

How did the different government approaches for lockdown in the UK and New Zealand affect the number of covid deaths?

Introduction

The 1st Covid case was confirmed in January 2020. The UK government advised that travellers that came from affected countries to follow the guidelines and began contact tracing which was then later abandoned due to all the errors and problems caused.

Later on, the government added further restrictions as it continued to spread. It led to the PM Boris Johnson announcing the first lockdown in 23rd March 2020.

Across the country, localised lockdowns, social distancing measures, self-isolation laws for those exposed to the virus, rules on face masks were introduced, as well as efforts to expand COVID-19 testing and tracing.

“Non-essential” businesses were closed, people were ordered to stay at home and only permitted to leave for essential purposes only for example, food purchases or medical reasons.

Timeline of UK restrictions

May 10th, 2020: a conditional plan for lifting lockdown was announced for those who cannot work from home, should return to their workplaces. However, were not permitted to use public transport.

June 1st, 2020: schools re-opened in England and non-essential shops reopened on **15th June**. However, 2m social distancing was introduced.

2nd week of August 2020: lockdown restrictions were further eased, allowing indoor theatres, bowling alleys and soft play to reopen.

September 14th, 2020: the ‘rule of six’ was introduced and stated that any indoor and outdoor gatherings above 6 were banned in England.

2nd week of October 2020: new three-tier system of Covid-19 restrictions starts in England, and it was announced that a second lockdown is being put in place to help reduce the strain being put on the NHS in response to an increase in cases.

November 5th, 2020: 2nd lockdown and was in place until December 2nd.

December 2nd, 2020: after 4 weeks. Return to a stricter three-tier system of restrictions.

December 19th, 2020: a new tier 4 system of restrictions was put in place for London followed by other areas later on in the month.

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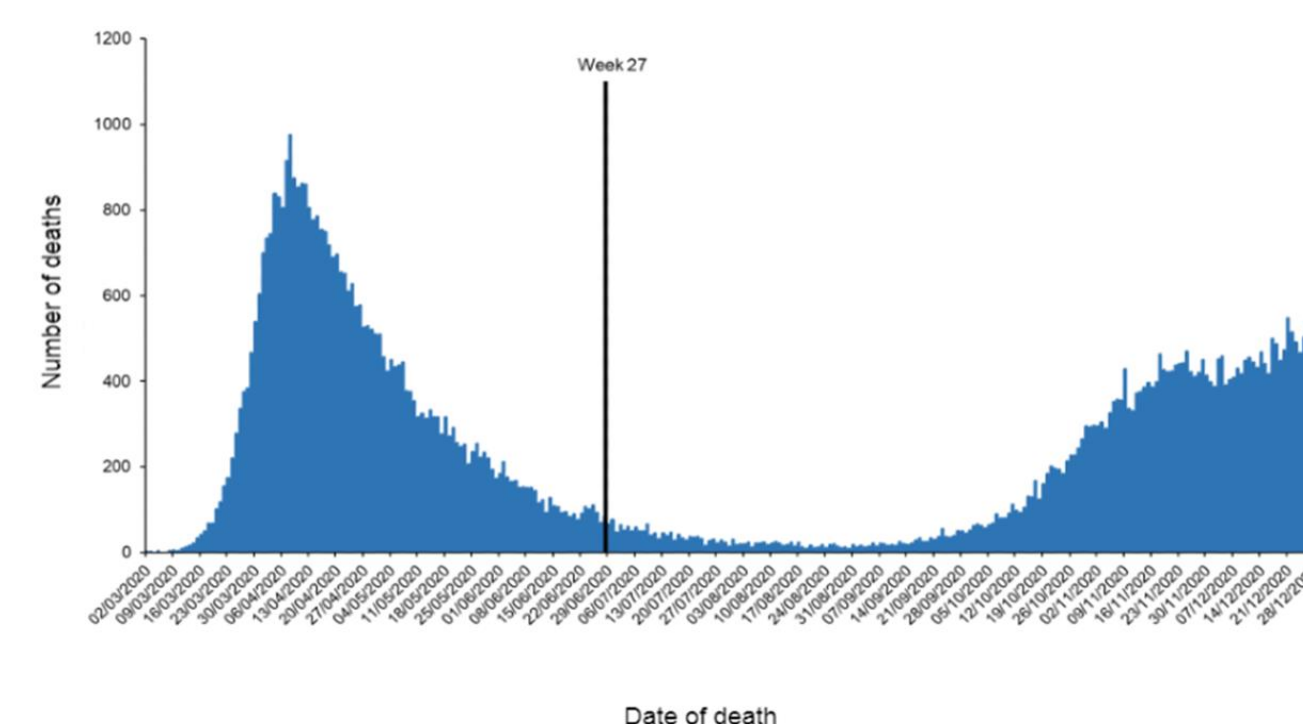
Between January 4th & 6th 2021: England enters their 3rd national lockdown.

February 22nd, 2021: PM published a roadmap for the lifting of the lockdown.

March 8th, 2021: England planned a return to school for primary and secondary school students in England. There were still some guidelines that were followed to keep the spread of Covid to a minimum i.e. masks and social distancing in public areas.

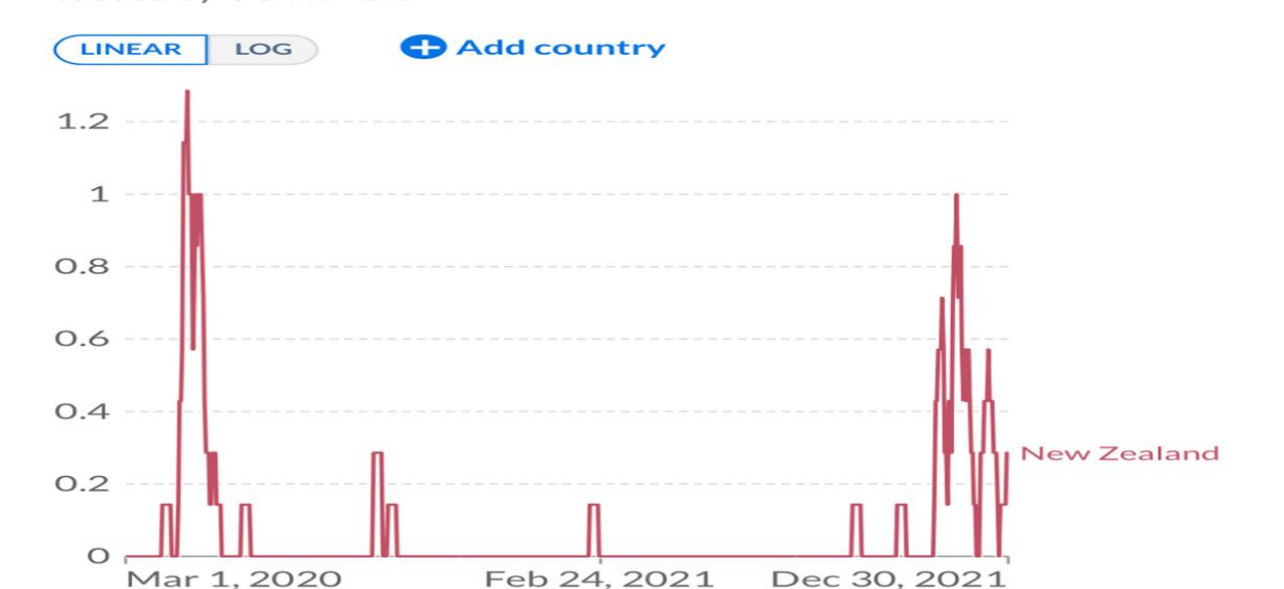
February 24th, 2022 Remaining restrictions were lifted in England under a “living with COVID” plan announced by the government.

Figure 1.a. Number of deaths in laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by date of death*†



Of all deaths registered in 2020 in England and Wales, 73,766 (12.1%) were due to coronavirus (COVID-19); the age-standardised mortality rate (ASMR) was 126.9 deaths per 100,000 people. The number of deaths (29,435) and the ASMR (619.3 deaths per 100,000 people) for deaths due to COVID-19 were highest in April 2020. Age-specific mortality rates in 2020 were highest among people aged 90 years and over at 2,918.1 deaths per 100,000 people; this was true for both males (3,707.2 per 100,000) and females (2,537.8 per 100,000). The North West of England had the highest ASMR for deaths due to COVID-19 in 2020 at 176.0 deaths per 100,000 people, while the South West of England had the lowest rate at 59.3 deaths per 100,000.

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths 7-day rolling average. Due to varying protocols and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death, the number of confirmed deaths may not accurately represent the true number of deaths caused by COVID-19.



Following the lockdown, the number of cases started to decline, and New Zealand was able to effectively contain the spread of the virus. By June 8, 2020, there were no active cases in the country. However, a small number of new cases were later reported, primarily among returning travellers who were in quarantine.

Timeline of New Zealand restrictions

January 28, 2020: The New Zealand government announces travel restrictions on anyone arriving from or transiting through China due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

February 28, 2020: New Zealand reports its first COVID-19 case, a person who had recently returned from Iran.

March 14, 2020: New Zealand reports its first case of community transmission.

March 23, 2020: New Zealand enters a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19.

April 27, 2020: New Zealand lifts some lockdown restrictions, allowing some businesses to reopen.

May 13, 2020: New Zealand reports no active cases of COVID-19 for the first time since the outbreak began.

June 8, 2020: New Zealand lifts almost all remaining lockdown restrictions, and life returns to near-normal.

August 11, 2020: New Zealand reports a new cluster of COVID-19 cases in Auckland, prompting the government to implement new restrictions in the city.

September 21, 2020: Auckland's COVID-19 restrictions are lifted as the number of cases in the city

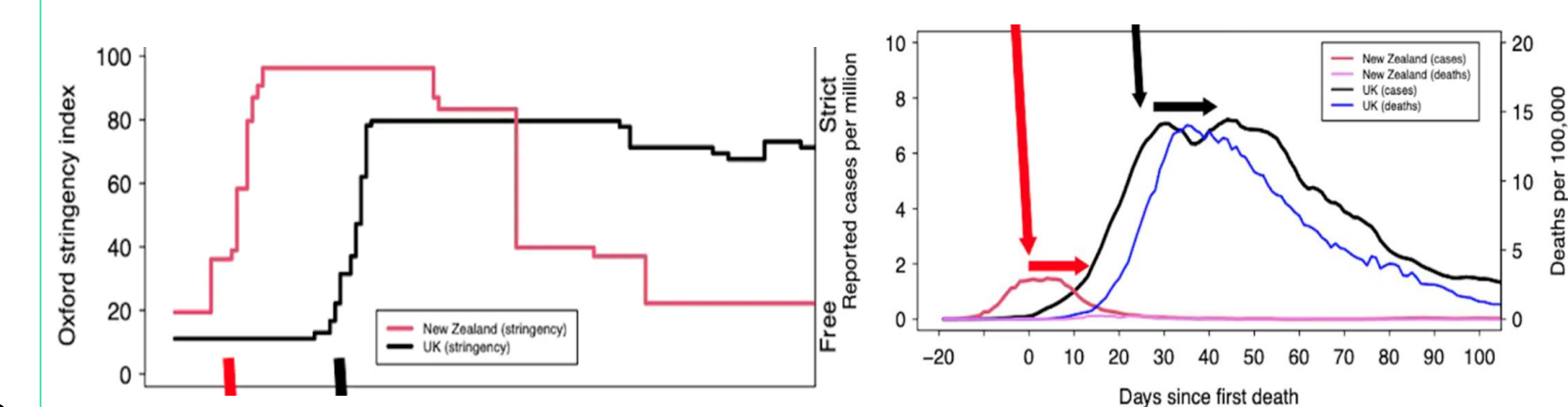
November 18, 2020: New Zealand signs an agreement with pharmaceutical company Pfizer to buy 1.5 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine

December 14, 2020: New Zealand announces that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use in the country

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December 19, 2020: The first shipment of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines arrives in New Zealand.

December 31, 2020: New Zealand reports a new case of COVID-19 in the community, the first in more than two months.



Due to the quick, stricter response from New Zealand, it allowed them to be less affected by the virus, resulting in no deaths and minimal cases compared to UK showing that they put down restrictions around 20 days later than New Zealand causing it to have a much bigger impact on the population. Graph 1 on column 4 shows the approach on the stringency of the restrictions, New Zealand were able to be free of restrictions much earlier than the UK as they put their restrictions much early on. Graph 2 on column 4 also shows that because the UK had put their restrictions on later, it has caused the UK to still be under strict restrictions. Graph 2 on column 4 shows the results of the different restriction approaches, portraying that because of New Zealand's quick response to the virus they experienced less damage whereas the UK experienced much worse which is shown through the big gap between New Zealand's and the UK data sets.

Conclusion

The data suggests that compared to the UK, the New Zealand approach to Covid restrictions was more effective overall. The implementation of really strict restrictions from the start led to fewer deaths overall compared to the UK. However, compared to New Zealand, the UK is a much larger country with a higher population density. With the UK and London being a major financial and trading hub, it would be difficult to completely close borders as the New Zealand government did.

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