

19th June 2020

ONS Statistics on Deaths Related to COVID-19, by Religion, Ethnicity and Disability:

First Official Statistics on COVID-19 Related Deaths of Sikhs

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has today published statistics of deaths related to COVID-19, analysed by religion, ethnicity and disability status of those who passed away (link [here](#)).

These are the first official statistics to identify the number of Sikhs living in England & Wales who are believed to have died because of COVID-19. Previous analysis has only reported on ethnic groups, within which Sikhs cannot be identified separately.

The highest age-standardised mortality rates of deaths involving COVID-19 were in the Muslim religious group with 198.9 deaths per 100,000 males and 98.2 deaths per 100,000 females; people who identified as Jewish, Hindu or Sikh also showed higher mortality rates than other groups.

The rates for male and female Sikhs were 128.6 and 69.4 deaths per 100,000, respectively. These figures compare with a rate of 92.6 for Christian males and 54.6 for Christian females. The death rates are even lower for those of no religion.

ONS's Nick Stripe, Head of Life Events, noted that:

"The risk of death involving COVID-19 varies across religious groups, with those identifying as Muslims, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh showing a higher rate of death than other groups."

This analysis covers deaths in the period 2nd March to 15th May 2020. Death records were linked to 2011 Census records to assign religion to the deceased persons.

Dr Jhutti-Johal, from the University of Birmingham, highlighted the need for more data:

"I welcome these data from ONS on religion, ethnicity and COVID-19 deaths, which show higher deaths amongst the Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh communities than other religious groups. It appears that a lot of the increased risk is due to geographic, socio-economic and demographic factors. Adjusting for these characteristics in a Cox regression analysis shows a lower risk than simply adjusting for age; however, in most cases, hazard ratios of death are still higher versus the Christian community. Ethnicity may also be playing a part. Also, currently, the analysis has been unable to adjust for factors such as prevalence levels of pre-existing medical conditions in religious groups which may help to explain the disparities further."

Sikh Assembly and the British Sikh Report team welcome this initial publication of COVID-19 related statistics by religious groups. We encourage the ONS to develop further analysis, demonstrating the differential impacts and disparities experienced by various groups.

Sikh Assembly emphasises that religion and belief became protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. It is essential that, ten years after the Act became law, statistics disaggregated by religion are as routinely available as those by ethnic categories.

The British Sikh Report team, Sikh Assembly and other partner organisations remain committed to supporting and engaging with the development of a broad range of official statistics to support the discussion of issues of relevance to Sikhs living in Britain. Jagdev Singh Virdee, the editor of the British Sikh Report (BSR), highlighted the value of statistics on the Sikh community in Britain:

“We now have several years of experience of developing robust statistics of relevance to Sikhs through the BSR, and can offer statistical expertise combined with knowledge of the community to improve the range and quality of official statistics relating to British Sikhs.”

Our partner organisations include those with expertise on social issues such as health and wellbeing, crime and gender inequalities.

Paramjit Kaur Matharu, CEO of Sikh Assembly, called for further investigation:

“This ONS analysis of COVID 19 related deaths by religious denomination confirms that there are significant factors that have disproportionately impacted on religious minority groups. The Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh rates of death per 100,000 of the population show a stark differential to the population as a whole. Sikh Assembly urges the Government to ensure that the cross-government commission that is being set up by the Prime Minister to look at racial disparities also includes the dimension of religion in its terms of reference. There needs to be an urgent focused action plan to understand and remediate the causes of this unacceptable disparity between communities in the UK, with measurable outcomes.”

Community Resource Team
Sikh Assembly