Stats: England had Europe's highest extra deaths in pandemic

July 30 2020, by Jill Lawless

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks to the owner of the the Cycle Lounge, Rodney Rouse, a bicycle repair shop Beeston near Nottingham, England, Tuesday, July 28, 2020. The government is launching a new cycling intuitive to help get people fitter. (AP Photo/Rui Vieira, Pool)

England suffered a more widespread coronavirus outbreak than its

European neighbors and had the highest level of excess deaths during the pandemic, according to [an analysis of more than 20 countries](#) released Thursday by the U.K.'s Office for National Statistics.

Spain had Europe's highest national mortality peak, with deaths at the start of April soaring 138.5% above the five-year average, almost two-and-a-half times the usual number, according to analysis of figures from British authorities and the European Union statistics agency, Eurostat.

England had the second-highest peak, with excess mortality spiking to more than double the average, 107.6%, in mid-April. England also had the biggest overall increase and the longest continuous period of excess mortality of the countries compared.

By the end of May, the cumulative mortality rate in England was 7.55% higher than the five-year average. Spain was second, with 6.65% more deaths than usual.

The biggest regional spikes were in central Spain and northern Italy. In Bergamo, Italy, the death rate in March hit 847.7% above the five-year average.

The U.K. statistics office says Britain was hit by a more widespread outbreak than in many other European nations, where the virus was more localized. It said every region of the U.K. had higher-than-average deaths at the height of the outbreak in April.

Britain's official coronavirus death toll stands at just under 46,000, the third-highest total in the world after the United States and Brazil. That is likely an underestimate—overall, the number of deaths in England so far this year is more than 53,000 above the five-year average.

Excess mortality is considered the best guide to the pandemic's impact

because it includes deaths of people who were not tested for the virus, and those whose deaths were indirectly caused by COVID-19.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government says there will be an independent inquiry into why the U.K. has had such a high death toll.

Asked about the high death rate on Thursday, Johnson said "this country has had a massive success now in reducing the numbers of those tragic deaths," and urged people to be vigilant about maintaining social distancing.