

What are the odds on coronavirus? Worse than most people think.

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This comes from The [Conversation](#) this morning:

Lots of people strongly suspect they have had COVID-19, despite the fact that only 0.5% of the UK's population has actually been diagnosed with it. Exactly how many people have been infected is notoriously difficult to estimate, with antibody tests suggesting it is no more than 5-10%. Until we know this number, it is hard to work out the exact fatality rate of the disease. Many models suggest this is around 1%, but models rely on certain assumptions, and often fail to take into account uncertainties in the data and explanations for these. A new study has tried to account for inaccuracies in antibody testing and death reporting and suggests that [many more people have had coronavirus than is being reported](#).

And this comes from the morning email from The Guardian:

In the United States, it is [estimated that 20 million people have contracted the virus](#) — 10 times more than the official count — according to the country's disease control agency. On Thursday, 27 states reported a rise in new cases while Texas has paused the next phase of its reopening from lockdown. The famously Covid-sceptic Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, says that although he has tested negative multiple times [he may have had the disease after all](#). The country recorded almost 40,000 new cases yesterday. Swedes [are losing confidence in their government's handling of the crisis](#). The country has seen many more deaths than some other European neighbours after it stuck to a light-touch lockdown policy.

Why highlight these two reports? Because they make it clear that we cannot be sure what the true coronavirus death rate is.

What is certain is that we will not know for some time as yet. And when the data is finally analysed it may well be that the secondary deaths caused by coronavirus - because people were not able to be treated for other conditions because hospitals were so overwhelmed by coronavirus - may be as significant as coronavirus itself, meaning that excess deaths could be much higher than those due to coronavirus.

Weigh the factors together and what do you get? The paper linked in the Conversation suggests the infection rate is higher than thought - so maybe 10% in the U.K., which is vastly higher than officially reported. But given that this means 6.5 million people have had it, and the deaths are about 65,000 now, that would still imply a death rate of 1%, which is what that paper suggests more likely to be true than the reported 1.4% in New York, for example.

However, that still suggests that without a vaccine (which still sounds unlikely) that another near 600,000 people could die earlier than they otherwise would in the UK because of this. It would seem that this possibility is now little understood, either by politicians permitting the end of lockdown or people on Bournemouth beach.

I've already suggested that the fat lady has not sung for coronavirus this morning: I am keen that she gets the chance. I keep wondering what the prospect of that happening is. It's lower than she might wish for, I strongly suspect. And that this is not appreciated worries me, greatly.