

COVID-19 Results Briefing: United Kingdom

November 19, 2020

This document contains summary information on the latest projections from the IHME model on COVID-19 in the United Kingdom. The model was run on November 18, 2020.

Daily cases and deaths have increased slightly over the previous week, although the rate of increase is slowing. The winter surge is ongoing across the United Kingdom. England continues to exhibit a slightly growing epidemic, while Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland show continued evidence of containing further growth. Globally, we have seen convincing evidence from hospital studies of individual patients and population-level measurements that the infection-fatality rate (IFR) has declined 30% since April due to improved treatment. These latest forecasts include this reduced IFR. Despite this, we expect 25,000 cumulative deaths by the end of the year in the UK, with a concurrent peak of daily deaths at 750 a day. Mask use has not increased and remains at 60%; further increases to 95% could save a further 18,000 lives by March 1. IHME models predict the most modest COVID-19 increases in daily death rates among those models tracked.

Current situation

- Daily reported cases in the last week increased to 22,800 per day on average, compared to 22,500 the week before (Figure 1).
- Daily deaths in the last week increased to 360 per day on average, compared to 330 the week before (Figure 2).
 - This makes COVID-19 the number 1 cause of death in the UK this week (Table 1).
- Effective R, computed using cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, is greater than 1 in England (Figure 3).
 - The countries with the greatest expected increase in transmission are England, Scotland, and Wales.
- We estimated that 15% of people in the UK have been infected as of November 16. Among countries, this ranged from 12% in Northern Ireland to 16% in England (Figure 4).
- Approximately 11% of infections were detected on November 16, 2020 (Figure 5).
- The daily death rate is greater than 4 per million in all four countries of the UK (Figure 6).

Trends in drivers of transmission

- Across all four countries of the UK, the median number of social distancing and mask mandates as of November 16 was four (Table 2).

- Mobility last week was 37% lower than the baseline mobility (average of the period January 1 to March 1, 2020; Figure 8).
 - Mobility was lower than 30% of baseline in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.
- As of November 16, we estimated that 60% of people always wore a mask when leaving their home (Figure 9) about the same as last week.
 - Among countries, mask use was highest in Northern Ireland, followed by Scotland, and lowest in England..
 - Mask use was at least 50% in all locations.
- There were 422 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people on November 16 (Figure 10).

Projections

IHME projections are for a worsening picture of COVID-19 deaths toward the end of the year in the United Kingdom. IHME remains the most conservative among forecasts of increasing deaths among the five models tracked, with Imperial and Los Alamos National Laboratories being substantially higher and Delphi MIT and SIKJalpha still projecting decreasing deaths (Figure 18).

- In our **reference scenario**, which represents what we think is most likely to happen, our model projects 92,000 cumulative deaths on January 1, 2021, and 124,000 on March 1, 2021.
 - Our results suggest that COVID-19 will have been the number 2 cause of death in the calendar year 2020.
 - Between November 16 and the end of 2020, our model projects 25,000 additional deaths in the UK.
 - We expect there to be about 750 deaths per day on January 1, 2021, and 375 deaths per day on March 1, 2021.
 - We expect there to be about 101,000 infections per day on January 1, 2021, and 39,000 infections per day on March 1, 2021.
 - We estimate that about 22% of people will have been infected by January 1, 2021, and 28% by March 1, 2021.
 - We forecast that all four countries will re-impose mandates by March 1, 2021.
 - We categorize hospital bed and intensive care unit (ICU) beds based on the percentage of total capacity occupied by COVID-19 patients.
- In our **universal mask scenario**, which assumes that mask use reaches 95% in all locations, our model projects 87,000 cumulative deaths on January 1, 2021, and 106,000 on March 1, 2021.

- If universal mask coverage (95%) were attained in the next week, our model projects 5,000 fewer cumulative deaths compared to the reference scenario on January 1, 2021, and 18,000 fewer cumulative deaths on March 1, 2021.
- Under this scenario, we estimate that about 20% of people will have been infected by January 1, 2021, and 24% by March 1, 2021.
- Under our **mandates easing scenario**, which assumes that no new mandates or measures are put in place to affect transmission, our model projects 96,000 cumulative deaths on January 1, 2021, and 193,000 cumulative deaths on March 1, 2021.
 - Our model projects 4,000 more cumulative deaths in this scenario compared to the reference scenario on January 1, 2021, and 69,000 more cumulative deaths on March 1, 2021.
 - Under this scenario, we estimate that about 27% of people will have been infected by January 1, 2021, and 49% by March 1, 2021.

Model updates

We have substantially revised the infection-fatality rate (the IFR) used in the model. To date, we had used an infection-fatality rate that was derived from an analysis of population representative antibody surveys where we disaggregated prevalence by age and matched COVID-19 death rates. The age-specific IFR from this analysis was assumed to be the same across locations and time.

We have now accumulated considerable empirical evidence that suggests that 1) the IFR has been declining since March/April due to improvements in the clinical management of patients, and 2) the IFR varies as a function of the level of obesity in a community.

The evidence supporting these observations includes:

- An analysis of detailed clinical records of more than 15,000 individuals from a COVID-19 registry organized by the American Heart Association. This registry covers patients in more than 150 hospitals. Our analysis suggests that after controlling for age, sex, comorbidities, and disease severity at admission, the hospital-fatality rate has declined by about 30% since March/April.
- An analysis of more than 250,000 individuals admitted to hospitals in Brazil with COVID-19 shows that after controlling for age, sex, obesity, and oxygenation at admission, the hospital-fatality rate has declined by about 30% since March/April.
- An analysis of age-standardized IFRs from more than 300 surveys also suggests that the population-level trends in the IFR are consistent with a 30% decline since March/April. These data also suggest that the prevalence of obesity at the population level is associated with a higher IFR and that the magnitude of the effect is similar to that found in the individual-level analysis.

Based on these empirical findings, we have switched to a new estimated infection-fatality rate. The new IFR varies over time (declining since March/April by approximately 0.19% per day until the beginning of September), varies across locations as a function of obesity prevalence, and varies across locations (as before) as a function of the population distribution by age. The implication of lower IFRs over time is that for a given number of observed deaths there are more cumulative infections.

For all COVID-19 resources at IHME, visit <http://www.healthdata.org/covid>.

Questions? Requests? Feedback? Please contact us at <https://www.healthdata.org/covid/contact-us>.

Current situation

Figure 1. Reported daily COVID-19 cases

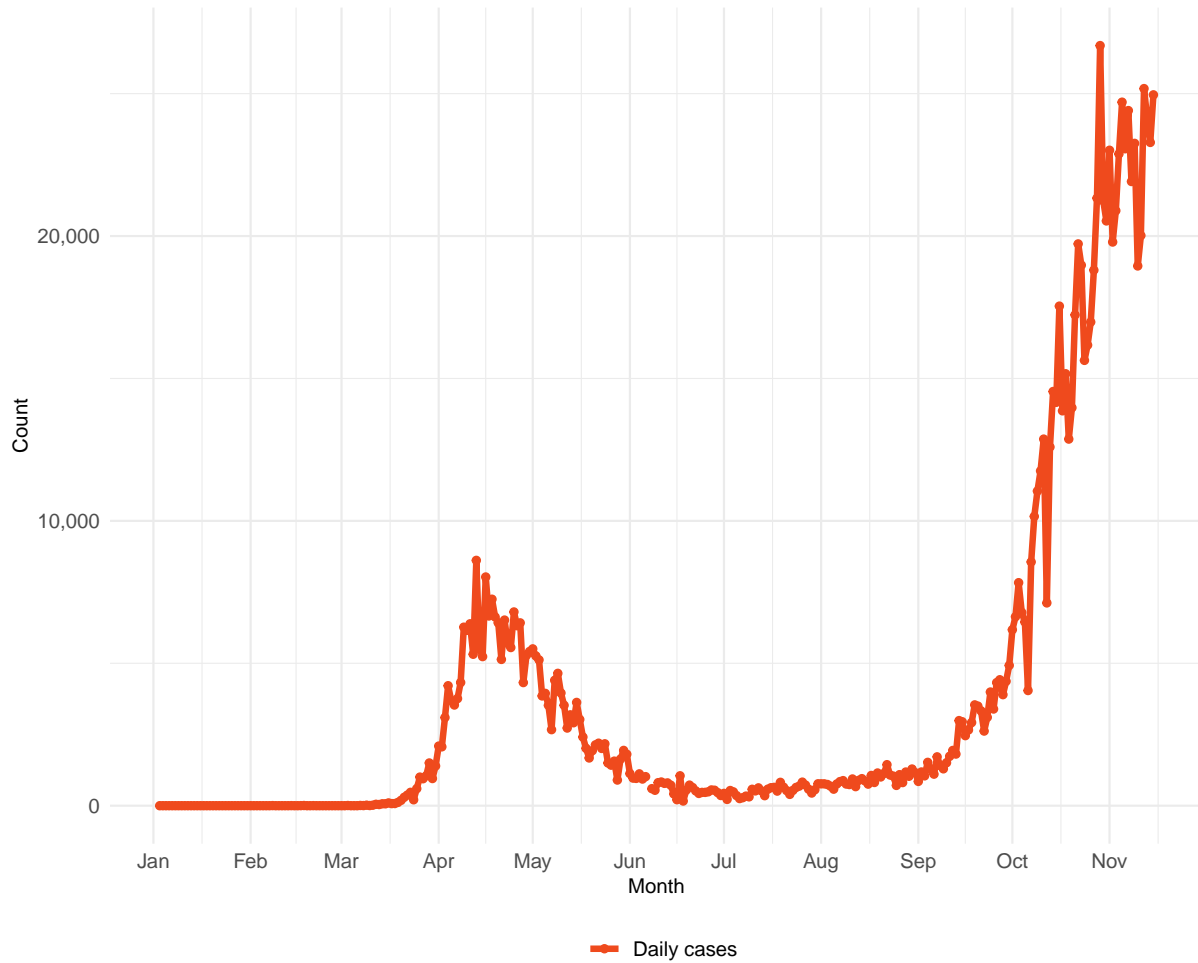


Table 1. Ranking of COVID-19 among the leading causes of mortality this week, assuming uniform deaths of non-COVID causes throughout the year

Cause name	Weekly deaths	Ranking
COVID-19	2,533	1
Ischemic heart disease	1,796	2
Stroke	974	3
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	845	4
Tracheal, bronchus, and lung cancer	824	5
Lower respiratory infections	805	6
Alzheimer's disease and other dementias	624	7
Colon and rectum cancer	466	8
Prostate cancer	307	9
Breast cancer	293	10

Figure 2a. Reported daily COVID-19 deaths.

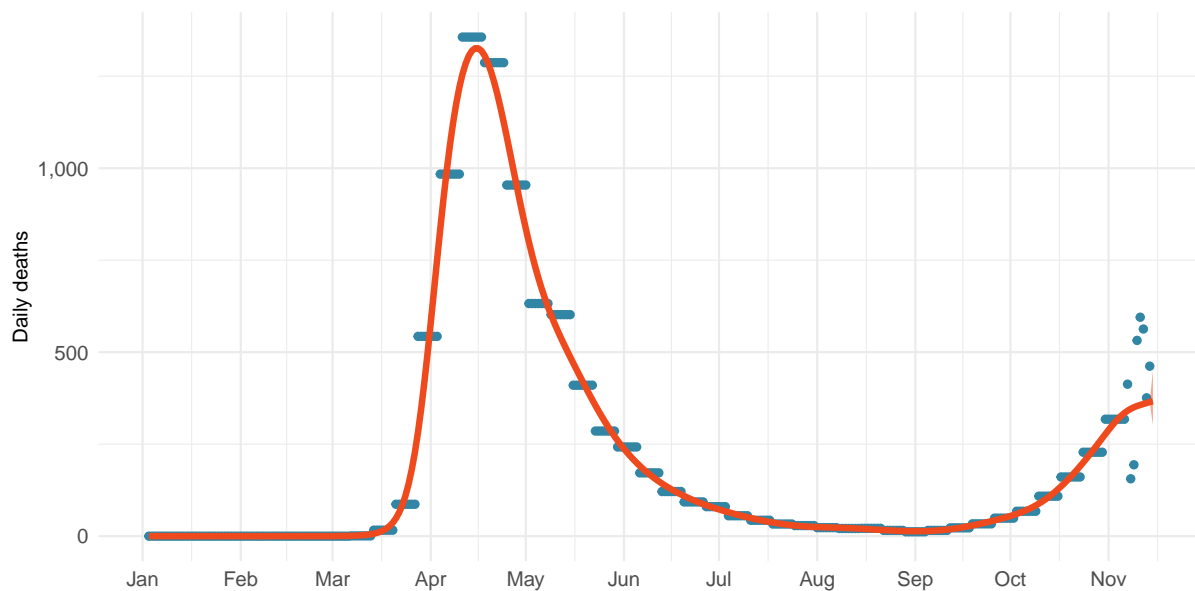


Figure 2b. Estimated cumulative deaths by age group



Figure 3. Mean effective R on November 05, 2020. The estimate of effective R is based on the combined analysis of deaths, case reporting and hospitalizations where available. Current reported cases reflect infections 11-13 days prior so estimates of effective R can only be made for the recent past. Effective R less than 1 means that transmission should decline all other things being held the same.

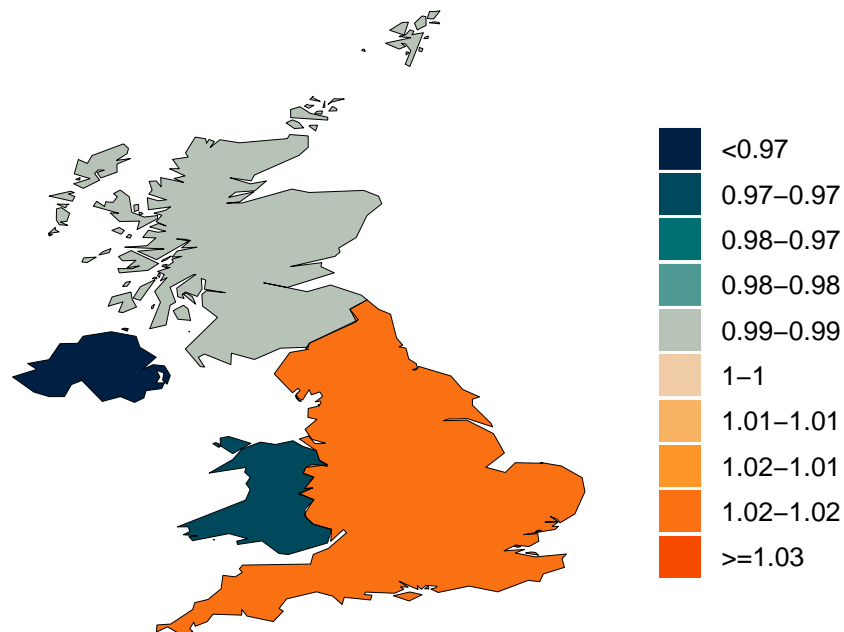


Figure 4. Estimated percent of the population infected with COVID-19 on November 16, 2020

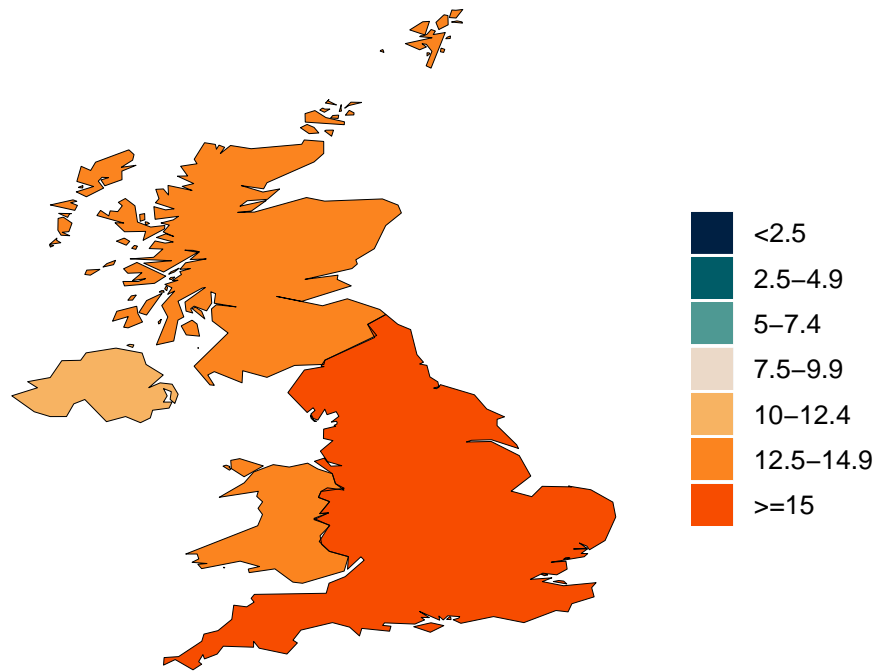


Figure 5. Percent of COVID-19 infections detected. This is estimated as the ratio of reported daily COVID-19 cases to estimated daily COVID-19 infections based on the SEIR disease transmission model.

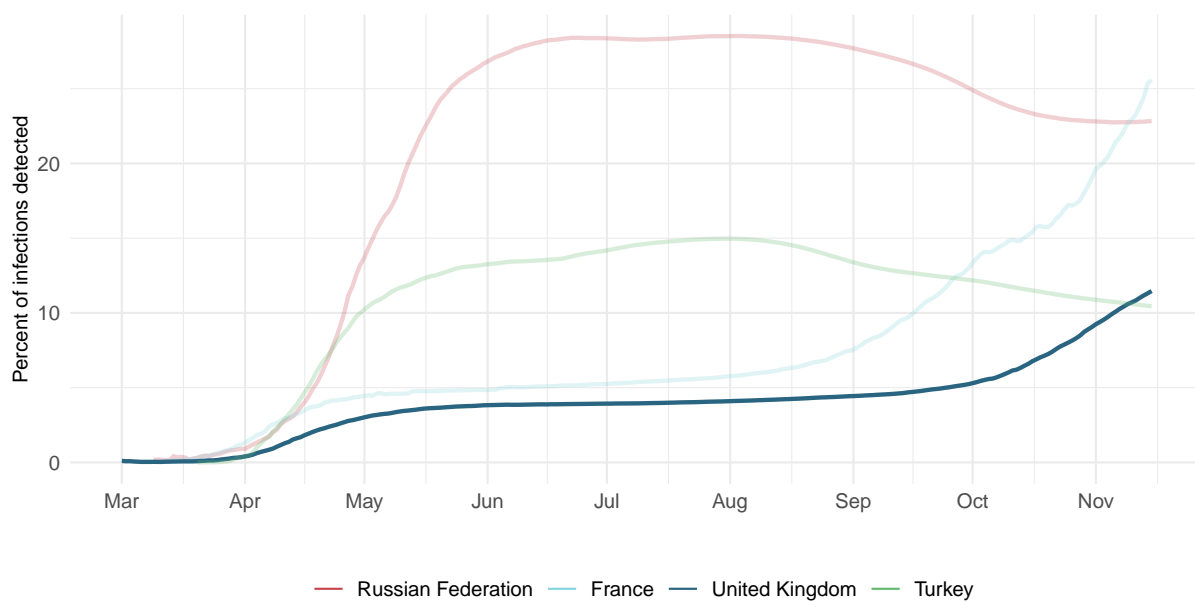
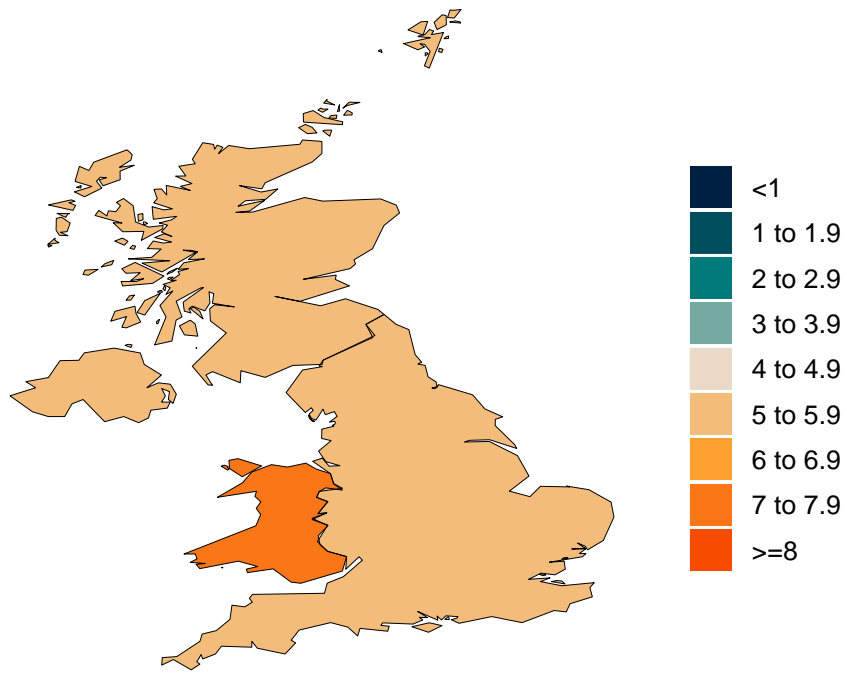


Figure 6. Daily COVID-19 death rate per 1 million on November 16, 2020



Critical drivers

Table 2. Current mandate implementation



Figure 7. Total number of social distancing mandates (including mask use)

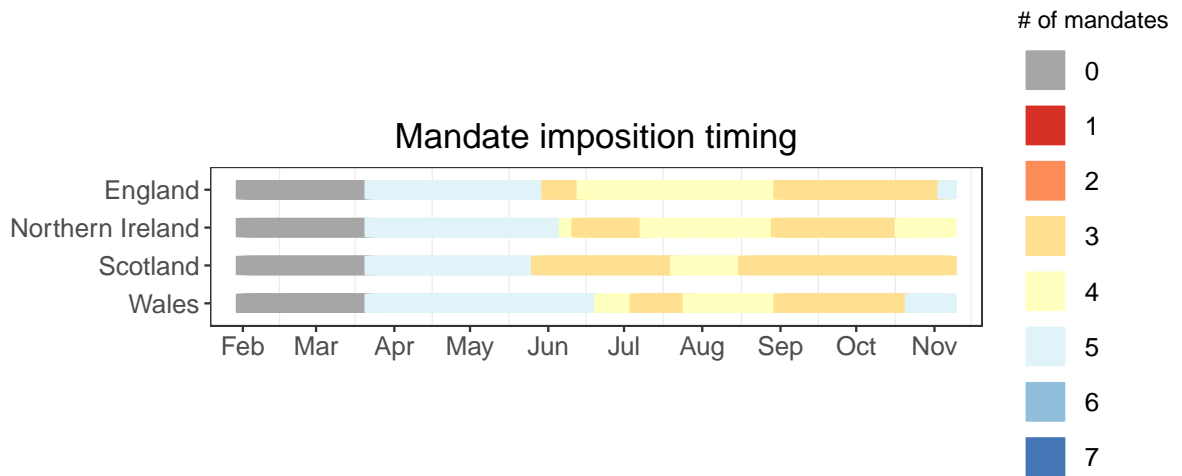


Figure 8a. Trend in mobility as measured through smartphone app use compared to January 2020 baseline

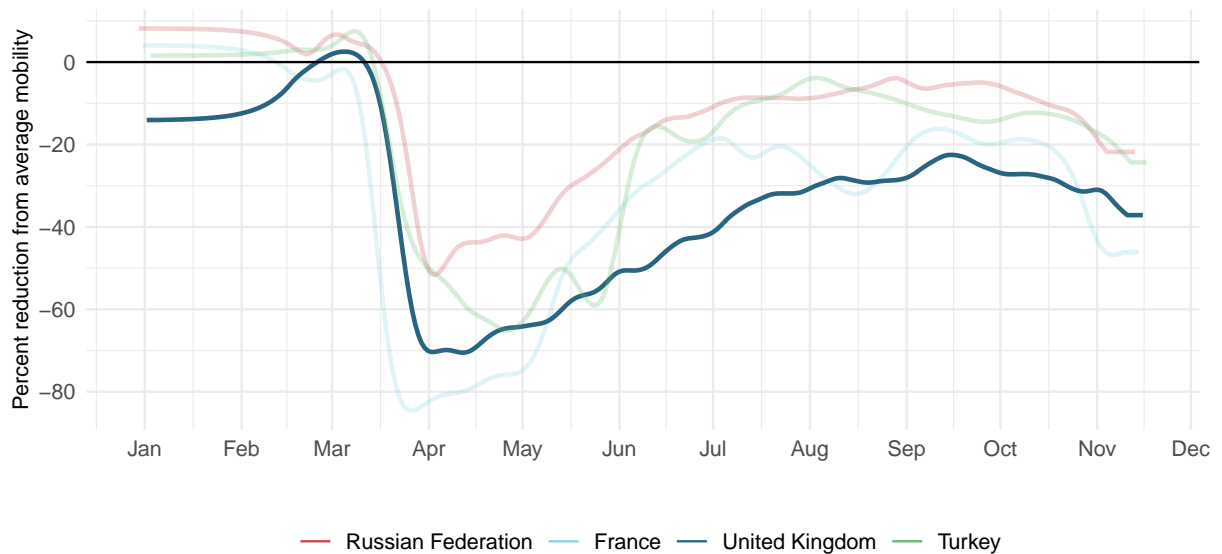


Figure 8b. Mobility level as measured through smartphone app use compared to January 2020 baseline (percent) on November 16, 2020

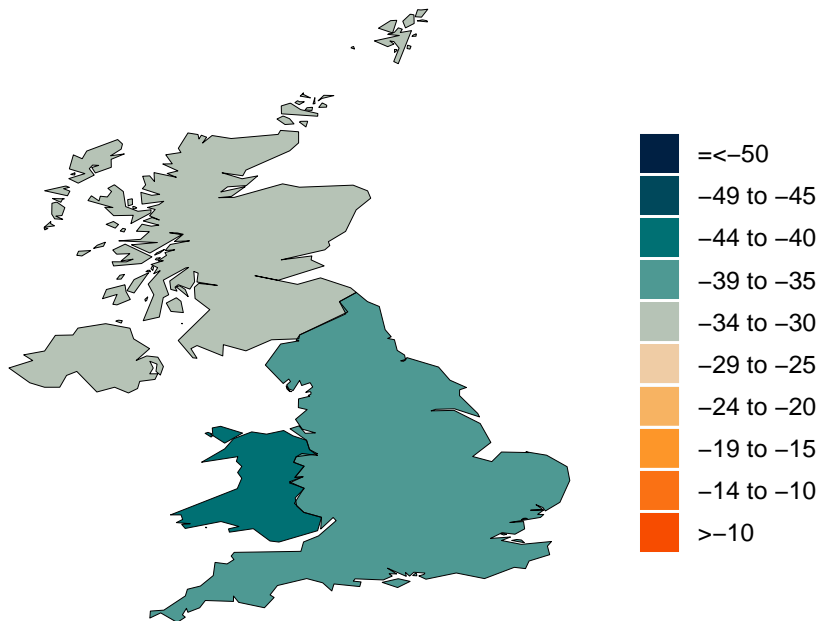


Figure 9a. Trend in the proportion of the population reporting always wearing a mask when leaving home

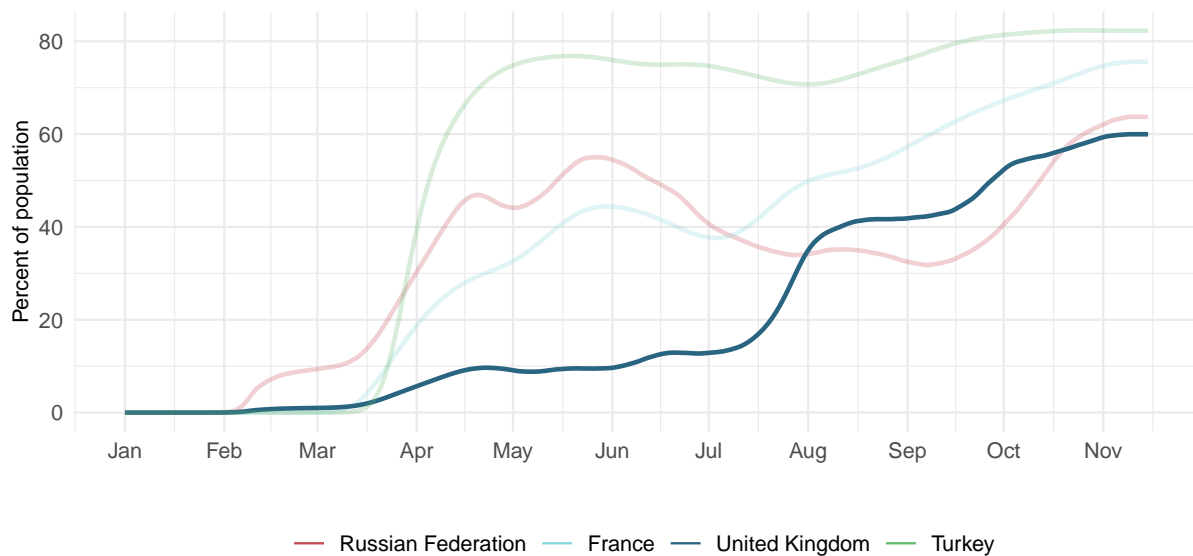


Figure 9b. Proportion of the population reporting always wearing a mask when leaving home on November 16, 2020

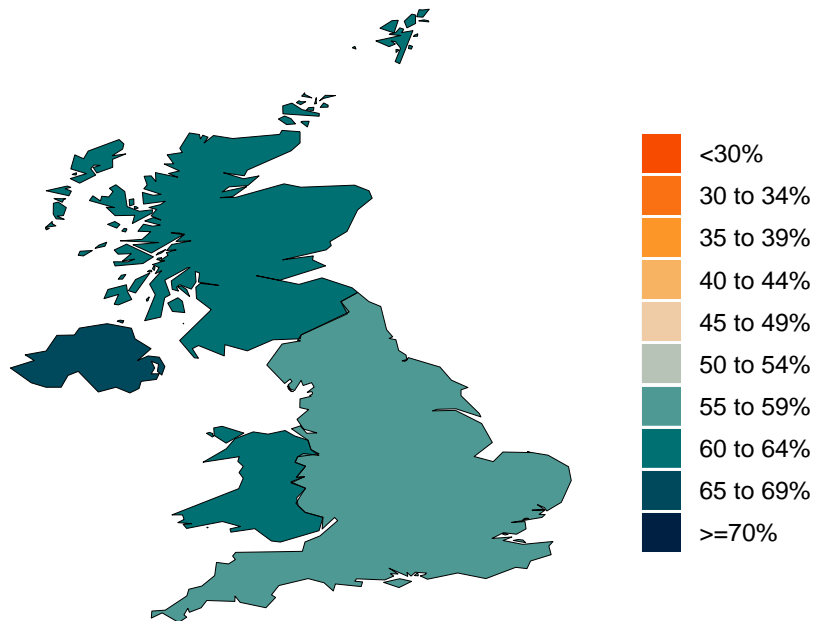


Figure 10a. Trend in COVID-19 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people

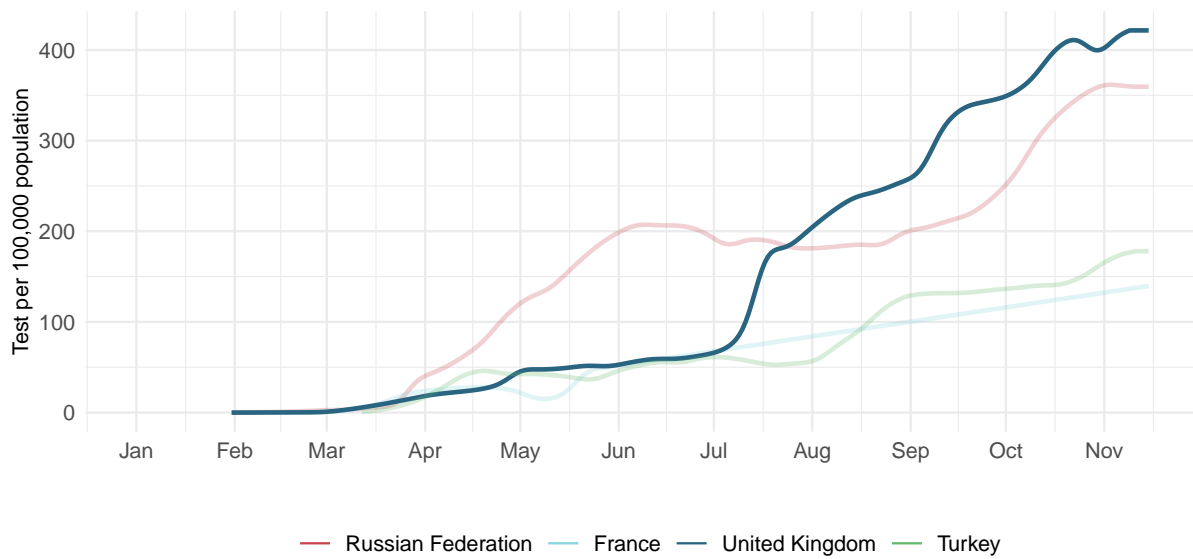


Figure 10b. COVID-19 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people on November 09, 2020

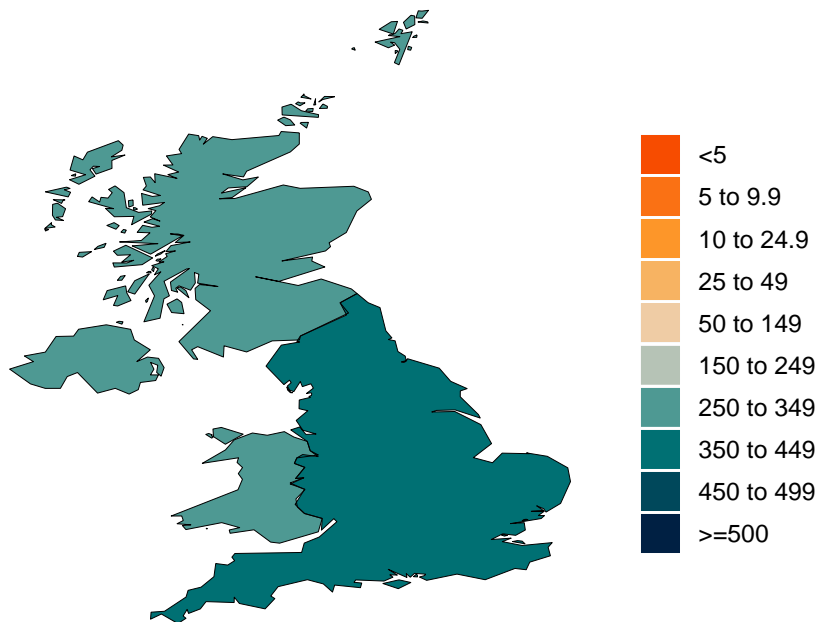
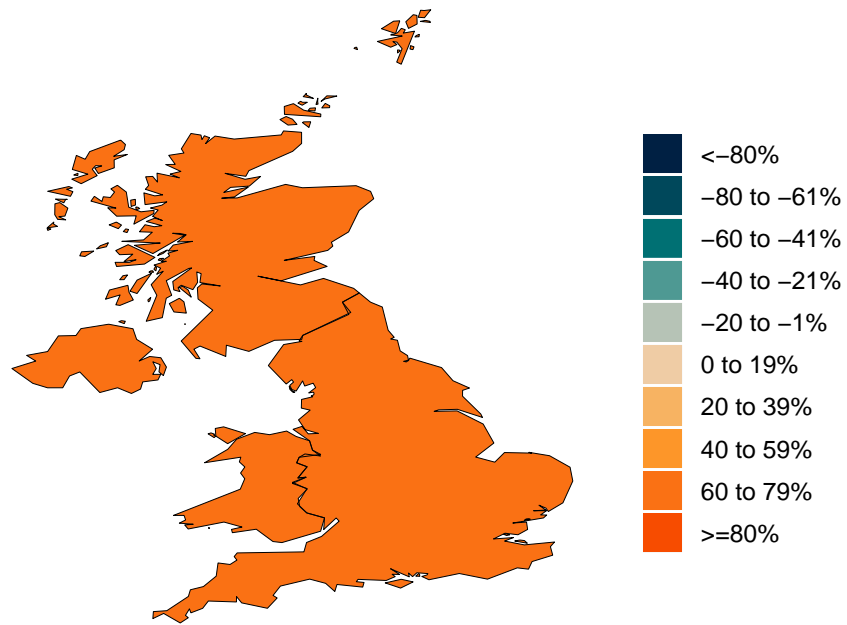


Figure 11. Increase in the risk of death due to pneumonia on February 1 compared to August 1



Projections and scenarios

We produce three scenarios when projecting COVID-19. The reference scenario is our forecast of what we think is most likely to happen. We assume that if the daily mortality rate from COVID-19 reaches 8 per million, social distancing (SD) mandates will be re-imposed. The mandate easing scenario is what would happen if governments continue to ease social distancing mandates with no re-imposition. The universal mask mandate scenario is what would happen if mask use increased immediately to 95% and social distancing mandates were re-imposed at 8 deaths per million.

Figure 12. Cumulative COVID-19 deaths until March 01, 2021 for three scenarios.

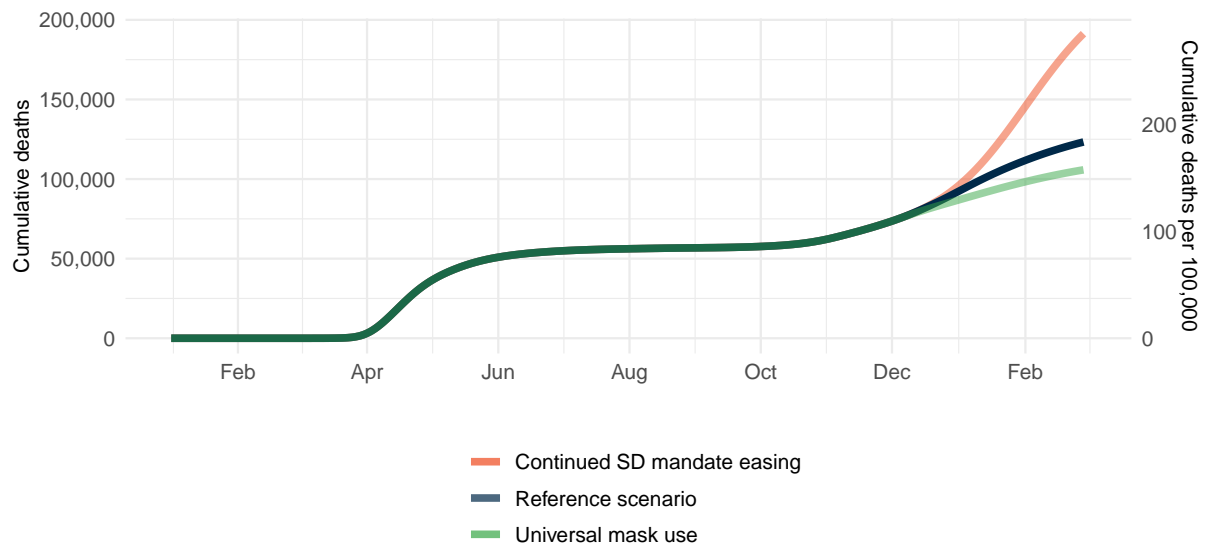


Fig 13. Daily COVID-19 deaths until March 01, 2021 for three scenarios.

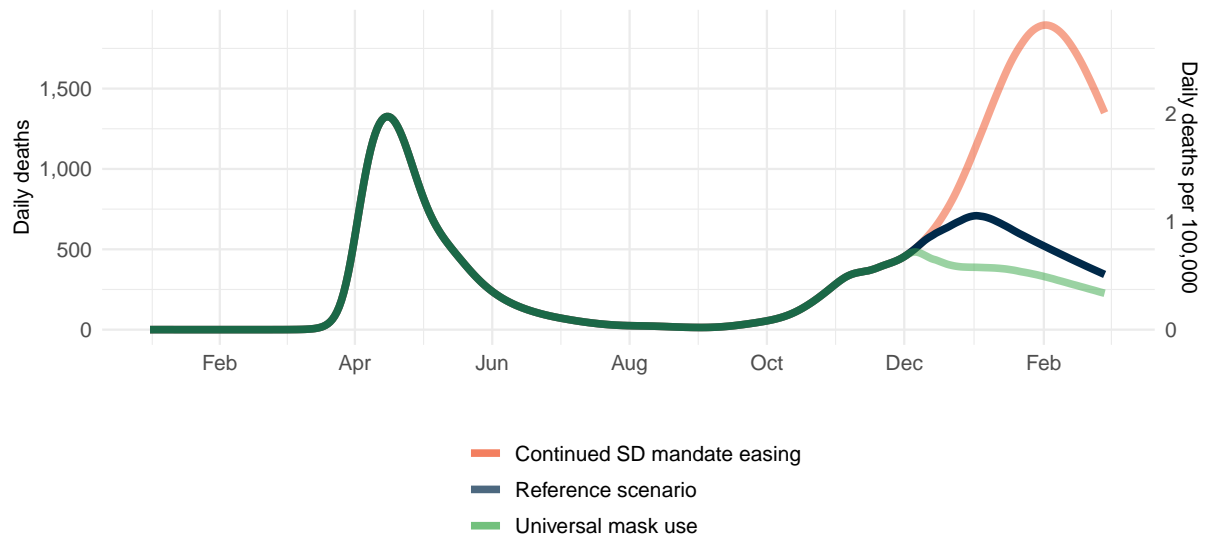


Fig 14. Daily COVID-19 infections until March 01, 2021 for three scenarios.

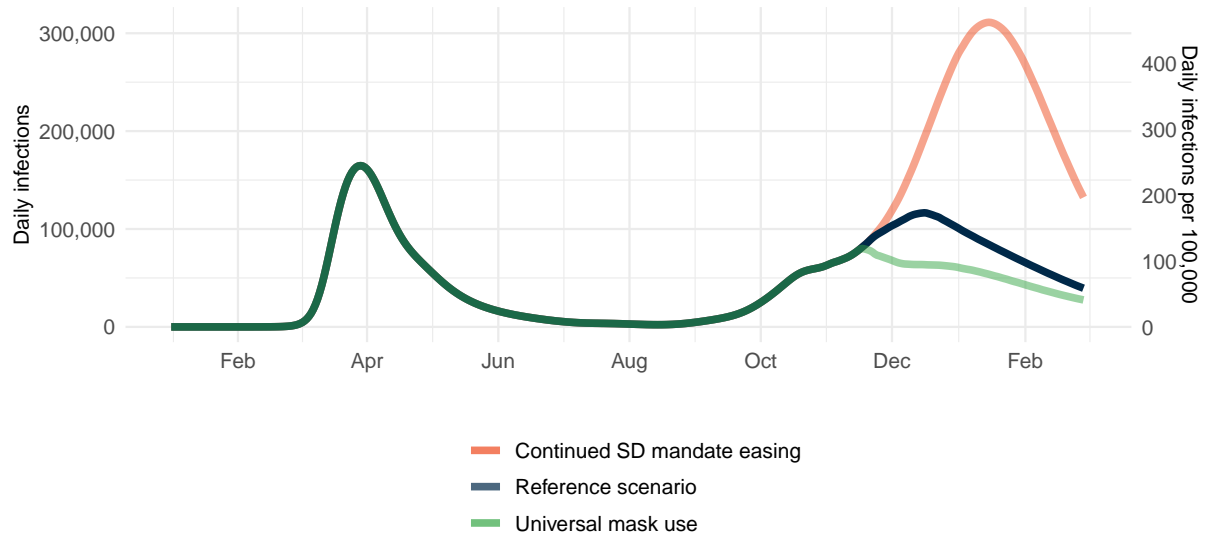


Fig 15. Month of assumed mandate re-implementation. (Month when daily death rate passes 8 per million, when reference scenario model assumes mandates will be re-imposed.)

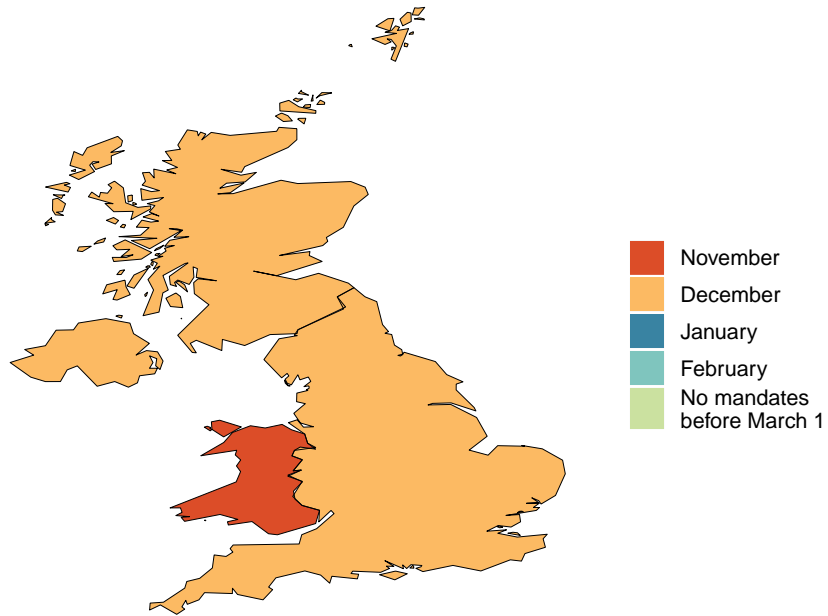


Figure 16. Forecasted percent infected with COVID-19 on March 01, 2021

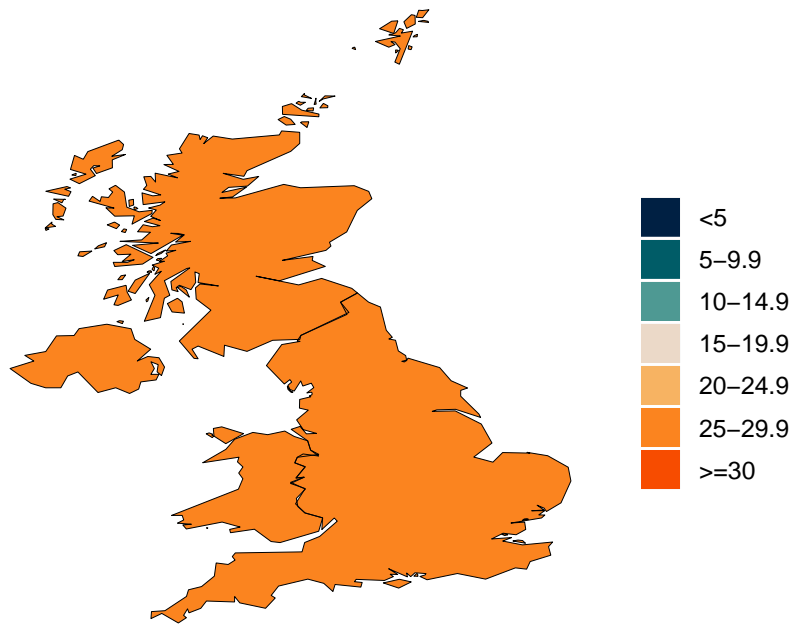


Figure 17. Daily COVID-19 deaths per million forecasted on March 01, 2021 in the reference scenario

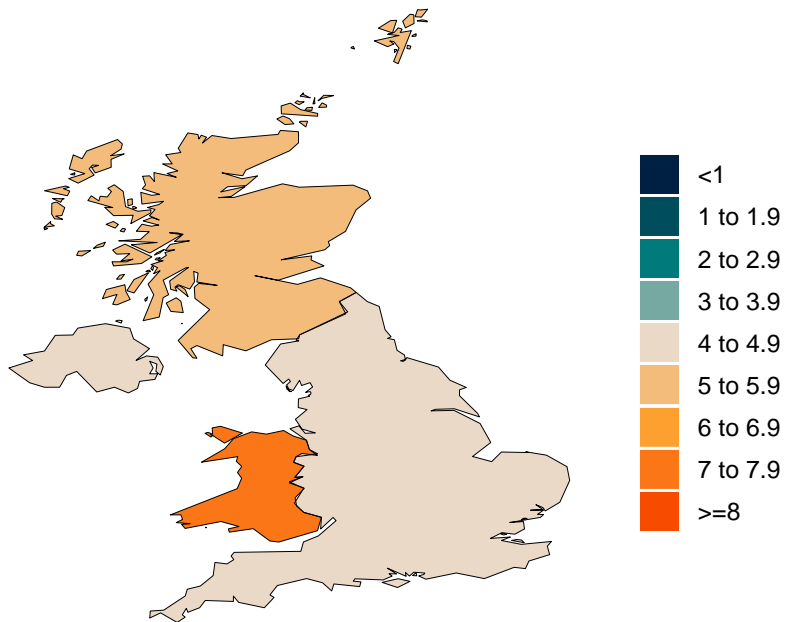


Figure 18. Comparison of reference model projections with other COVID modeling groups. For this comparison, we are including projections of daily COVID-19 deaths from other modeling groups when available: Delphi from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Delphi; <https://www.covidanalytics.io/home>), Imperial College London (Imperial; <https://www.covidsim.org>), The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL; <https://covid-19.bsvgateway.org/>), and the SI-KJalpha model from the University of Southern California (SIKJalpha; <https://github.com/scc-usc/ReCOVER-COVID-19>). Daily deaths from other modeling groups are smoothed to remove inconsistencies with rounding. Regional values are aggregates from available locations in that region.

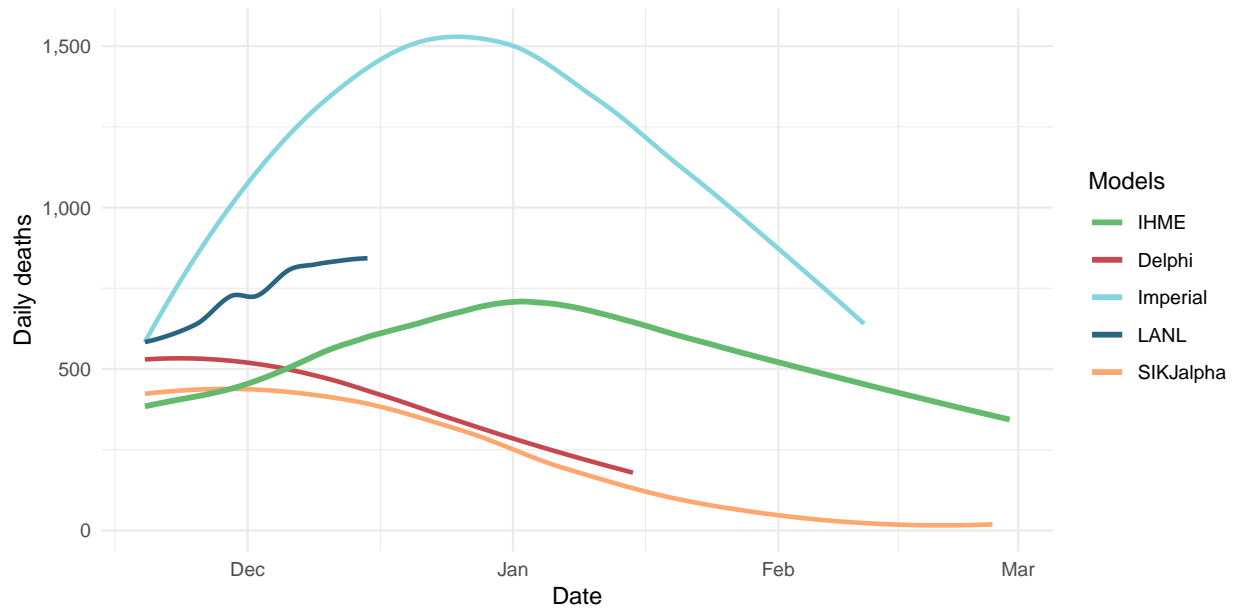


Figure 19. The estimated inpatient hospital usage is shown over time. The percent of hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is color coded based on observed quantiles of the maximum proportion of beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. Less than 5% is considered *low stress*, 5-9% is considered *moderate stress*, 10-19% is considered *high stress* and greater than 20% is considered *extreme stress*.

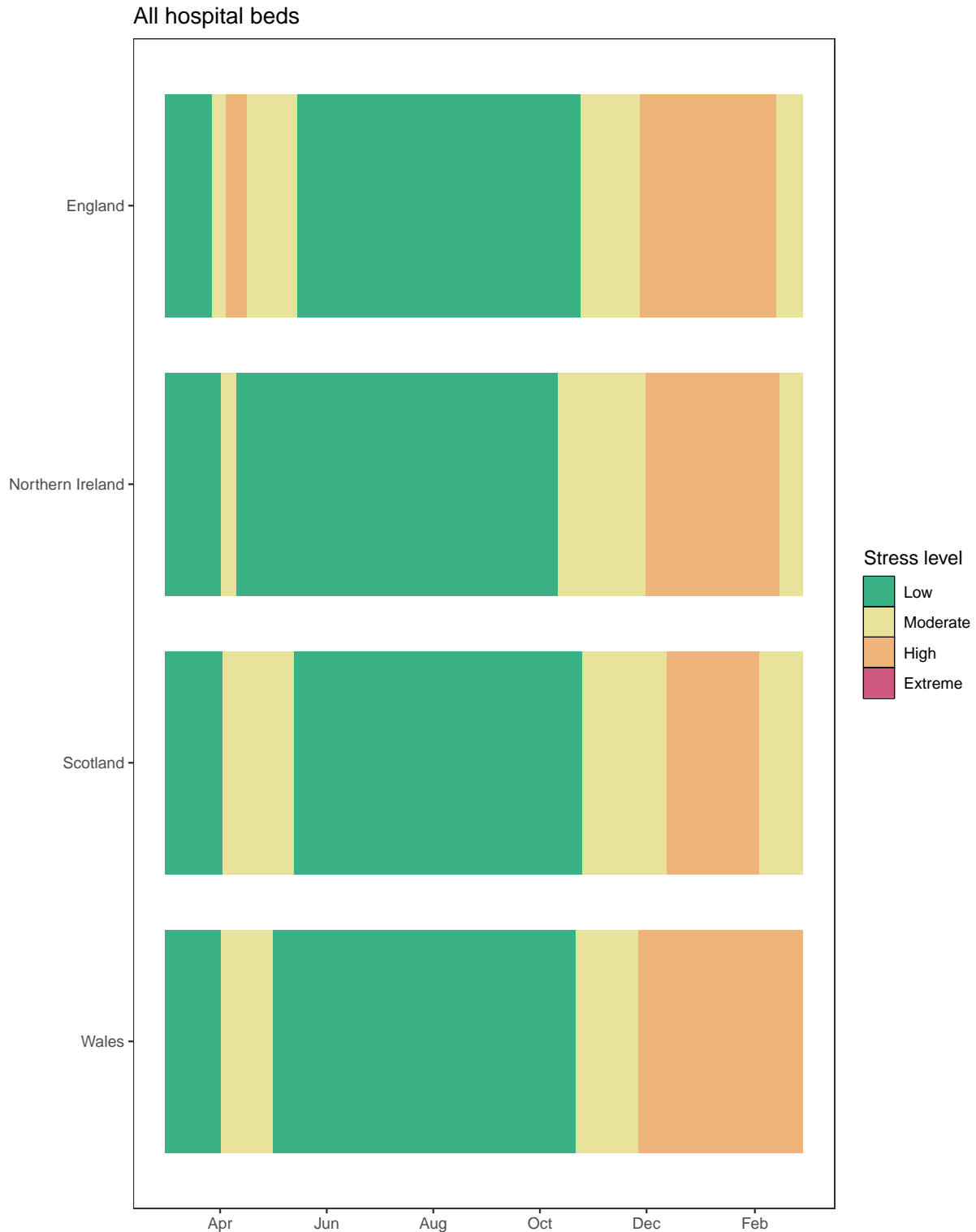


Figure 20. The estimated intensive care unit (ICU) usage is shown over time. The percent of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is color coded based on observed quantiles of the maximum proportion of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. Less than 10% is considered *low stress*, 10-29% is considered *moderate stress*, 30-59% is considered *high stress* and greater than 60% is considered *extreme stress*.

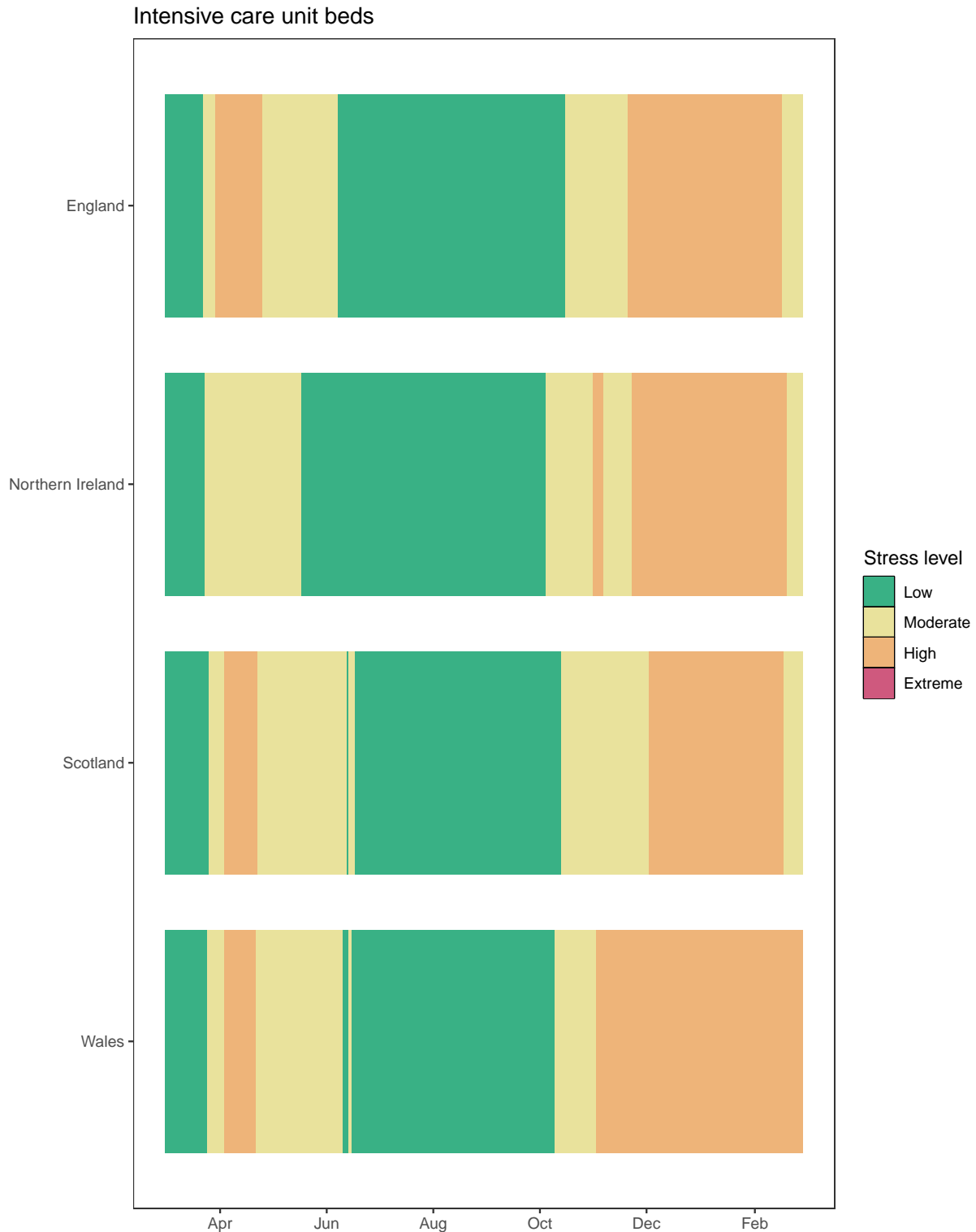


Table 3. Ranking of COVID-19 among the leading causes of mortality in the full year 2020. Deaths from COVID-19 are projections of cumulative deaths on Jan 1, 2021 from the reference scenario. Deaths from other causes are from the Global Burden of Disease study 2019 (rounded to the nearest 100).

Cause name	Annual deaths	Ranking
Ischemic heart disease	93,400	1
COVID-19	92,337	2
Stroke	50,600	3
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	43,900	4
Tracheal, bronchus, and lung cancer	42,800	5
Lower respiratory infections	41,900	6
Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias	32,400	7
Colon and rectum cancer	24,200	8
Prostate cancer	16,000	9
Breast cancer	15,300	10

Table 4. Table of the number of deaths at varying levels of the cumulative percent of the population that is infected with COVID-19. The infection fatality rate can be used to figure out how many people may eventually die from COVID-19 before a community arrives at herd immunity. Since we do not know the level at which herd immunity may be reached for COVID-19, the table below shows the total number of deaths that would be expected in United Kingdom for various levels of herd immunity. These estimates assume that there does not exist an effective vaccine and that no significant improvements in treatment will be made. We estimated that the all age infection fatality ratio as of November 18, 2020 in United Kingdom was 0.6%.

Cumulative incidence	Deaths
30%	123,000
35%	143,000
40%	164,000
45%	184,000
50%	205,000
55%	225,000
60%	246,000
65%	266,000
70%	286,000
75%	307,000
80%	327,000
85%	348,000
90%	368,000
95%	389,000

Recognition and thanks

Mask data sources:

PREMISE; Facebook Global symptom survey (This research is based on survey results from University of Maryland Social Data Science Center) and the Facebook United States symptom survey (in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University); Kaiser Family Foundation; YouGov COVID-19 Behaviour Tracker survey.

A note of thanks:

We would like to extend a special thanks to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) for key data sources; our partners and collaborators in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Honduras, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Turkey, and Ukraine for their support and expert advice; and to the tireless data collection and collation efforts of individuals and institutions throughout the world.

In addition, we wish to express our gratitude for efforts to collect social distancing policy information in Latin America to University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas (Felicia Knaul, Michael Touchton), with data published here: <http://observcovid.miami.edu/>; Fundación Mexicana para la Salud (Héctor Arreola-Ornelas) with support from the GDS Services International: Tómatelo a Pecho A.C.; and Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Anáhuac (Héctor Arreola-Ornelas); Lab on Research, Ethics, Aging and Community-Health at Tufts University (REACH Lab) and the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas (Thalia Porteny).

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