



LATEST ESTIMATES SHOW THAT 20 PEOPLE A DAY DIE IN UNRELIEVED PAIN ACROSS THE UK AT THE END OF THEIR LIVES

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KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- A previous OHE report in 2019 estimated that 378, 427 people in England needed palliative care a year. Our updates show that an estimated **436,022 people in England needed palliative care in 2023.**
- Across the UK, an estimated **7,329 people per year – or 20 people a day – dying with no pain relief in the last 3 months of their life**, even if the highest levels of hospice-level care are available to patients, using conservative assumptions that provide the lowest possible estimate.
- This is a **15% increase** between 2019 to 2023 in the number of people dying in completely unrelieved pain, even at the highest standards of palliative care in England.
- Irrespective of the outcome of the upcoming decisions across the UK, investment into funding high quality end-of-life care should be a crucial component of the conversation around assisted dying in England and Wales.

Current levels of unrelieved pain in the last 3 months of life (VOICES 2015)

Place of death	% Pain not at all relieved			% Pain partially relieved		
	LCL	Central	UCL	LCL	Central	UCL
Home	7.6	8.2	8.8	42.6	43.6	44.6
Hospital	3.6	4.0	4.4	26.7	27.6	28.5
Hospice	0.8	1.4	2.0	10.4	12.0	13.5
Care home/other	1.8	2.2	2.6	23.0	24.2	25.4
Total	3.8	4.3	4.7	28.0	29.0	30.1

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Source: Zamora, B., Cookson, G. and Garau, M., 2019. *Unrelieved Pain in Palliative Care in England*. OHE Consulting Report, London: Office of Health Economics. Available at: <https://www.ohe.org/publications/unrelieved-pain-palliative-care-england>

Table 1: Current levels of unrelieved pain. Number of patients – 2019 (England)

Place of Death	No. Palliative Care Deaths (1)	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			All Unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Home	81,793	6,216	6,707	7,198	34,844	35,662	36,480	41,060	42,369	43,678
Hospital	173,763	6,255	6,951	7,646	46,395	47,959	49,522	52,650	54,909	57,168
Hospice	28,807	230	403	576	2,996	3,457	3,889	3,226	3,860	4,465
Care home	85,692	1,542	1,885	2,228	19,709	20,737	21,766	21,252	22,623	23,994
Other	8,372	151	184	218	1,925	2,026	2,126	2,076	2,210	2,344
Total	378,427	14,395	16,130	17,865	105,869	109,841	113,783	120,265	125,971	131,648

Notes: 1.Deaths under 19 years old represent a 0.83% of deaths registered in England and Wales (ONS, 2017). Therefore, if we were to consider only adults, the number of patients who experience no relief from their pain at all in the last three months of life would go from 16,130 to 15,996.

Table 2: Current levels of unrelieved pain. Number of patients – 2023 (England)

Place of Death	No. of Palliative care Deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			All Unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Home	125,138	9510	10,261	11,012	53,309	54,560	55,812	62,819	64,821	66,824
Hospital	189,234	6812	7,569	8,326	50,525	52,229	53,932	57,337	59,798	62,258
Hospice	20,493	164	287	410	2,131	2459	2,767	2,295	2,746	3,177
Care home	89,385	1609	1966	2,324	20,559	21,631	22,704	22,168	23,597	25,028
Other	11,337	204	249	295	2,608	2744	2,880	2,812	2,993	3,175
Total	436,022	16,569	18,749	20,493	122,086	126,446	131,243	138,655	145,195	151,736

Table 3: Projected number of palliative care patients dying with unrelieved pain – 2019 (England)

Place of Death	No. Palliative Care Deaths (1)	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			Total unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Home	81,793	654	1,145	1,636	8,506	9,815	11,042	9,161	10,960	12,678
Hospital	173,763	1,390	2,433	3,475	18,071	20,852	23,458	19,461	23,284	26,933
Hospice	28,807	230	403	576	2,996	3,457	3,889	3,226	3,860	4,465
Care home	85,692	686	1,200	1,714	8,912	10,283	11,568	9,598	11,483	13,282
Other	8,372	67	117	167	871	1,005	1,130	938	1,122	1,298
Total	378,427	3,027	5,298	7,569	39,356	45,411	51,088	42,384	50,709	58,656

Notes:

1.Deaths under 19 years old represent a 0.83% of deaths registered in England and Wales (ONS, 2017). Therefore, if we were to consider only adults, the projected number of patients who experience no relief from their pain at all in the last three months of life would go from 5,298 to 5,254.

Table 4: Projected number of palliative care patients dying with unrelieved pain – 2023 (England)

Place of Death	No. Palliative care Deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			All Unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Home	125,138	1,001	1,752	2,503	13,014	15,017	16,894	14,015	16,768	19,396
Hospital	189,234	1,514	2,649	3,785	19,680	22,708	25,547	21,194	25,357	29,331
Hospice	20,493	164	287	410	2,131	2,459	2,767	2,295	2,746	3,176
Care home	89,385	715	1,251	1,788	9,296	10,726	12,067	10,011	11,978	13,855
Other	11,337	91	159	227	1,179	1,360	1,530	1,270	1,519	1,757
Total	436,022	3,485	6,104	8,713	45,300	52,323	58,805	48,785	58,427	67,518

Table 5: Current levels of unrelieved pain in other UK nations in 2019

	No. of Palliative care deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			Total unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Scotland	42,211	1,606	1,799	1,993	11,809	12,252	12,692	13,415	14,051	14,684
Wales	24,587	935	1,048	1,161	6,879	7,137	7,393	7,814	8,185	8,554
Northern Ireland	11,508	438	491	543	3,219	3,340	3,460	3,657	3,831	4,003

Table 6: Current levels of unrelieved pain in other UK nations in 2023

	No. of Palliative care Deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			All Unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Wales	27,041	1,027	1,163	1,271	7,571	7,842	8,138	8,598	9,005	9,409
Scotland	47,583	1,808	2,046	2,237	13,323	13,799	14,315	15,131	15,845	16,552
Northern Ireland	12,869	489	553	605	3,603	3,732	3,872	4,092	4,285	4,477

Table 7: Projected number of palliative care patients dying with unrelieved pain in other UK nations in 2019

	No. of Palliative care deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			Total unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Scotland	42,211	338	591	844	4,390	5,065	5,698	4,728	5,656	6,543
Wales	24,587	197	344	492	2,557	2,950	3,319	2,754	3,295	3,811
Northern Ireland	11,508	92	161	230	1,197	1,381	1,554	1,289	1,542	1,784

Table 8: Projected number of palliative care patients dying with unrelieved pain in other UK nations in 2023

Place of Death	No. of Palliative care Deaths	Pain not at all relieved			Pain partially relieved			All Unrelieved pain		
		LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL	LCL	Central Est.	UCL
Wales	27,041	216	379	541	2,813	3,245	3,651	3,029	3,624	4,192
Scotland	47,583	318	666	952	4,950	5,710	6,424	5,331	6,376	7,375
Northern Ireland	12,869	103	180	257	1,338	1,544	1,737	1,441	1,724	1,994

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