

14<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **Sikh Assembly Welcomes Publication Of Statistics And Analysis of Deaths**

### **Associated With COVID-19 By Religious Group**

*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*

Sikh Assembly welcomes publication yesterday by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) of data and analysis by religion of deaths associated with COVID-19 in England ([link here](#)). The first statistics on COVID-19 deaths by religion were published in June 2020, and it is harrowing to learn now of the sharp increase in deaths of members of England's Sikh community during the second wave.

This is the first opportunity to see data recording deaths of individuals by faith during the period covering the UK response and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic from 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

We recognise the value of the analysis published based on what is known as age-standardised mortality rates (ASMR's, age-adjusted rates of death). The analysis further corrects the ASMRs for impacts on mortality of known significant factors such as location, measures of disadvantage, occupation, living arrangements and pre-existing health conditions (fully adjusted rates of death). The fully adjusted rates show the residual differences in mortality between different religious groups that cannot be explained by the above factors. The 2011 Census records have been used to assign religion to the deceased persons.

The fully adjusted figures show Sikhs in England had a significantly lower mortality rate associated to COVID-19 during the first wave of the pandemic (defined as 24<sup>th</sup> January to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020) than Buddhists, Muslims, and Jews for men, while for women the differences were not significant. However, it is of some concern that the data show a significant increase in mortality of Sikh men and women during the second wave (12<sup>th</sup> September 2020 onwards), while those of Buddhists and Jews declined significantly. The mortality rates for Muslim and Christian groups remain respectively higher and lower for both waves.

Sikh Assembly is alarmed by these findings and suggests further investigation is required to determine the reasons as to why such disparities exist between different faith groups, even after taking account of the various known risk factors mentioned above.

Our emphasis remains on the need for inclusion of religion and belief categories in all data collection and analysis to reflect religion being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It is essential that, eleven years later, the provisions and protection provided by the law are made available to serve under-represented ethnic communities currently not counted appropriately. Sikh Assembly and our partner organisations remain committed to supporting the work of Government

and bodies to help ensure that the Sikh community becomes a visible part of the social fabric of Great Britain. In particular, we urge ONS to conduct further analysis using existing sources, new surveys and forthcoming data from the 2021 Census to improve the range and quality of official statistics by religion.

Jagdev Singh Virdee, Sikh Assembly Executive Member and editor of the British Sikh Report, highlighted the value of statistics on the Sikh community in Britain:

*“The statistics published today show how COVID-19 has impacted differently on Sikhs compared with other religious groups throughout the pandemic, with a higher impact on Sikhs in the second wave compared with the first. This illustrates why there is a need for more routine production of official statistics by religion, as well as by ethnicity. For example, the differences shown in experiences of Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists have historically been hidden within broad ethnic categories such as Indian or Asian.”*

Paramjit Kaur Matharu, Chair of Sikh Assembly, added:

*“Sikh Assembly has participated actively with the Government faith round table conversations to raise the specific issues that affect the Sikh community and also engaged proactively with ONS to lobby for religion to be a core category for statistical profiling. The work ahead to see whether the incidence of front-line roles, underlying genetics, existing health demographics of the community as well as the economic profile of Sikhs by area has any specific bearing on the sad outcomes for the Sikh community. We will continue to work with government and public institutions to highlight the need for meaningful data collection and analysis for minority communities like ours. I thank ONS for this valuable report.”*

**Community Resource Team**  
**Sikh Assembly**