

Virus gives Belgium deadliest April since WWII: study

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Coronavirus brought Belgium its deadliest April since world War 2 last month, according to a new study as the country begins slowly to lift lockdown measures.

A total of 14,790 people died in Belgium last month as COVID-19 swept

the nation—substantially higher than the normal April total of deaths below 9,000, researchers from VUB university in Brussels found.

Not since the Nazi occupation of the 1940s has Belgium seen such a [high mortality rate](#) in April, the month when high winter death rates usually drop off with the onset of spring, the researchers found.

"Mortality in Belgium is exceptionally high, reaching unprecedented levels, especially in the period from 1 to 12 April," the university said in a statement.

April 10 saw 639 deaths, "more than double the number that would have been expected for that day".

"April 2020 was the deadliest April since the Second World War, both in absolute numbers and per capita," it said.

There were 15.7 deaths per 1,000 population last month, Professor Patrick Deboosere of the Interface Demography research group that produced the study told AFP.

This compares with 16.3 deaths per 1,000 population in April 1941.

Belgium has been hit hard by the pandemic, suffering one of the world's highest per capita death tolls, though the virus appears to be easing and lockdown restrictions are starting to be lifted.

The government has also been praised by the World Health Organization for keeping more accurate tolls than some of its neighbours, and the per capita rate may be higher because of this.

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