

CEOG Webinar

3. Communicating COVID-19

The role of messaging and data



Housekeeping

- The webinar is conducted under Chatham House rules, meaning we will take notes of the discussion but will not attribute any comments/questions to individuals or countries
- Where relevant the slide presentation will be recorded and shared but Q&A will be confidential so please feel able to ask tough and frank questions
- We will circulate the slides, any video recording, notes, and links after the webinar to all CEoG network members
- You can also send any additional questions, or data and analysis requests to: network@africaceog.org

Proposed Agenda

1. Welcoming remarks Albert
2. Briefing on WBG response to COVID-19, Hafez Ghanem, Vice-President, WBG Africa region
3. Q&A on communicating COVID-19

Moving towards smart containment to protect lives and livelihoods

Countries are increasingly thinking about 'smart containment'

- Measures that can reduce epidemic impact while minimizing economic harm
- Measures that can be sustained as the new normal — the pandemic will be with us until a vaccine is found, many months away at least
- Measures that are targeted in order to reduce widespread economic harm while protecting most vulnerable



ANDALOU AGENCY, 2020.

The World Bank favors a multi-pronged approach

1. Preserving Lives

Emergency Health and Water & Sanitation Projects

Protect and equip already scarce medical personnel, Expand testing and surveillance testing –including rural areas, Set up national level command center led by scientists, WASH.

Budget support operations

Creating the fiscal space to save lives and rallying the international community for a comprehensive “Debt Stand-Still”; \$44b needed!

2. Preserving Livelihoods

Households and informal micro and small enterprises (SP & Cash Transfers)

Firms (liquidity support, protecting people and jobs)

State presence and basic service delivery (security...)

3. Preserving the Future

Sowing the seeds of future resilience in the policy response

Thinking ahead, preserve vital investment in expenditures restructuring

Learning Lessons as we go, not to waste the crisis

Adopting the multi-pronged approach to specific country contexts requires policy coordination

- A centralized decision-making authority is essential for responsive and adaptive policy-making
- It should consist of respected health care professionals and be guided by the head of the executive
- Visible coordination across sectors emphasizes that there is no tradeoff between health and the economy
- The multi-pronged approach is focused on **lives & livelihoods**



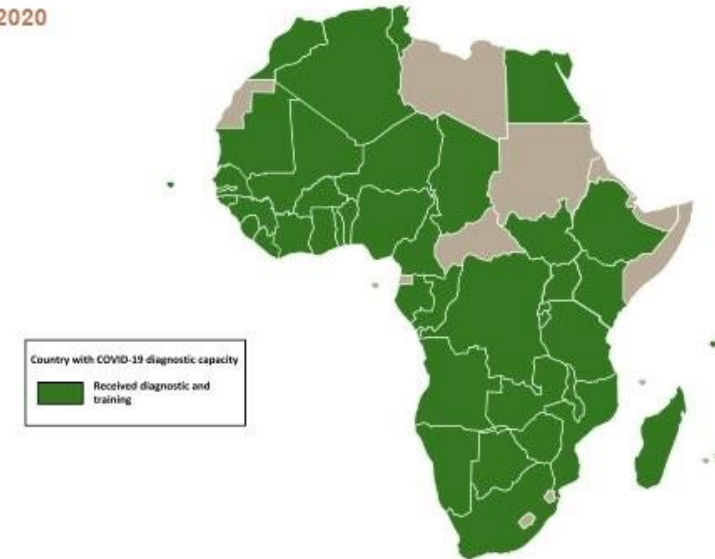
Source: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150224006553/en/Ke-nyan-Ministry-Health-Selects-GE-Healthcare-Strategic> ?

Testing capacity is currently limited, but it is essential for a targeted approach to deconfinement (*forthcoming World Bank report*)

- Testing is essential to determine the size, trajectory and distribution of the pandemic (*forthcoming World Bank report*)
- Localized and granular data on the pandemic allows policies to be implemented on as small a scale as possible
- Widespread lockdowns should be used to buy time to scale up testing and tracing capacity

Map of African countries with diagnostic capacity for COVID-19

09 March 2020



African Union

AFRICA CDC
Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
Safeguarding Africa's Health

Source: African CDC. As of March 9, 43 African countries had lab diagnostic capacity but less than 500,000 people had been tested by April 24, 2020

Localized data can facilitate a tiered response that can be implemented at the level of the outbreak (country, city, neighborhood...)

1. Stringent measures when the virus is widespread
 - e.g bans on non-essential businesses
2. Intermediate measures
 - e.g. mandatory facemasks
3. Baseline measures that are part of the 'new normal'
 - e.g. handwashing facilities at the entrance to public spaces; promoting mobile payments

Governments must be prepared for cycles of escalation and de-escalation through the tiers

(forthcoming World Bank Report)



A member of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade in Beni, North Kivu, DRC washes her hands at the Mission. MONUSCO/Michael Ali

Communication and COVID-19

Messaging around policy strategies and tradeoffs will be crucial to protect lives and livelihoods

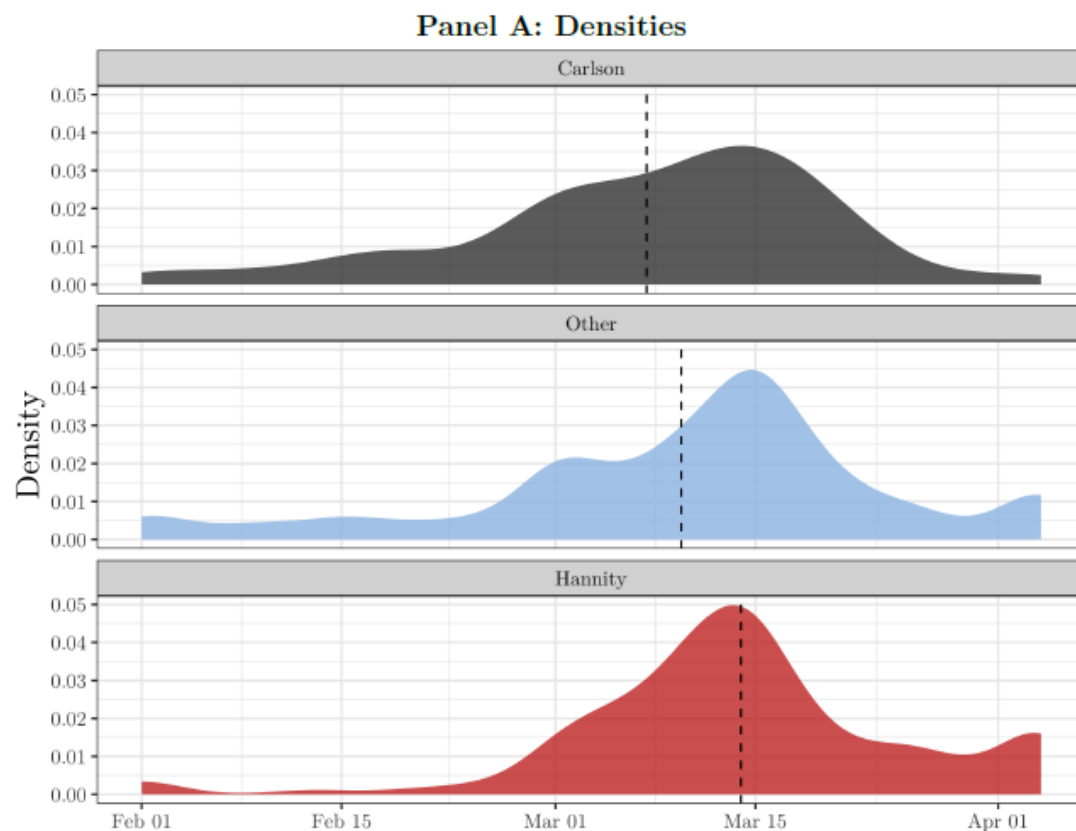
- New research using mobility data confirms that policies that restrict livelihoods face greater resistance in low-income countries compared to high-income countries (Mahoney and Taskin, 2020)
- Governments will need to build and maintain trust as they iterate smart re-opening policies
- Compliance is easier from a well-informed and self-motivated population rather than using monitoring and enforcement (which may be limited in feasibility too).
- Many countries employ frequent briefings led by the head of state.
 - Often accompanied by Minister of Health and other scientific experts.
 - Demonstrate fact-based consensus.
 - Include a review of the numbers and a description of strategy going forward.



President Kenyatta leads a press conference on March 14, 2020 with key officials demonstrating social distancing recommendations. SAMUEL MIRING'U

Preliminary evidence shows US residents who listened to skeptical news media changed COVID-19 health behavior more slowly

Figure 2: Timing of behavioral change by show viewership



Viewers listening to Hannity, who was skeptical changes their behavior a few weeks later than Fox viewers listening to Carlson who took COVID-19 seriously early on. (Bursztyn et al. 2020)

- Mass media messaging has effects on behavior of viewers, such as staying at home or washing hands.
- Behavior translates into additional cases and deaths.
- Differences in reporting between two Fox News shows led to earlier behavior change where coverage took COVID-19 more seriously.

Communicating *why* is as important as communicating *what*



*President Akufo-Addo on
April 21, 2020*

- President Akufo-Addo succinctly laid out tradeoffs and uncertainty around difficult policy decisions.
- Described as the "quote of the year" (theghanareport.com).
- Implicit promise of accountability — "we know how to bring the economy back to life".

Unpleasant realities need to be communicated frankly



"Nobody likes to hear this but it is the truth. We are not living through the final phase of this crisis, we are still at its beginning. We will have to live with this virus for a long time."

- Chancellor Merkel on April 23, 2020
- 5 weeks into strict restrictions, 153K cases



"Medical scientists and our doctors inform us that we are still in the early stages of this pandemic. Without proven therapeutic medicines or a vaccine, we can expect this to continue as a problem for the foreseeable future."

- President Cyril Ramaphosa on April 22, 2020
- 26 days into South African lockdown, 1000 cases

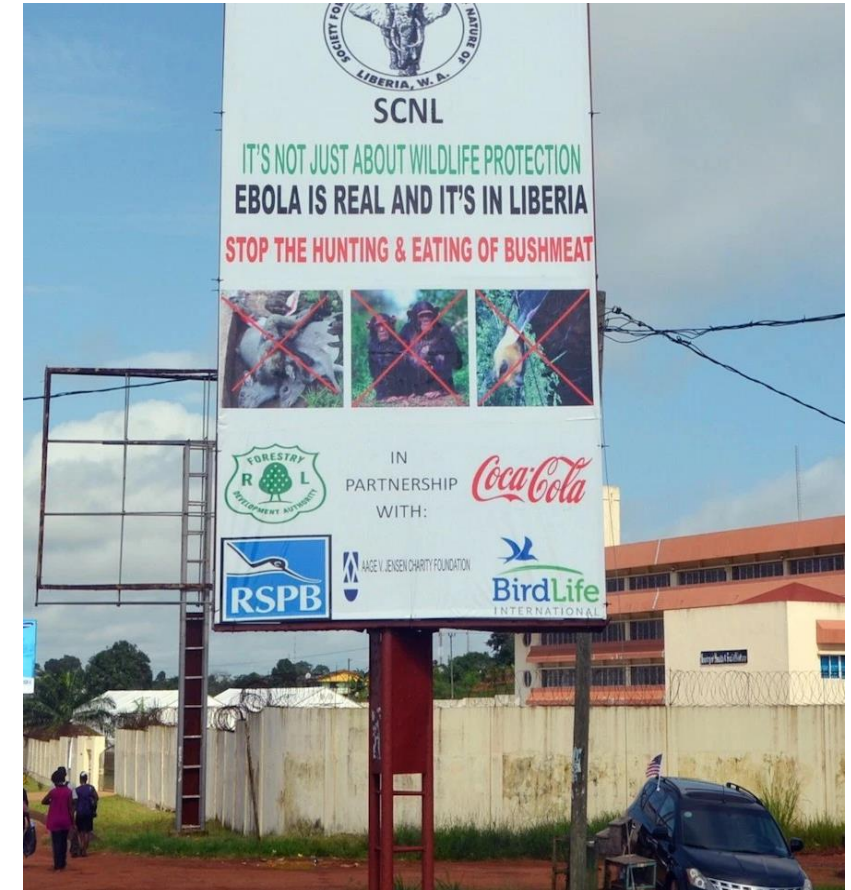
Leaders can gain trust by acknowledging that these are not normal times for anyone



- President Ramaphosa faced difficulties with his mask during live national address on April 23, 2020.
- President responded with humor on the following day:
“I'm going to open a TV channel where I'm going to teach people how to put on a mask. So you can enroll [and learn] how a mask is put on.” (eNCA.com)
- Positive response from public in social and traditional media after difficult weeks of lockdown.

Communication was an important part of Liberia's campaign against Ebola and may have averted up to 25,000 deaths

- Government fought misinformation that minimized seriousness and severity of the outbreak.
- It was important to share information domestically and with neighbors and other regional leaders.
- President Sirleaf led daily meetings and ensured that her government spoke with one voice. There was no confusion and no contradictions.
- Government engaged effectively with diverse range of social actors – interfaith figures, musicians etc.



Source: Amara Konneh, What the West can learn from Liberia's Ebola response, March 2020 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/16/coronavirus-ebola-liberia-sirleaf-west-can-learn-from-africa-response/>

Creativity can amplify government messages.

Examples from Rwanda:



SEEN IN KIGALI: To prevent the risk of [#Coronavirus](#) outbreak, passengers at the Kigali Bus Park have to wash their hands before getting onto buses.

[#Rwanda](#) has recorded NO case of the epidemic but the country has stepped up vigilance.



12:13 PM · Mar 9, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Practical and innovative technology makes it easier for the public to comply with recommended messaging.



Rwanda National Police
[@Rwandapolice](#)

1/2

We have added drones to our methods of raising awareness about [#COVID-19](#).

As drones pass your neighborhoods, we ask you:

1. Listen carefully the message.
2. Don't leave your home to view the drones.



12:29 AM · Apr 12, 2020 · [Twitter for Android](#)

Using drones to disseminate COVID-19 information.

Gathering and interpreting COVID-19 data

We need data to understand the pandemic

deaths testing-capacity
case-infection-ratio R_0
lags COVID-19
cases-per-million logs infections
confirmed cases

- How many people are infected?
- Where are the infected people?
- How quickly is it spreading?
- Where are health systems most needed and most under pressure?

"When you don't know, it's more difficult to act"

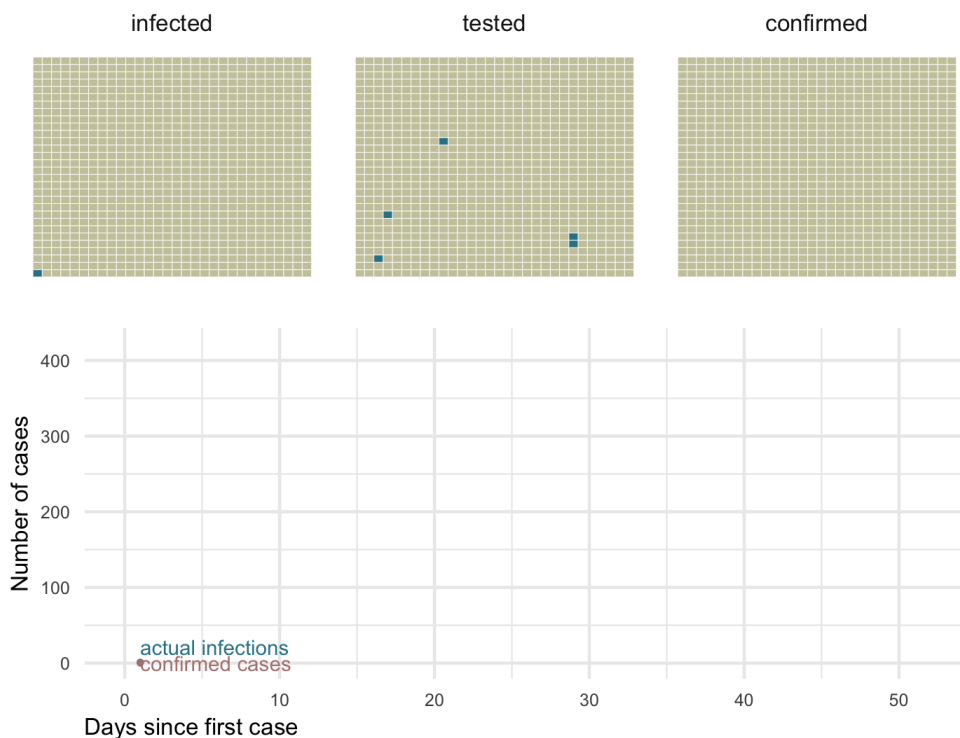
- Emmanuel Andre, spokesman of the Belgian government COVID-19 advisory response.

Data on confirmed cases is important but not sufficient. Confirmed cases depend on how much testing is being done and who is being tested

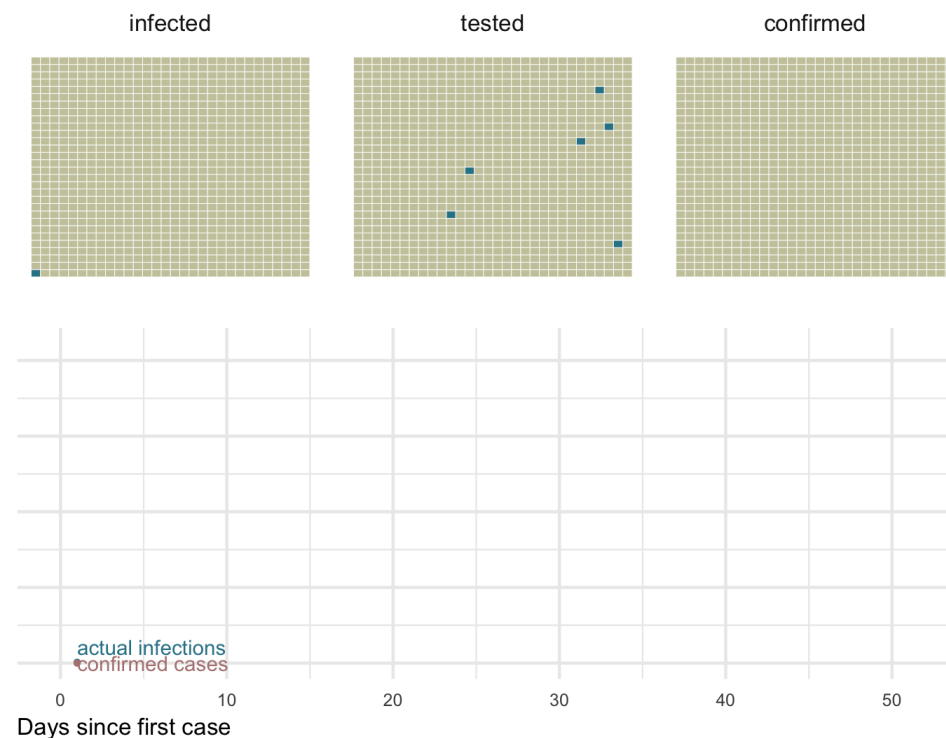
Trying to understand the COVID-19 pandemic by looking only at confirmed cases can be misleading.

The simulation below shows two hypothetical countries with the same rate of actual infections. They have different confirmed cases curves. It depends on testing.

Testing only 0.6% of the population e.g. Kenya today



Scaling up to test 5% of the population e.g. Ghana today

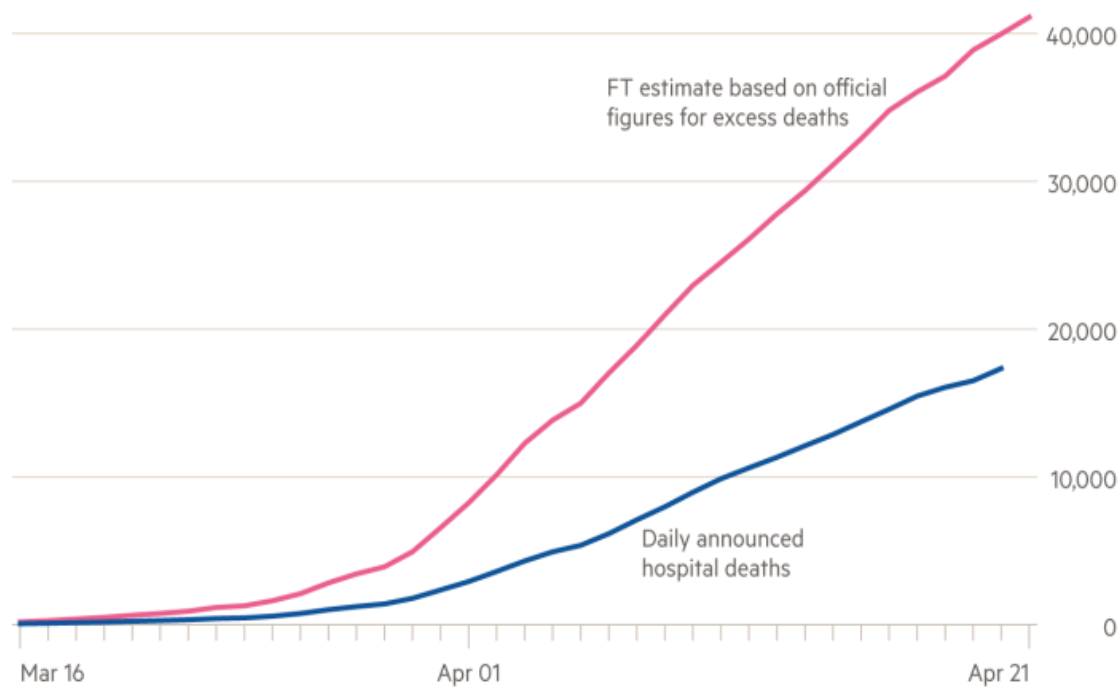


Notes: Actual infections grow at an exponential rate. A random sample of the population is sampled for testing in each period according to the testing ratio. If a test is done on an infected person (i.e. the squares overlap), it becomes a confirmed case.

Animation does not play while slide is in edit mode.

Data on deaths may be more reliable but different ways of counting and reporting COVID-19 deaths may underestimate the severity of the pandemic

Coronavirus has caused as many as 41,000 deaths in the UK



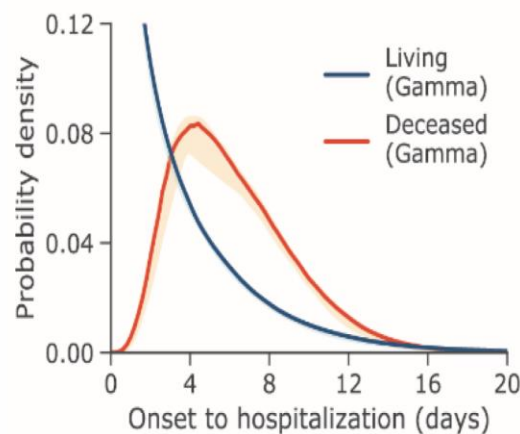
Source: FT analysis of ONS data
© FT

Source: UK coronavirus deaths more than double official figure, according to FT study <https://www.ft.com/content/67e6a4ee-3d05-43bc-ba03-e239799fa6ab>

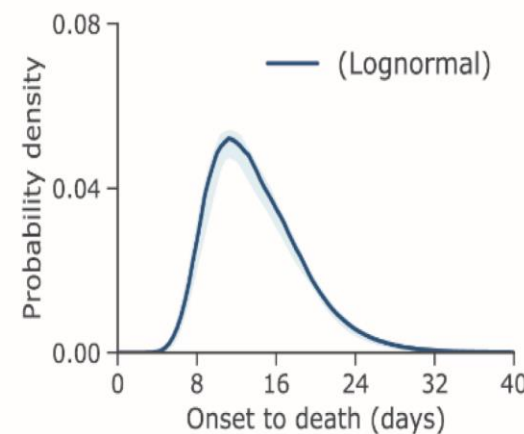
- Different definition of a COVID-19 case could have quadrupled total number of reported cases and deaths in China (Tsang et al, 2020).
- A UK comparison of reported hospital deaths to registry data suggests a total of 41,000 deaths due to COVID-19 (compared to 17,337 confirmed hospital COVID-19 deaths).
- This important use of registry data is not likely to be possible for Africa. 2017 UNECA study found that only 1 in 3 deaths in the region are captured by official registration systems (Sanko et al, 2020).

Even the highest quality data is likely to always be several days out of date due to time lags between infections and symptoms (and testing positive)

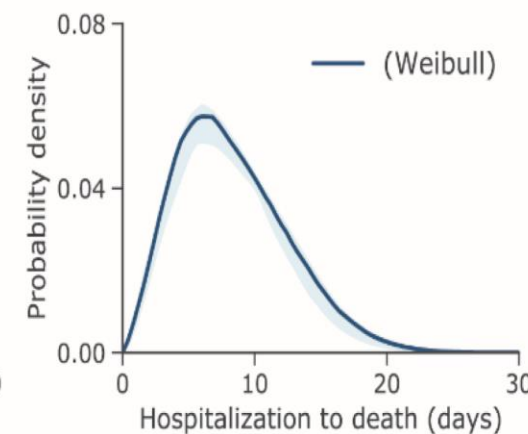
- A hospitalization today may represent an infection that happened 4-12 days ago.
- May have gone on to infect other people in the meantime.
- It can take up to one week for COVID-19 test results to be known (Canadian Government Health and Social Services).



(A)



(B)



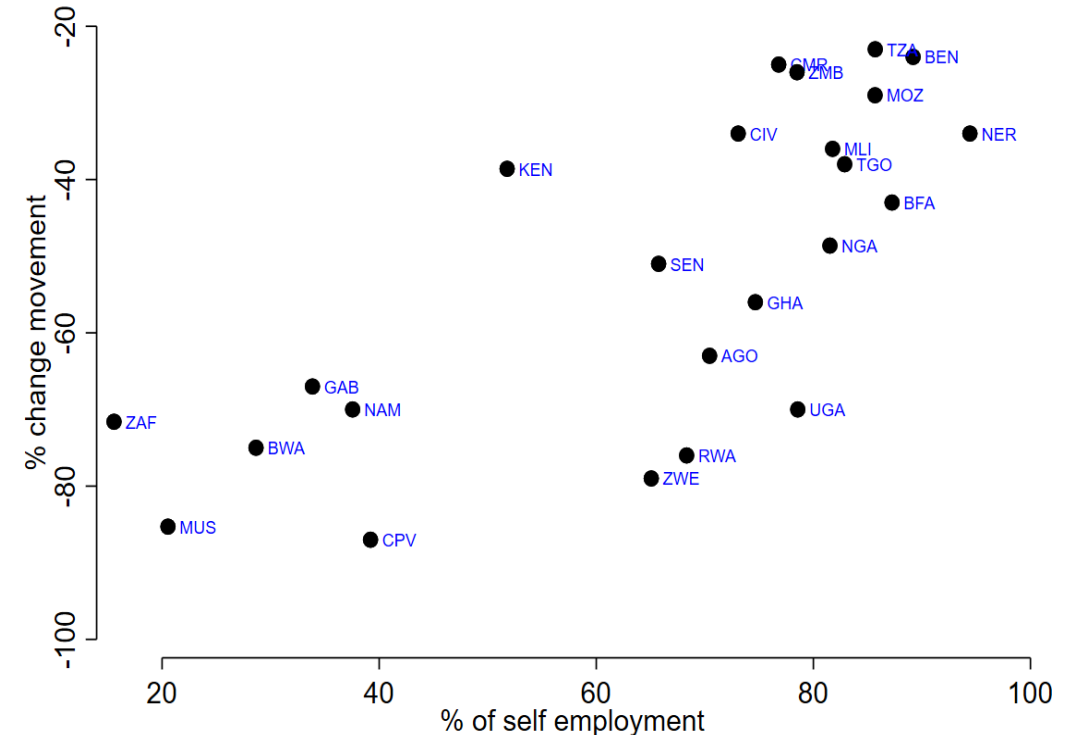
(C)

Linton et al, 2020. Journal of Clinical Medicine

Policies made under uncertainty may be guided by ‘no regret’ principles and making the best use of available data (Dercon, 2020)

- Data at scale can reduce economic and epidemiological uncertainty
 - Examples: mobile phone data to understand who is affected by lockdown; hospitalization and death records as alternatives for infections.
- “When the facts change, I change my mind.”
 - Attributed to John Maynard Keynes.
 - Policymaking under uncertainty has to be adaptive: decisions need to be made in ways that can be reversed, fiscally and politically.
- Building and maintaining trust will be essential

Residents of countries with a large share of self-employment were less likely to reduce mobility during lockdown



Notes: Location accuracy and the understanding of categorized places varies from region to region
Source: WDI and Google Community Mobility Report dataset. Accessed on 27 Apr 2020

Source: Google Mobility Data

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