

Death from COVID-19 is often not random: Researchers say the same pattern is found around the world

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

At least 6 million people have died from COVID-19 to date. But who dies is often not random. The same pattern is found around the world.

COVID-19 hit some countries harder than others. But the same groups

of people were hit hardest everywhere.

The UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) have now established a working group to study who was the hardest hit, and why. The work is being led from Trondheim.

Who dies involves multiple factors, including where people live, where they were born, working conditions, education and how much they earn.

So which countries were hit the hardest, who was hit the hardest in each country and why was that the case? Where is it most dangerous to be poor? The researchers have been tasked to find this out.

"We're looking at how COVID mortality varied globally between [social groups](#)," says Professor Terje Andreas Eikemo at the Center for Global Health Inequalities Research (CHAIN) at NTNU.

Although the mortality rate in the Nordic region was relatively low, the course of the disease was more severe and [mortality rates](#) higher among migrants.

Global research effort on COVID-19

The UN and WHO commissioned NTNU's research center with the assignment. The work is so extensive that CHAIN [asked the international research community for help](#) in the WHO's *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* journal.

The response was not long in coming. More than 50 established researchers from all over the world are now going through 15,000 research articles that NTNU's university library has identified. Six employees from the University Library are involved in the work.

"This is very labor-intensive but important work that we are proud to be a part of," says Solvor Solhaug. She is the team leader for NTNU University Library's Systematic searches, Section for research support, data and analysis.

The results are not yet clear, but so far the pandemic appears to have made existing [social differences](#) more apparent, and even reinforced them. This seems to apply not only in countries with limited financial resources, but also in those with strong economies.

"COVID-19 has been a double burden for disadvantaged groups. They've been harder hit by the virus, and they also suffered the most from the consequences of the measures, such as loss of work and income, [social isolation](#) and reduced access to health services," says Eikemo.

Led by CHAIN researcher

CHAIN's research coordinator Mirza Balaj is leading the study. Balaj is based in Brussels, and from there she heads several of CHAIN's projects, commissioned by [international organizations](#) and the European Commission.

Balaj was one of the first authors of [a study](#) in *The Lancet* that discovered a universal connection between parental education and [child mortality](#) last year. She also holds international board positions in the UN, WHO and Global Burden of Disease, the world's largest scientific consortium.

"If we're to influence the will for political change, we need to be present where the decision-makers are. We need to strengthen the link between research and politics, which COVID-19 exemplified," says Balaj.

The results of the study will be ready in the second half of 2023.

Provided by Norwegian University of Science and Technology

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