

Conundrum of COVID Statistics

A recent commentary on COVID infection rates in Europe said ‘While the rest of western Europe enjoys a relative respite from Covid infections, the UK has some of the worst Covid infection levels in the continent, despite having a vaccination rate comparable with its neighbours’. The UK is seeing an average of [554 new cases per million people](#) every day. Only Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have more, while Sweden, Germany, France, Italy and Spain are among countries with fewer than 100 cases per million. In Portugal (60 cases per million) mask wearing remains mandatory on public transport and in certain indoor spaces.’ The journalist is, of course, quite right but there is another issue.

If we look at the COVID data for those countries in Europe where the numbers of **new deaths** (i.e. yesterday’s deaths) is greater than 9, we can see that whilst:

- After Russia, UK had the **largest number of total deaths** and it was the **fourth in terms of deaths per millions** behind Hungary, Italy, Belgium and Romania;
- UK had **(just)** the largest number of total cases per million.

At the same time:

- UK was in the middle of the range of the ratio of total cases to total deaths, it was an outlier when looking at cases in the last 24 hours to deaths **in the last 24 hours**, with a ratio of 286, and next nearest was Germany with a ratio of 170.
- UK had **at least twice as many tests per thousand** as any other country.

These last two points suggest that the higher reported infection rate in the UK is at least in part a consequence of a more intensive testing regime.

Comparing Cases of and Deaths from COVID in European Countries with more than 10 new deaths, 15th October 2021

Country	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Cases / Total Deaths	New Cases / New Deaths	Population (thousands)	Total Cases/m	Total Deaths/m	Total Tests/thousand
UK	8,272,883	44,826	138,237	157	59.9	285.5	68,345	121,051	2,020	4,627,050
Russia	7,861,681	31,299	221,313	986	35.6	31.7	146,015	54,056	1,509	1,360,820
France	7,063,511	5,187	117,211	38	60.4	136.5	65,459	108,072	1,791	2,231,115
Spain	4,977,448	1,932	86,917	48	57.2	40.3	46,778	106,506	1,858	1,415,490
Italy	4,707,087	2,665	131,503	40	35.7	66.6	60,346	78,206	2,180	1,623,023
Germany	4,366,243	11,756	95,365	69	46.0	170.4	84,128	51,900	1,133	871,872
Poland	2,931,063	2,999	76,067	60	38.6	50.0	37,793	77,555	2,011	566,869
Ukraine	2,597,275	18,881	60,137	412	43.3	45.8	43,395	59,851	1,381	309,775
Romania	1,414,647	16,383	40,869	303	34.5	54.1	19,073	74,171	2,137	719,424
Belgium	1,272,669	3,667	25,726	13	49.5	282.1	11,654	109,201	2,207	1,769,432
Hungary	831,866	1,141	30,341	11	27.5	103.7	9,629	86,393	3,151	738,424
Greece	687,278	2,572	15,289	48	44.9	53.6	10,358	66,355	1,476	2,199,177

Source: Derived from World-o-Meter tables [<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>]