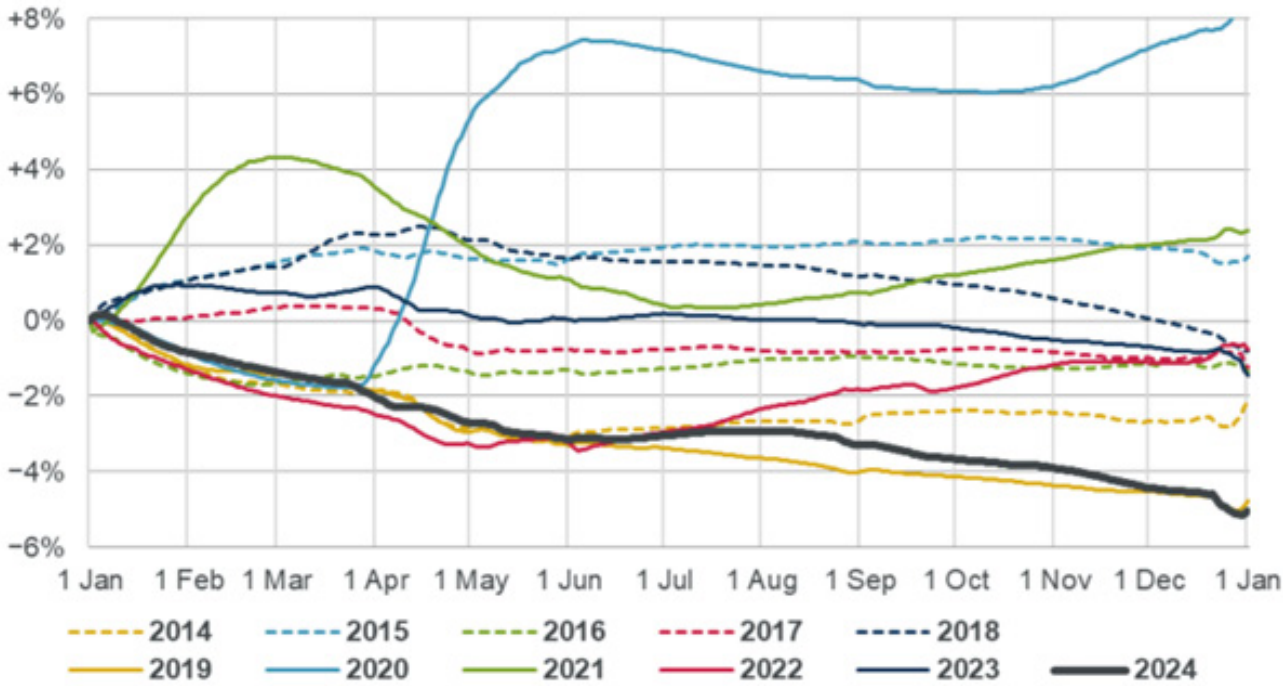
Changes to death registration process

Death certificate reforms, which came into force on 9 September 2024, introduced a statutory medical examiner system and changed the way that causes of deaths are scrutinised and certified. This change has led to delays in registering deaths and so fewer deaths were registered in the weeks immediately following the reform. These process-driven delays resulted in fewer deaths being registered in the last quarter of 2024, as some deaths which occurred during this period will not have been registered until 2025.

Diverging trends amongst different age groups

There was a 7.7% reduction in mortality rates experienced by the 75-84 age group, relative to the average mortality rates over the 10 year period, 2014-2023. This was markedly different from the pattern observed in the 20-44 age group, where mortality rates were 1.7% higher than the 10 year average. However, rates across all ages in 2024 were lower than those seen in 2023.

Cumulative standardised mortality rate compared to the 2014-2023 average



Source: CMI Mortality Monitor

Analysis of younger deaths

The percentage of total deaths from alcohol, drugs and suicide in younger age groups has been on the rise in recent years, as shown in the table.

The increase in these ‘deaths of despair’ could be attributed to the significant effects on mental health and health-related behaviours linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

Despite the increase in mortality rates in younger age groups, overall the number of young deaths is very low and the key message from the 2024 data is that longevity is improving.

	2015-2017 %	2018-2020 %	2021-2023 %
Ages 18-34			
Alcohol-specific	3.45	3.06	4.26
Drug Poisoning	14.37	15.27	15.75
Suicide	20.45	22.46	24.18
Total	38.27	40.79	44.19
Ages 35-50			
Alcohol-specific	9.00	9.05	10.80
Drug Poisoning	9.11	10.36	11.23
Suicide	8.33	8.58	8.72
Total	26.44	28.00	30.75

Source data: ONS