

World's true pandemic death toll nearly 15 million, says WHO

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the deaths of nearly 15 million people around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates. That is 13% more deaths than normally expected over two years.

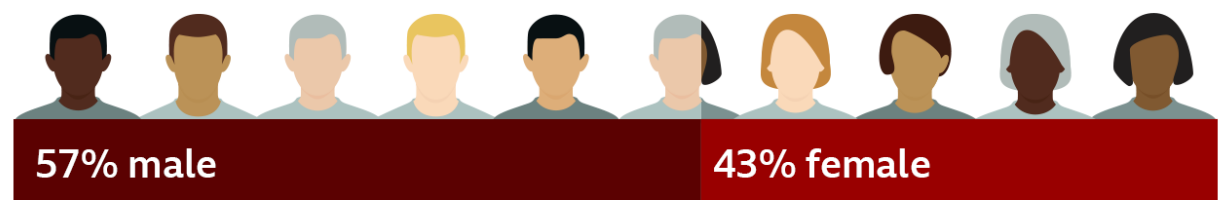
The WHO believes many countries **undercounted** the numbers who died from Covid - only 5.4 million were reported. In India, there were 4.7 million Covid deaths, it says - 10 times the official figures - and almost a third of Covid deaths globally. The Indian government has questioned the estimate, saying it has "concerns" about the methodology, but other studies have come to similar **conclusions** about the scale of deaths in the country.

Nearly 15 million excess deaths worldwide

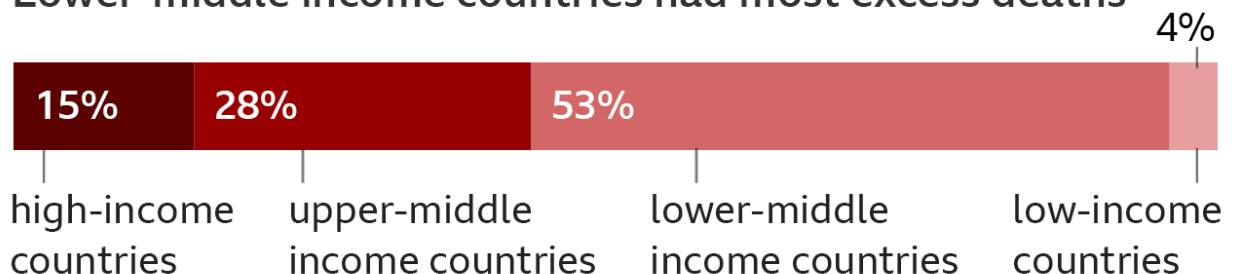
Almost three times more excess deaths than officially reported Covid deaths



Global excess death toll was higher for men



Lower-middle income countries had most excess deaths



Source: World Health Organization



The measure used by the WHO is called excess deaths - how many more people died than would normally be expected based on mortality in the same area before the



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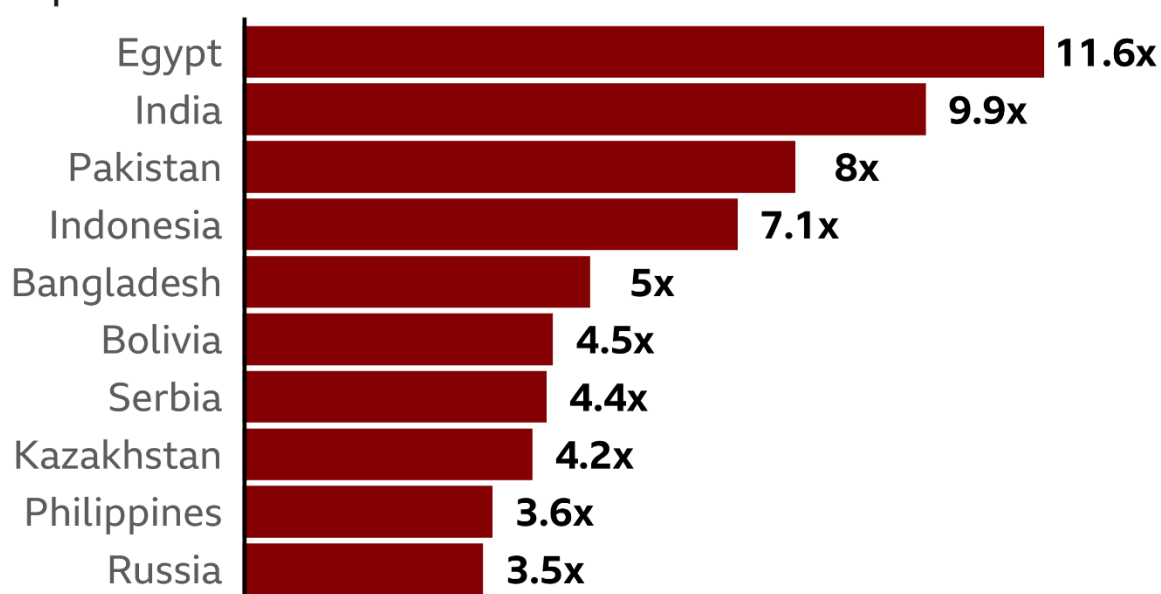
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pandemic hit. These calculations also **take into account** deaths which were not directly because of Covid but instead caused by its knock-on effects, like people being unable to access hospitals for the care they needed. It also accounts for poor record-keeping in some regions, and **sparse** testing at the start of the crisis.

But the WHO said the majority of the extra 9.5 million deaths seen above the 5.4 million Covid deaths reported were thought to be direct deaths caused by the virus, rather than indirect deaths.

How much higher are excess deaths than official Covid deaths?

Ratio of excess deaths in 2020 & 2021 compared with reported Covid-19 deaths



Note: Includes only countries with at least 10,000 official recorded Covid deaths

Source: World Health Organization

BBC

Speaking about the scale of the figures, Dr Samira Asma, from the WHO's data department, said "It's a tragedy. "It's a **staggering** number and it's important for us to honour the lives that are lost, and we have to hold policymakers accountable," she said. "If we don't count the dead, we will miss the opportunity to be better prepared for the next time."

Alongside India, countries with the highest total excess deaths included Russia, Indonesia, USA, Brazil, Mexico and Peru, the WHO figures suggest. The numbers for Russia are three-and-a-half times the country's recorded deaths.

The report also looks at the rates of excess deaths relative to each country's population size. The UK's excess mortality rate - like America, Spain and Germany - was above the global average during 2020 and 2021.



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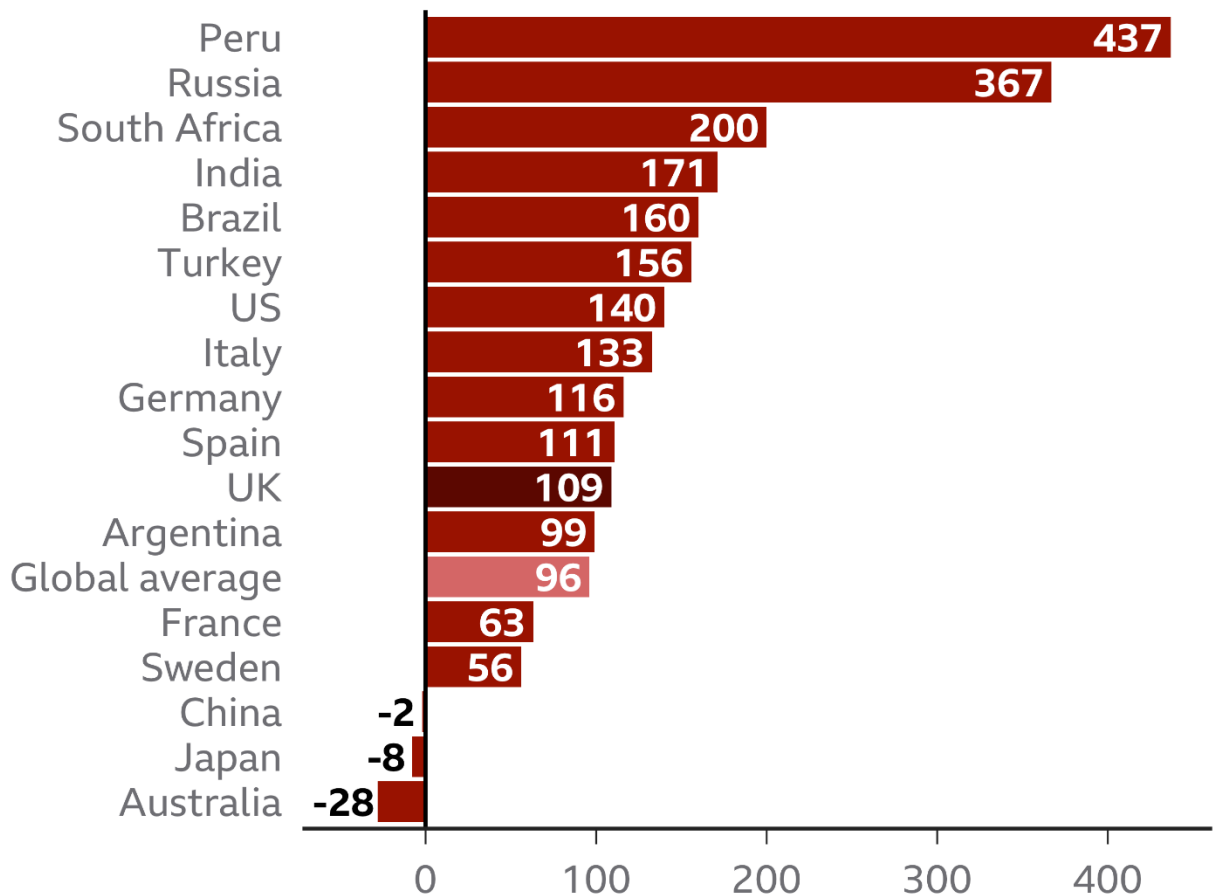
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Different countries, different pandemics

Excess deaths per 100,000 in 2020 & 2021, selected countries



Note: Excess death rates are calculated as an average of the rates for 2020 & 2021

Source: World Health Organization

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Countries with low excess mortality rates included China, which is still pursuing a policy of "zero Covid" involving mass testing and quarantines, Australia, which imposed strict travel restrictions to keep the virus out of the country, Japan and Norway.

The academics who helped compile the report admit their estimates are more speculative for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, because there is little data on deaths in the region. There were no reliable statistics for 41 out of 54 countries in Africa. Statistician Prof Jon Wakefield, from Seattle's University of Washington, helped the WHO and told the BBC: "We urgently need better data collection systems. "It is a disgrace that people can be born and die - and we have no record of their passing.

"So we really need to invest in countries' registration systems so we can get accurate and timely data."



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Essential words for writing and speaking

1. **Undercount** – to count fewer people or things than there really are.
The Census Bureau was criticized for undercounting the nation's homeless.
2. **Conclusion** – the opinion you have after considering all the information about something.
At first I thought he was a bit shy, but I've come to the conclusion that he's simply unfriendly!
3. **Take sth into account** – to consider or remember something when judging a situation.
I hope my teacher will take into account the fact that I was ill just before the exams when she marks my paper.
4. **Sparse** – small in numbers or amount, often spread over a large area.
The information available on the subject is sparse.
5. **Staggering** – very shocking and surprising.
It costs a staggering \$50,000 per week to keep the museum open to the public.
6. **Pursue** – if you pursue a plan, activity, or situation, you try to do it or achieve it, usually over a long period of time.
If you pursue a plan, activity, or situation, you try to do it or achieve it, usually over a long period of time.
7. **Quarantine** – a specific period of time in which a person or animal that has a disease, or may have one, must stay or be kept away from others in order to prevent the spread of the disease.
The government announced mandatory quarantines for high-risk travellers returning from countries with Covid-19 outbreaks.
8. **Impose** – to officially force a rule, tax, punishment, etc. to be obeyed or received.
The council has imposed a ban on alcohol in the city parks.
9. **To be a disgrace** – to be a very bad situation.
It's a disgrace that the government spends so much on guns and so little on education.
10. **Timely** – happening at exactly the right time.
This has been a timely remainder to us all.

