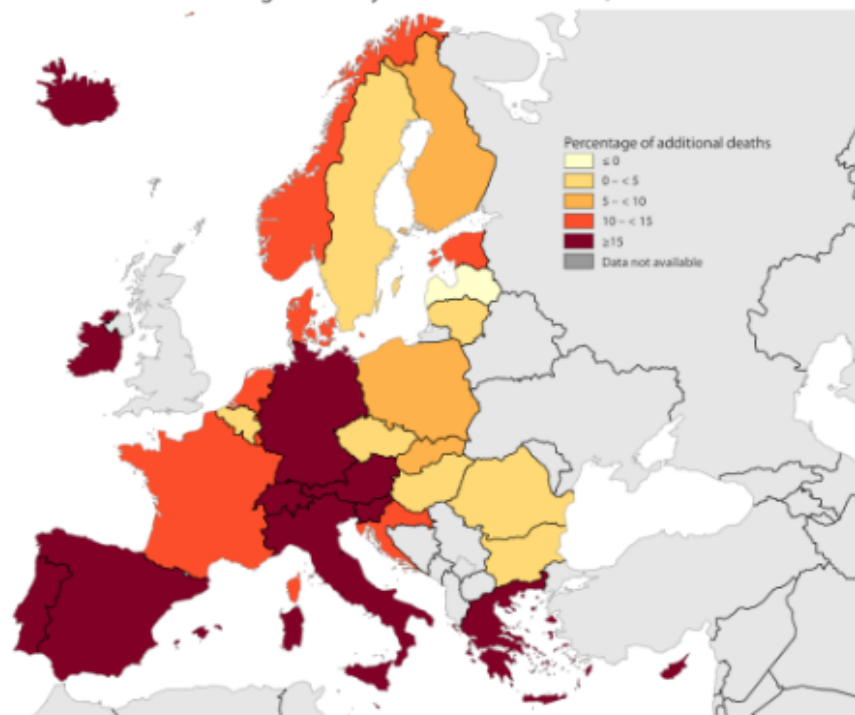# Excess deaths keep rising across EU

The latest figures from July show 15% more deaths than normal

BY **ROB LOWNIE**

EU excess deaths reached new highs in the month of July 2022, the latest EU figures show. Excess mortality hit +15.8% — equivalent to 53,000 excess deaths — compared to the same month in the years 2016-2019. This figure marks a steep rise from June and May 2022, both of which were around 7%.

Monthly Excess Mortality in July 2022
(% difference versus average monthly deaths in 2016-2019)

Credit: EuroStat

While one EU member state, Latvia, recorded few or no excess deaths (-0.5%) in July, eleven countries had rates over 15%. The highest of these was Spain, with a rate of 36.9%, followed by Cyprus at 32.9% and Greece at 32.1%.

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EU officials claim that July's unusually high value "may be due to heat waves that affected parts of Europe", which is why southern European countries suffered the highest rates of excess mortality. The spike is not attributed to Covid.

'Excess mortality' measures the number of deaths, from any cause, exceeding what would be considered normal during a particular period. Since April 2020, national statistical bodies from the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have submitted weekly death figures to Eurostat. In this time frame, the four clearest peaks have come in April 2020 (25.2%), November 2020 (40.0%), April 2021 (20.9%) and November 2021 (26.5%), most of which was driven by the Covid pandemic.

Outside the EU, during an eight-week period between 11 June and 5 August the Continuous Mortality Investigation (CMI) listed 8,200 excess deaths in England and Wales, adjusted for age.

These statistics show cardiovascular issues such as heart failure and circulatory diseases to be overrepresented as causes for excess mortality. Diabetes and urinary problems also feature heavily, while numbers for respiratory infections are skewed by Covid-19.

However, according to the ONS's most recent statistics, in the week ending 2 September only 3.5% of total excess deaths in England and Wales involved Covid as a contributing factor. In 182 of these 314 cases, the coronavirus was recorded as the underlying cause of death. This is down from the previous week, in which Covid-19 accounted for 4.1% of excess mortality.

For a discussion of potential causes, don't miss the recent UnHerdTV discussion with actuary Stuart Macdonald.