

# University of Washington study suggests COVID-19 deaths far higher than official reports

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A team of researchers at the University of Washington Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) has found evidence that suggests the number of people who have died due to COVID-19 is much higher than official reports would indicate. They have undertaken a country-by-country analysis of deaths due to COVID-19 that includes factors associated with the pandemic as a whole and have published their results [on the IHME website](#).

Most [medical experts](#) involved with the current [pandemic](#) agree that the number of people who have died from COVID-19 is higher than official reports indicate. This is because many people who died were not listed as COVID-19 casualties; instead, they were listed as dying from other causes or their deaths were not recorded at all—what experts have not agreed on is the degree of difference. In this new effort, the researchers sought to calculate estimates for the total number of people who died in each country and then to add them together to find a global total.

The work involved combing death records for each country for the time covering the pandemic and then comparing those numbers with the average number of deaths over the past several years. Numbers in excess of the average were then assumed attributable to COVID-19 or other factors associated with the pandemic, such as an increased likelihood of dying from cancer due to fear of seeking treatment during a pandemic.

To create their estimates, the researchers counted deaths around the world week by week, factoring in six drivers of mortality: total official deaths from COVID-19, increases in deaths due to delayed treatment for other ailments, increases in deaths due to increases in mental health conditions such as depression, reductions in deaths due to fewer incidents involving injury, such as car accidents due to the pandemic, reductions in deaths due to less spread of other diseases such as the flu and reductions in deaths due to people who would have died from other ailments such as [chronic diseases](#) but were listed as COVID-19 deaths.

After analyzing their data, the researchers found major discrepancies between official death tallies and those they found through their calculations. Egypt, for example, reported just over 13,000 deaths, while the IHME number came to 170,000. Another example was Russia—officials there reported just over 100,000 deaths, while the team at IHME found the number was more likely over 600,000. The researchers also found that the actual death toll in the U.S. is likely nearly twice as high as official reports—as of May 3, it was 574,043. They found it more likely the number is closer to 905,289. All told, the researchers found that worldwide death estimates have been far lower than actual deaths. The WHO has reported the worldwide death toll (which has been calculated using each country's official tallies) as 3.25 million people as of May 6.

The IHME team found the number is much likely closer to 6.93 million.

**More information:**

[www.healthdata.org/special-ana ... rted-covid-19-deaths](http://www.healthdata.org/special-ana...rted-covid-19-deaths)

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