

How do we best contain the virus?

The recent world figures for deaths from the virus show Belgium continuing to lead the grisly table with 1516 deaths per million people, followed by Peru at 1099, Italy at 1052 and Spain at 1005. All of these countries have followed World Health Organisation advice and had extensive lock downs. Sweden which did allow a little more freedom rests below average for advanced countries at 720. Germany has done much better than most at 247. Brazil at 840 is below the worst despite taking a more sceptical approach to the consensus.

Most of the Asian countries have done much better with very few deaths in Taiwan, South Korea, China and Japan. Taiwan had to develop its own response early as it is not allowed by China to be a member of the WHO. It used its island position well to keep the virus at bay. Maybe the Asian SARS outbreak left better immune responses or maybe these societies were more disciplined over track and trace follow up.

I would like to see an explanation of why Belgium has suffered so much more, along with more understanding of the much better experiences of many Asian countries. It is possible the world tables are distorted by different definitions of what is a Covid death, and different levels of CV 19 testing. Clearly the U.K. and USA have found many more cases since they introduced Mass testing on a large scale. Some other countries have not tested so much and may have attributed more elderly deaths to something other than Covid.

In the UK The devolved Administrations have from time to time varied their approach from the U.K. and English one. Wales thought that a so called circuit breaker of two weeks would do well, but it did not turn out that way. Scotland was talking about eradicating the virus in the summer by being a little bit tougher, but that did not work either. It has demonstrated there is no easy answer to controlling the spread.

I would be interested in your thoughts on what has worked best, and on why there are such big differences between most of Europe and most of Asia. We still have some months to go of containment, preferably without doing too much more damage to the economy.