



13 March 2023

S9(2)(a)

By email: S9(2)(a)
Ref: H2023020095

Tēnā koe S9(

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 13 February 2023 for information regarding COVID-19 deaths and the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. You requested:

["Excess mortality: Deaths from all causes compared to average over previous years \(ourworldindata.org\)](https://ourworldindata.org)

According to reported data, New Zealand experienced a significant number of excess deaths in 2022 - sometimes 30% above previous averages.

What work is planned, currently underway and/or completed to identify to cause or causes of these excess deaths?

What possible causes have been identified?

What work is proposed, currently underway, or completed to investigate negative the public health impact of Pfizer mRNA Covid-19 vaccinations?

What evidence is there for a connection between the Pfizer mRNA Covid-19 vaccination programme and excess deaths being reported?"

Aotearoa New Zealand experienced changes in the frequency death from all causes across the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, over the winter of 2020, there was a **clear reduction in deaths compared to what was expected based on previous years** (see Figure 1, in the appended document). Over the winter of 2021, there was a slight reduction in deaths, and over the winter of 2022 there was an increase in deaths, compared to what was expected based on previous years. The periods of observed reductions in deaths compared to expected coincide with the winters of 2021 and 2022. Normally influenza and other respiratory virus deaths occur more often during winter. However, in 2020 and 2021, due to border restrictions and alert level restrictions, these respiratory viruses were circulating to a much lesser extent than in previous years. During the period where most doses of COVID-19 vaccine were given, there were no excess deaths observed, i.e., during the periods when the first and second doses were given (approximately June to December 2021), and when the first booster doses were given (approximately early December 2021 to late February 2022).

Excess mortality (i.e., an increase in all-cause mortality compared to pre-pandemic years) was observed in 2022. The excess mortality observed in 2022 coincided with the Omicron wave of COVID-19 in New Zealand and the subsequent deaths attributable to SARS-CoV-2 infection. In 2022, the number of excess deaths was lower than the number of deaths attributed to COVID-19, which may mean that COVID-19 accounts for most of the excess deaths in 2022. However,

cause of death data is required to make this evaluation. Data on the causes of death takes time to become available, but reporting for cause of death is underway. Deaths attributable to COVID-19 were more likely to occur in those who have not received a primary course of vaccine than in those who had (see report [here](#)). Overall, New Zealand has not experienced an excess of deaths in 2020-2022 (inclusive) compared to previous years (see Figure 2, in the appended document).

There are numerous New Zealand agencies monitoring mortality rates and/or safety of COVID-19 vaccines within New Zealand and internationally. These include:

- Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM), National Pharmacovigilance Centre
- Medsafe (New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority)
- Vaccine Safety Surveillance and Research (VSSR) within the National Immunisation Programme
- The Public Health Agency (PHA) within Manatū Hauora
- Statistics New Zealand

There have also been several documents produced reporting this information. For example:

- Two publications (the second a pre-print) by VSSR about COVID-19 vaccine safety in New Zealand are available at: www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049384822004893. and https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4329970.
- A Manatū Hauora report on COVID-19 mortality (with an assessment of the effect of vaccination) is available at: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/covid-19_mortality_in_aotearoa_inequities_in_risk_september_2022_29_sept.v2.pdf.
- Summaries of international publications about safety data from vaccines are available within variants updates at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-science-news.
- Summaries of safety information are available within memos from the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG): www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag.

There is no evidence based on the current data that COVID-19 vaccination has contributed to excess deaths observed in New Zealand 2022. Manatū Hauora and other agencies continue to monitor national and international safety signals relating to COVID-19 vaccines.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

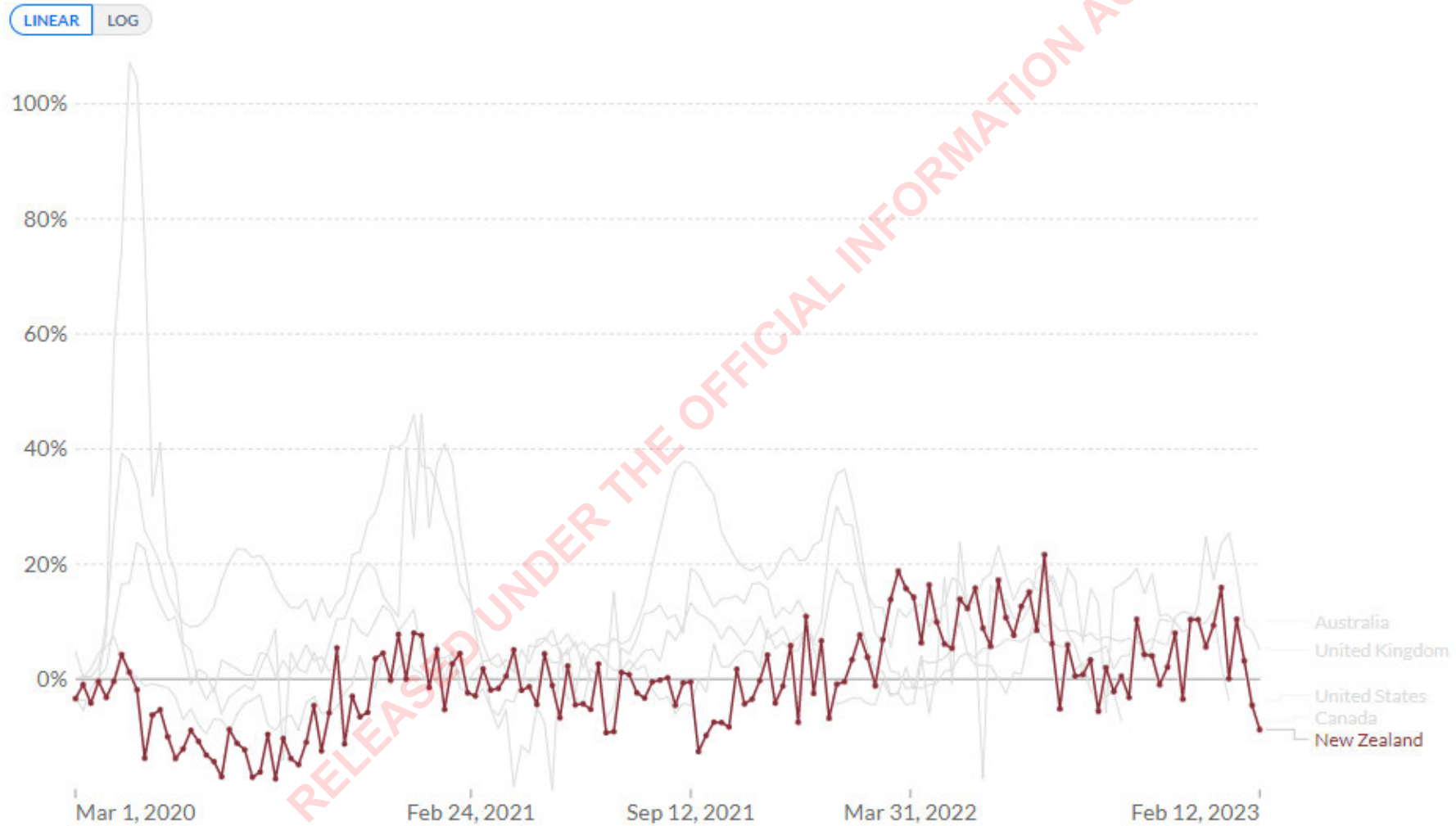


Dr Andrew Old
Deputy Director-General
Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui

Figure 1

Excess mortality: Deaths from all causes compared to projection based on previous years

The percentage difference between the reported number of weekly or monthly deaths in 2020–2022 and the projected number of deaths for the same period based on previous years. The reported number might not count all deaths that occurred due to incomplete coverage and delays in reporting.



Source: Human Mortality Database (2022), World Mortality Dataset (2022)

Note: Comparisons across countries are affected by differences in the completeness of death reporting. Details can be found at our Excess Mortality page.

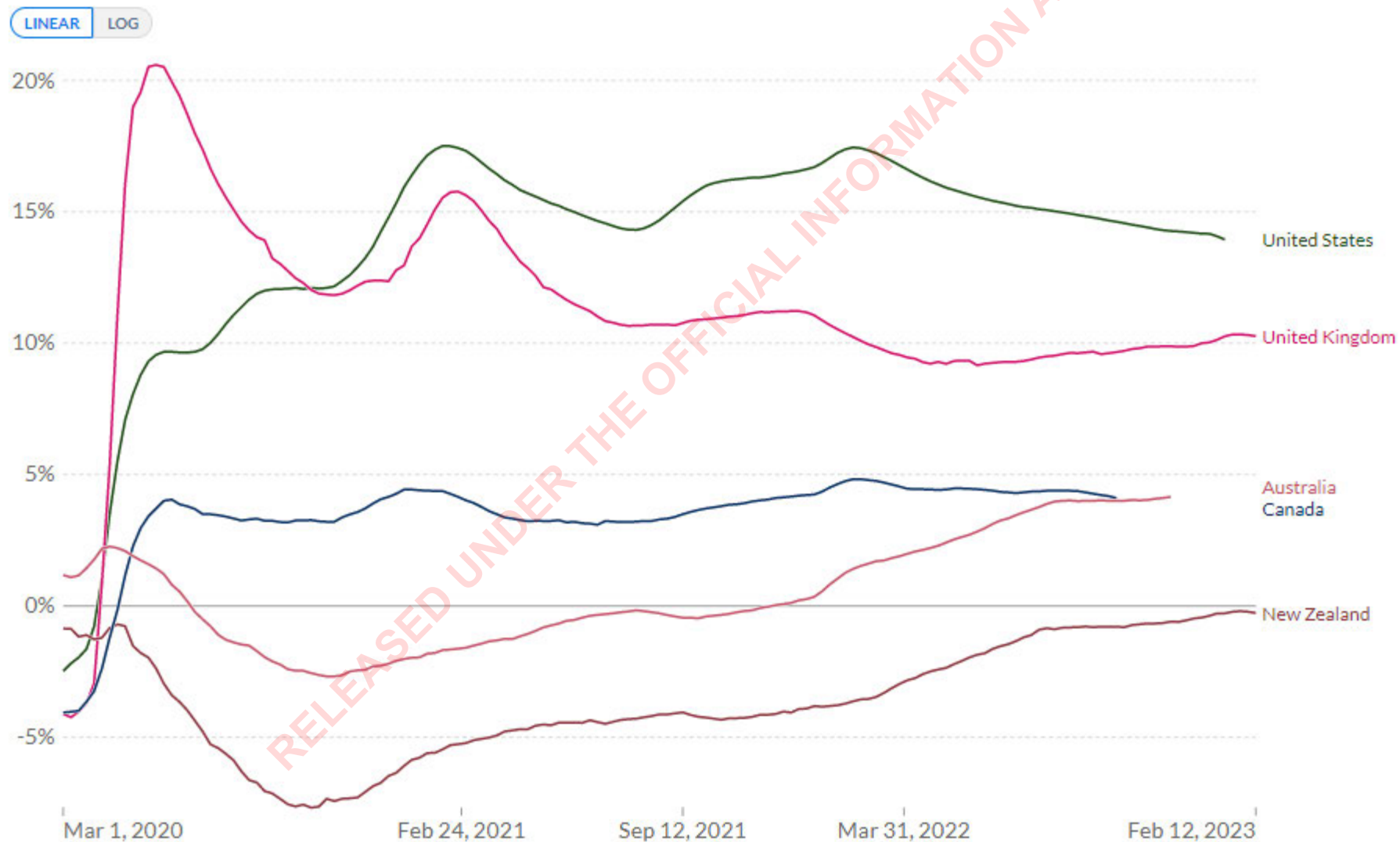
CC BY

Figure 2

Excess mortality: Cumulative deaths from all causes compared to projection based on previous years



The percentage difference between the cumulative number of deaths since 1 January 2020 and the cumulative projected deaths for the same period based on previous years. The reported number might not count all deaths that occurred due to incomplete coverage and delays in reporting.



Source: Human Mortality Database (2022), World Mortality Dataset (2022)