



October 18th 2020

WEEKLY DEATHS – preliminary data

Weeks 1 to 42 of 2020

## MORTALITY IN PORTUGAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### **MORE THAN 2/3 OF THE INCREASE OF DEATHS BETWEEN MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup> AND OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup> COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE OF THE LAST 5 YEARS OCCURRED OUTSIDE A HOSPITAL**

Between March 2nd, when the first cases of COVID-19 were diagnosed in Portugal, and October 18<sup>th</sup>, there were 72,519 deaths in the national territory, an increase of 7,936 deaths in 2020 when compared to the average number of deaths during the same period over the past five years. Of these deaths, 27.5% (2,198) were due to COVID-19. In the last 4 weeks (September 21<sup>st</sup> to October 18<sup>th</sup>) there were 612 more deaths than the average from the same period of 2015-2019. In that period there were 278 registered deaths from COVID-19 (45.4%).

Of the total deaths recorded between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> 35,842 were of men and 36,069 were of women, an increase of 3,328 and 4,608 deaths, respectively, compared to the average of deaths observed in the same period between 2015-2019.

More than 70% of deaths were of people aged 75 years or over. Compared to the average number of deaths observed in the same 2015-2019 period, another 6,824 people aged 75 and over died, of which 5,377 were aged 85 and over.

The largest increase in the number of deaths in relation to the 2015-2019 average was registered in the Norte region, with the exception of the last week of June and the first of July, when this increase was higher in the region Área Metropolitana de Lisboa.

Of the total deaths recorded between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, 43,280 occurred in a hospital and 29,239 outside a hospital, corresponding to an increase of 2,483 deaths and 5,453 deaths, respectively, when compared to the average number of deaths in the same 2015-2019 period.

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Despite the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Statistics Portugal calls for the best cooperation from enterprises, households and public bodies in responding to Statistics Portugal's requests. The quality of official statistics, particularly their ability to identify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, crucially depends on this cooperation, for which Statistics Portugal thanks you in advance.

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In this press release Statistics Portugal provides preliminary information regarding the evolution of weekly deaths that occurred in national territory up to the 42<sup>nd</sup> week of 2020 (October 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>) and provides a comparison with the average number of deaths for the same period from the last five years (2015-2019).

Information on deaths is obtained through the Civil Register collected under the Integrated Civil Registration and Identification System (SIRIC) until October 27<sup>th</sup>. This time lag prevents the disclosed information from being subjected to considerable revisions. Even so, the information referring to 2020 is preliminary and will be subject to subsequent update.

One of the most dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic concerns the increase in the total number of deaths. The number of COVID-19 deaths provides only a partial measure of these effects. A more comprehensive measure of the impact on mortality may be provided by the difference between the total number of deaths observed in 2020, by all causes of death, and the average number of deaths for the last five years (2015-2019)<sup>1</sup>, even though there are other known effects on mortality, such as seasonal flu and spikes or hot or cold waves.

#### Number of deaths in 2020 higher than in previous years

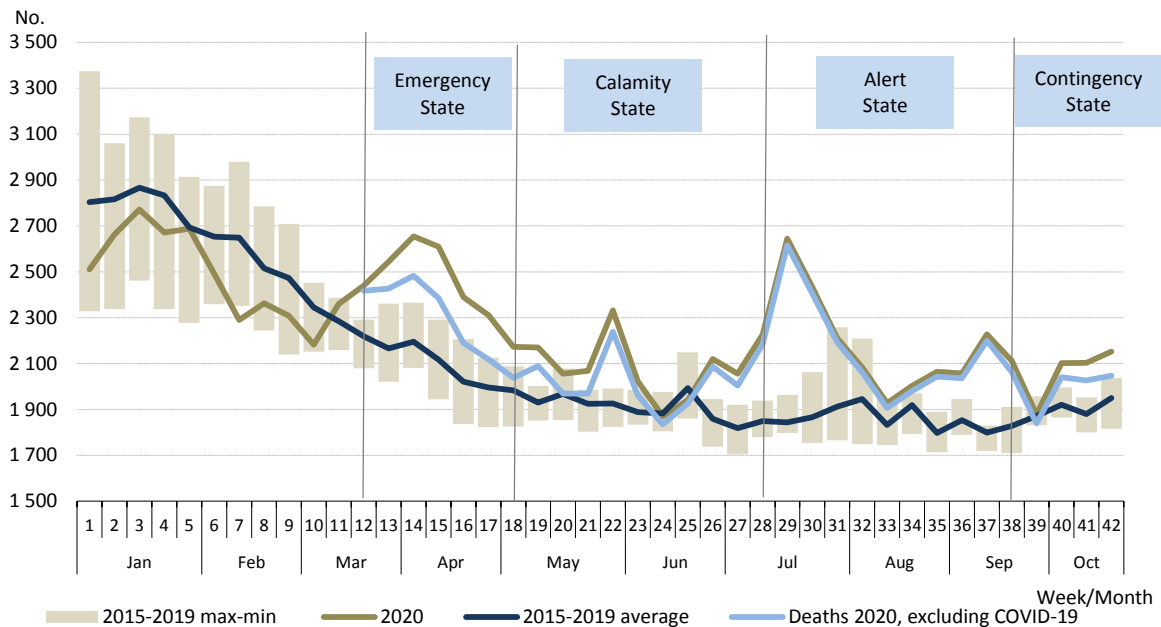
In the first two months of 2020, the number of deaths was, in general, lower than the values observed in the last five years. However, in week 11 (9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020), the number of deaths exceeded the average values recorded in recent years. In Figure 1, the shaded bars, defined by the minimum and maximum values of deaths recorded per week in any of the five years between 2015 and 2019, provide an indication of the range of variation in the number of deaths in the considered period. It shows that the number of deaths in 2020 was, from the beginning of March, in general, above the upper limit of this range of values.

Between March 2<sup>nd</sup>, when the first cases of COVID-19 disease were diagnosed in Portugal, and October 18<sup>th</sup>, that is, between weeks 10 (March 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>) and 42 (October 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>) there were 72,519 deaths, 7,936 above the average number of deaths observed in the same period from 2015-2019.

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<sup>1</sup> In this press release, a simple measure was adopted to quantify the increase in the number of deaths compared to previous years, taking as a basis of comparison the average of deaths in the last five years (2015-2019). This measure should therefore not be confused with the *excess mortality* indicator published in some studies, in particular through the EuroMOMO platform.

Figure 1: Deaths 2020 and average 2015-2019, by week, Portugal, weeks 1 to 42

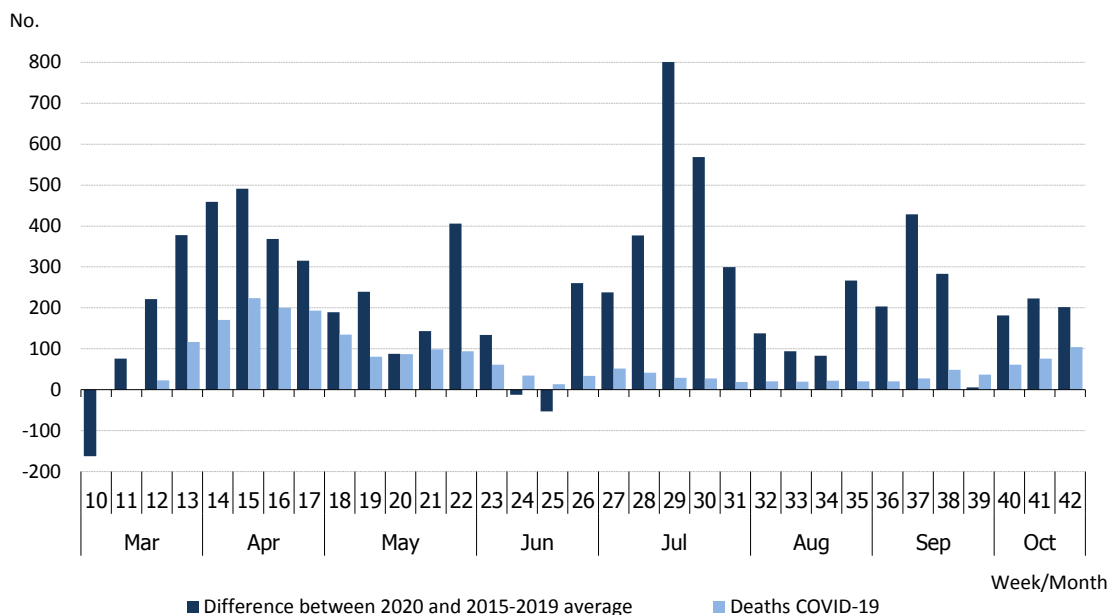


Source: Statistics Portugal, Deaths. Directorate-General of Health, Daily COVID-19 Status Report.

The increase in deaths in 2020 compared to the 2015-2019 average peaked at week 15 (April 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>), gradually decreasing until the end of the State of Emergency period (May 3<sup>rd</sup>). At the end of May (week 22: 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May), there was a new peak in mortality. In weeks 24 and 25 (June 8<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>) mortality returned to the values of previous years. From week 26 (June 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>) there was an increase in mortality in 2020 compared to the average of the same period, reaching its highest point in week 29 (July 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>), with an additional number of around 800 deaths. It should be recalled that the month of July 2020 was an extremely hot month with several heat waves. In the following weeks, until week 34 (August 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>th</sup>), there was a lower increase in the number of deaths, approaching the average of the last five years. As of this week, the number of deaths, compared to the 2015-2019 average, increased again, reaching a new peak in week 37 (September 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>), after which it decreases to average values in week 39 (September 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>). In the last three weeks (September 28<sup>th</sup> to October 18<sup>th</sup>), the number of deaths increased again to values above the average of the last five years.

The increase in mortality from of March onwards in relation to the average of the last five years is only partially explained by the number of deaths caused by COVID-19. In Figure 2, the bars represent the total weekly death differential relative to the 2015-2019 average for the same period and the number of COVID-19 deaths.

Figure 2: Difference between deaths 2020 and 2015-2019 average, by week, Portugal, weeks 1 to 42



Source: Statistics Portugal, Deaths. Directorate-General of Health, Daily COVID-19 Status Report.

### Portugal in the European context

Considering as a basis for comparison the information on 23 European countries<sup>2</sup> that submitted data to Eurostat on the number of deaths per week until week 39 and for all weeks of years 2016 to 2019<sup>3</sup>, the mortality in the first weeks of 2020 was below the average values observed over the 2016-2019 period. From the beginning of March 2020, contrary to what has been observed in recent years, there was a significant increase in the number of deaths, reaching a peak in week 14 (March 30<sup>th</sup> to April 5<sup>th</sup>), with 47% more deaths than in the same weeks of 2016-2019. Mortality in Portugal followed a similar pattern, however showing a lower difference in relation to the 2016-2019 average, just under 25% more deaths. In the following weeks, mortality in Europe was closer to the average. In Portugal, despite an initial period where there was a reduction in mortality, it increased again, remaining far from the average until week 23 (June 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>). While in European countries mortality tended to remain close to the average of recent years, between the weeks 26 and 31 (from June 22<sup>nd</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>) the increase in the number of deaths in Portugal was very significant when compared to the average, reaching 43% in

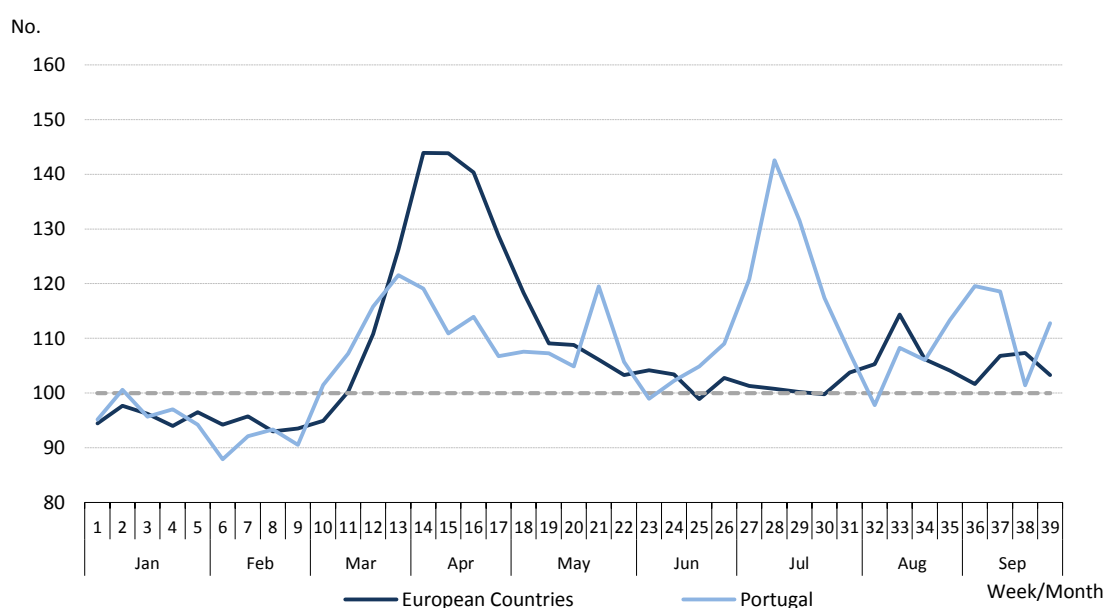
<sup>2</sup> European countries considered: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Note that the countries considered in this press release are not the same of the previous press release (October 16<sup>th</sup>), as such the results are not comparable.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that 2015 was not included in the base comparison period due to the lack of data for some of the countries.



week 29 (July 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>). In the following weeks, mortality in Portugal has decreased, reaching lower values than those of the European countries as a whole in weeks 33 and 34 (August 17<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>). At the beginning of September, mortality in Portugal increased again in comparison with these European countries. In the last two weeks mortality has decreased in Portugal and at week 39 went below the mortality level of this set of European countries.

Figure 3: Deaths in 2020 compared to 2016-2019 average (2016-2019 average = 100), by week, Portugal and 23 European countries, weeks 1 to 39



countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

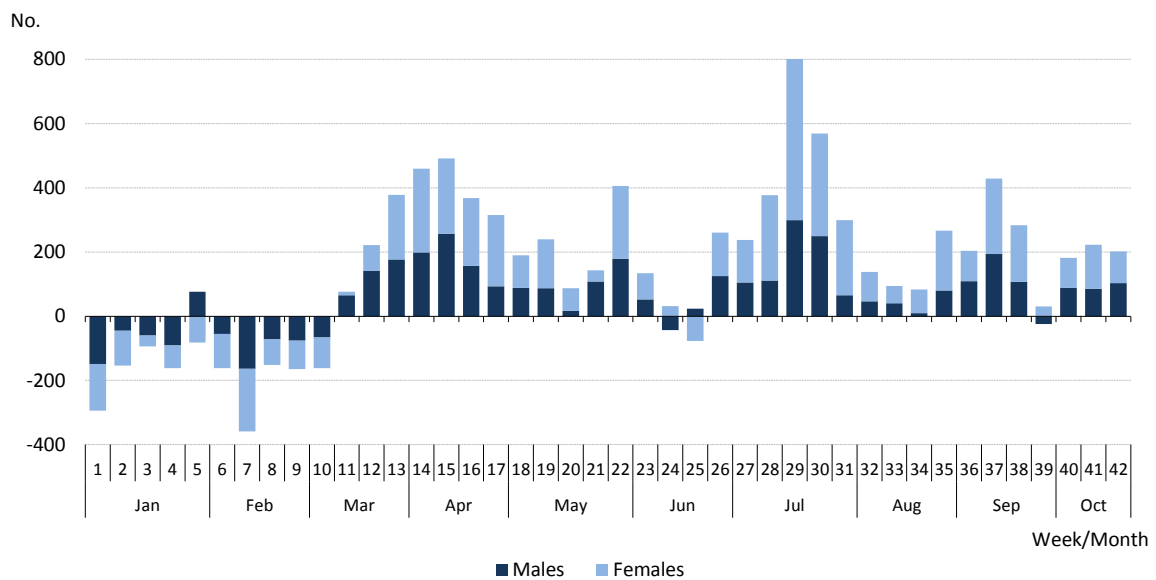
Source: INE calculations based on Eurostat's online database (extracted on 28/10/2020).

### Deaths of women with the greatest contribution to the increase in mortality

Between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup>, that is, between weeks 10 (March 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>) and 42 (October 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>), there were 35,842 deaths of men and 36,677 of women, an increase of 3,328 and 4,608 deaths, respectively, compared to the average of deaths observed in the same period of 2015-2019.

In weeks 11 and 12, the increase of mortality resulted mainly from the increase in male deaths. From that moment, the contribution of female deaths to the increase in the number of deaths was generally higher, especially in the month of July (weeks 28 to 32).

Figure 4: Difference between deaths in 2020 and 2015-2019 average, by week and sex, Portugal, weeks 1 to 42

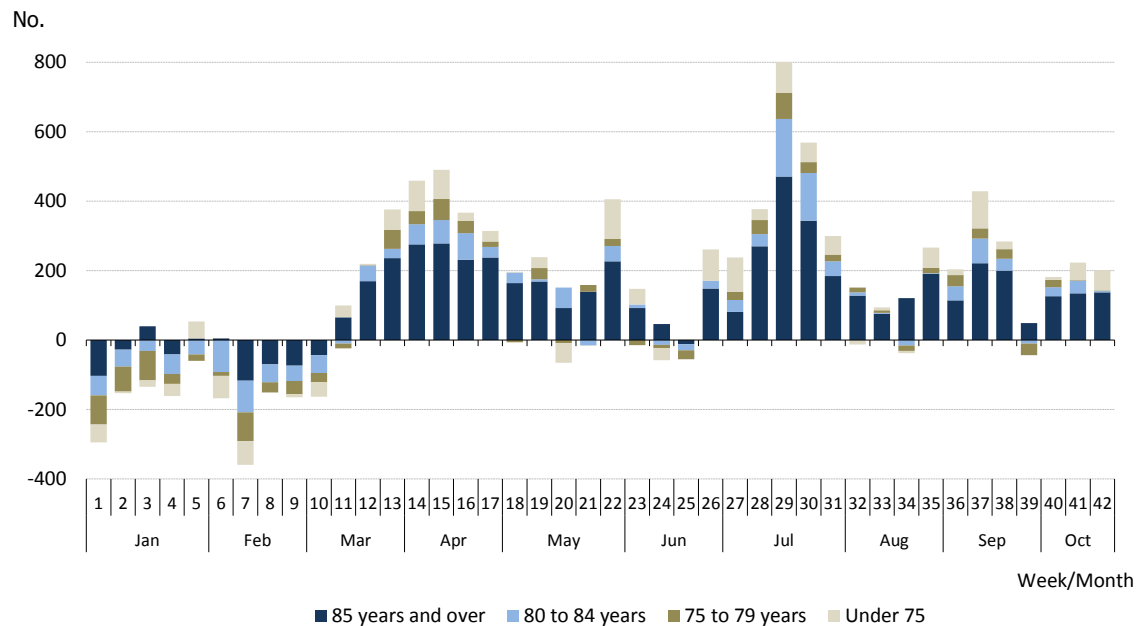


Source: Statistics Portugal, Deaths.

### More than 70% of deaths were from people aged 75 or over

Between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 (weeks 10 to 42), more than 70% of deaths (51,641 deaths) were of people aged 75 years and over and, of these, around 60% (30,889) were of people aged 85 and over. Compared to the average number of deaths observed in the same period of 2015-2019, there was an increase of 6,824 deaths of people aged 75 and over, of which 5,377 were 85 or older.

Figure 5: Difference between deaths in 2020 and 2015-2019 average, by week and age group, Portugal, weeks 1 to 42



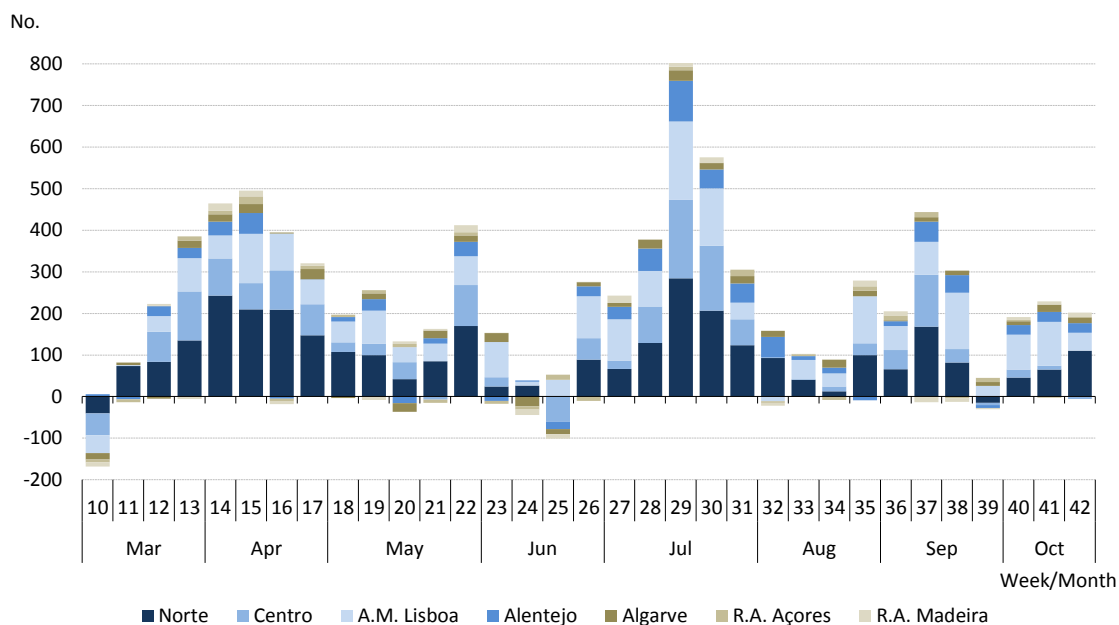
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### Regions Norte, Centro and Área Metropolitana de Lisboa with the greatest contribution to excess mortality

Between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> (weeks 10 to 42), compared to the average number of deaths observed in the same period of 2015-2019, the largest increase in the number of deaths was registered in the Norte region (+3,280 deaths), followed by Área Metropolitana de Lisboa (+2,177 deaths), Centro (+1,434 deaths), Alentejo (+696 deaths), Algarve (+299 deaths) and the autonomous regions of Açores and Madeira (+90 and +83, respectively).

Comparing the number of deaths per week with the average of deaths in the period 2015-2019, the excess of deaths recorded in week 11 (March 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>) is explained by the increase in deaths recorded in the Norte region. Although the Norte region remains the greatest contributor to the increase in the number of deaths between weeks 13 (March 23<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>) and 22 (April 25<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>), the contributions of the remaining regions increased, in particular those from the Centro and Área Metropolitana de Lisboa regions. In the weeks 23 and 25 to 27 the largest contribution was from the Área Metropolitana de Lisboa, and then the region Norte returned to occupy the first position. In weeks 38 to 41 (between September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 11<sup>th</sup>) the largest contribution to the increase in the number of deaths once again was from the Área Metropolitana de Lisboa. In the last week, the region Norte again had the greater increase of deaths.

Figure 6: Difference between deaths in 2020 and 2015-2019 average, by week and regions NUTS 2, weeks 10 to 42



Source: Statistics Portugal, Deaths.

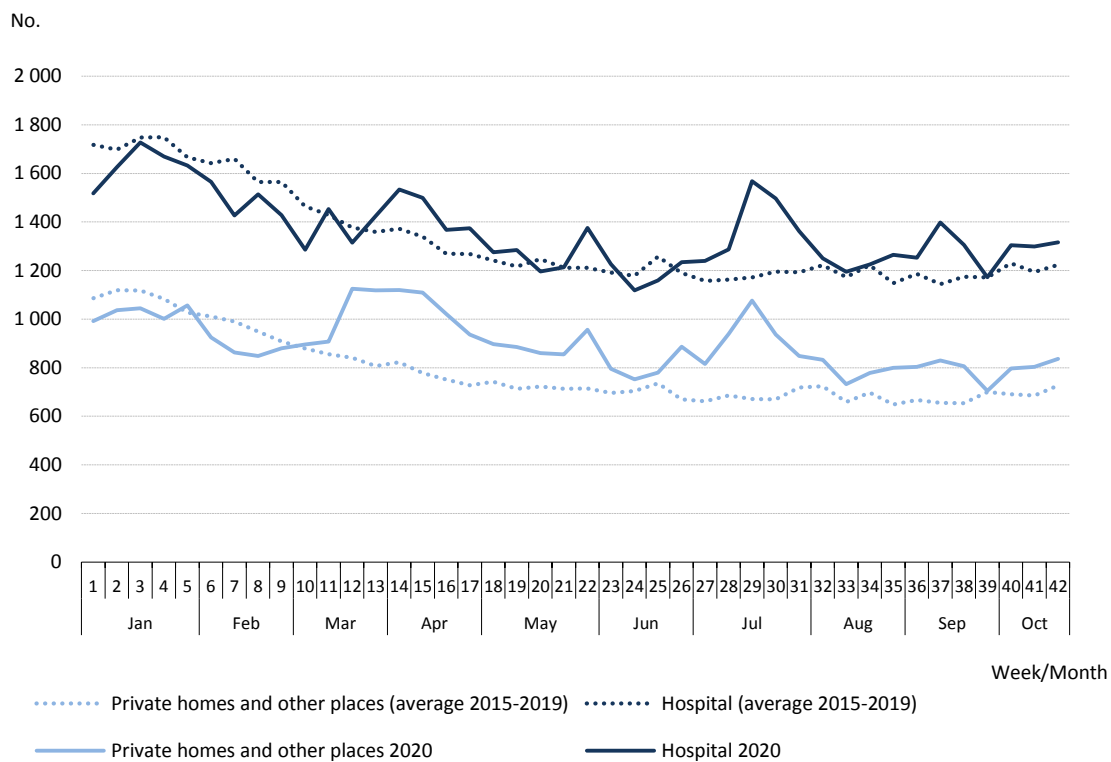
### Mortality outside hospital (at private homes and other locations) higher than in previous years

Of the 72,519 deaths recorded between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, 43,280 took place in a hospital and 29,239 occurred outside the hospital context, corresponding to an increase of 2,483 deaths and 5,453 deaths, respectively, compared to 2015-2019 average of deaths over the same period. The excess of deaths outside the hospital context is important throughout all weeks, especially until the beginning of June (week 23). In the last few weeks, the increase in deaths was more evenly distributed between those that took place in a hospital and those which occurred outside the hospital context.





Figure 7: Deaths 2020 and 2015-2019 average, by week and place of occurrence, Portugal, weeks 1 to 42



Source: Statistics Portugal, Deaths.



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## TECHNICAL NOTE

Statistics Portugal releases the preliminary weekly deaths for 2020, based on the information registered in the Civil Register Offices until October 27<sup>th</sup> 2020.

Data on deaths is obtained from statistical operations of direct and exhaustive collection on live births and deaths in Portuguese territory using facts that are subject to compulsory civil registration (birth and death) in the Sistema Integrado do Registo e Identificação Civil (SIRIC).

In addition to administrative information obtained from Civil Register Offices, Statistics Portugal collects an additional set of variables identified as statistically pertinent to the National Statistic System (NSS) and the European Statistical System (EES).

Data is recorded and sent electronically, in compliance with the requirements set out by Statistics Portugal and laid down in liaison with the Instituto de Registos e Notariado (IRN) and the Instituto de Gestão Financeira e Equipamentos da Justiça (IGFEJ).

## DEFINITIONS:

**Death:** The permanent disappearance of vital functions.

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Detailed methodological information available at: [www.ine.pt](http://www.ine.pt), option Products, Metadata system.

Detailed statistical information available at: [www.ine.pt](http://www.ine.pt), option Products, Statistical data, database, theme Population, subtheme Mortality and life expectancy.