

## It's not the excess deaths now that matter (although ea...

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The data for [excess deaths is out from the ONS](#). Because I am teaching this afternoon I have been a bit distracted, but now I have looked at it.

As ever, this data will be understated: there are delays in registration and given that there has been a massive jump in excess deaths at home and post mortems are required in those cases the delays could be significant. I am being cautious in estimating an impact of this in what follows.

But assuming the linear growth from the week to 3 April to 10 April continues for at least another week or (which is a probable underestimate) and that we may only be peaking about now and that the data is also understated for delays I suspect that the true figure for excess deaths is approaching 30,000 now, and is definitely not less than 25,000 (there has to be some uncertainty in this). That is at least 50% higher than government data. I stress, I think that I have been incredibly cautious in estimating this. I have seen other reputable people estimating at around the 30,000 level.

However, the worrying thing is what happens now we know this. My estimate implies a death rate of more than 11,000 a week now. And there is no sign that this will come down: at best it might plateau, which is what would happen with a reinfection rate of 1. I really cannot imagine it's less than that as yet, and I can't see reason without mass testing why it will go lower. Any easing in lockdown will, of course, increase the rate, and so the deaths.

Given that, and a continuing death rate of this figure (including maybe 100 healthcare workers a week) then the deaths from coronavirus are going to be quite scary. Remember, the UK government's aim is not to end them, unlike other countries. We are literally doing nothing to achieve that. We are instead trying to contain them at the level the NHS can manage (just about). The result is that Covid-19 deaths in the UK are now going to run into hundreds of thousands eventually, and not the 20,000 the government said would be a good outcome, which now feels like a claim from the ancient history of this crisis.

When other countries by early lockdown and track and trace will actually contain this issue, we won't. We will just endure continuing excess deaths.

And that has catastrophic consequences because even if we end lockdown others may not want to deal with us. After all, why will France want to allow shipping from a country not seriously seeking to contain coronavirus when they are?

In that case worry for our food supply chains. Because that is where this policy gets very real: if we are locked down from the rest of the world that matters, as I now think likely, we are in much more trouble than we currently think.

On any reasonable basis of forecasting based on this government's approach, we are going to have a torrid time whilst many of our neighbours look on.

And there may now be little we can do about it.

Electing Boris Johnson may turn out to have been one of the biggest mistakes this country could ever have made.