



**ADRU**  
Academy of the  
Disaster Research Unit



## SARS CoV 2 Monitoring Report

Week 20, May 11<sup>th</sup> – May 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

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Academy of the  
Disaster Research Unit (ADRU)

## Rationale

As part of a real time evaluation of the SARS CoV 2 pandemic (with focus on epidemiological, economical, societal, and cultural developments in Germany and Iran) the research team, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Martin Voss, is conducting a weekly monitoring of real time developments. Multiple national and international media outlets, research platforms and scientific and organisational guidelines, briefs and updates are screened on a daily basis to feed into this weekly outlet. The rationale behind this is to support the projects' network partners in Iran and Germany with a condensed overview of key developments, trends and events that are shaping the global, German and Iranian outbreak response and recovery. The selection of subjects are driven by 3 factors:

- relevance to network partners – based on regular bilateral and multilateral feedback/input
- the focus area of the real time evaluation (epidemiological trends, economic, societal and cultural effects, escalating risks and downstream effects, risk communication and vulnerabilities)
- global trends and developments as the pandemic evolves

The setup of these short briefs is structured by technical area, with country relevance and specificities included under each main headline. The chapters are precluded by pertinent general observations. This could be mainstream big ticket items or fringe subjects that are easily overlooked in the global flood of information. Some topics will be followed through their evolution in time while others may only appear once. While subjectively selected, the briefs are descriptive in nature and leave analysis and critical interpretation to the reader. Initially based on the research teams' perception of relevance, the content will gradually represent the importance of topics for network partners in both countries.

**Keywords:** pandemic, covid-19, health, epidemiology, data, science, treatment, trial, risk, escalating risks, vulnerability, global, , economy, society, culture, risk management

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## General Observations May 11<sup>th</sup> – May 17<sup>th</sup>

Wuhan Province in China, Korea, and Iran are experiencing setbacks with new clusters of cases appearing in the wake of easing lock down measures. As with everything in the crisis testing is being both curse and cure. Wuhan province is attempting to test all 11 million population in a 10 day exercise which many perceive impossible giving the current testing capacity in the country<sup>1</sup>. However, it will be fascinating to see this unfold – and learn from the consecutive actions taken, which have the potential to result in strict tracing and isolation measures.

The spread of COVID 19 among migrant populations around the world is being broadly discussed because of the dramatically unfolding situation in Singapore where the city nation managed to contain the outbreak albeit no lock down and with “normality” continuing for the general population<sup>2</sup>. Had the government not dropped the ball on their large number of migrant workers, whose living conditions are far from ideal to apply social distancing measures, the city nation would have recovered swiftly. In Sweden however, where migrants are equally bearing the highest burden of the disease outbreak among population groups the reason seems to be a different one: that of a general unwillingness among Swedish authorities to consider how cultural differences impact people’s behaviors. *“There is a strong aversion in Sweden for the government or authorities to differentiate between people of different ethnic backgrounds”*, Per Brinkemo, author of the survey, said. *“It’s a well-intentioned attitude but can prove dangerous.”*<sup>3</sup> According to the *Migrationsdatenportal* in 10 of the 15 most affected countries migrants are overrepresented in the population with up to 10 % as opposed to the global 3.5 %<sup>4</sup>.

## Health

**Epidemiology** The majority of countries are currently exhibiting doubling times of more than 10 days. Compared to the end of March—when most country’s epidemics were doubling faster than 8 days—this is an encouraging sign. A number of countries in Africa, however, are doubling faster. Burundi, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, and Zambia are all currently doubling faster than 10 days<sup>5</sup>.

Reports from Europe and North America have described clusters of children and adolescents requiring admission to intensive care units with a multisystem inflammatory condition with some features similar to those of Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome. Case reports and small series have described a presentation of acute illness accompanied by a hyperinflammatory syndrome, leading to multiorgan failure and shock.<sup>13-15</sup> Initial hypotheses are that this syndrome may be related to COVID-19 based on initial laboratory testing. WHO drafted a first guideline with tentative case definition and an urgent appeal (There is therefore an urgent need for collection of standardized data describing

<sup>1</sup> BBC News (12.5.20): Coronavirus: Wuhan draws up plans to test all 11 million residents, retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52629213>

<sup>2</sup> Griffith J. for CNN (19.05.2020): **Singapore had a model coronavirus response, then cases spiked. What happened?** Retrieved from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/18/asia/singapore-coronavirus-response-intl-hnk/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Rothchild N. for Foreign Policy FP (21.04.2020): **The Hidden Flaw in Sweden’s Anti-Lockdown Strategy** retrieved from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/21/sweden-coronavirus-anti-lockdown-immigrants/>

<sup>4</sup> Migrationsdatenportal (2020): Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic <https://migrationdataportal.org/de/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>5</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (13.05.2020): COVID 19 Update, retrieved from: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-13.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=DDbK8f9w-JY>



clinical presentations, severity, outcomes, and epidemiology) to report any cases using a standardized reporting form<sup>6</sup>.

Iran had reported [steadily decreasing COVID-19 incidence](#) since its peak in early April, down from more than 3,000 new cases per day to fewer than 1,000 in early May<sup>7</sup>. Over the past several days, however, Iran has again reported increasing COVID-19 incidence—approximately 50% more cases than the low earlier this month—as a result of [increased transmission in the Khuzestan province](#)<sup>8</sup>. Reportedly, the increased transmission is a result of [residents relaxing social distancing](#) efforts<sup>9</sup>. COVID-19 incidence in the affected area tripled, and hospitalizations increased by 60%. Iran was in the midst of slowly relaxing national social distancing policies, but the increased transmission led Iran to re-impose more restrictive measures in affected areas of Khuzestan province, including local travel restrictions<sup>10</sup>.

Several European countries recently published data from large surveys to estimate the scope of their national COVID-19 epidemics. [France](#)<sup>11</sup> and [Spain](#)<sup>12</sup> both conducted serological surveys to determine the proportion of the population that has ever been infected with SARS-CoV-2. In France, the study estimated that 4.4% of the population had previously been infected, and similarly, Spain estimated that 5% of the population had been infected. For comparison, France has reported 140,734 confirmed cases, representing approximately 0.2% of the entire population, and Spain has reported 229,540 confirmed cases, representing approximately 0.5% of its population. Both studies also provide regional breakdowns for the data. These two serological studies indicate that there could potentially be 10-20 undetected infections for every known case. While this may seem like a large number this portraits that at least 95% of both populations in both countries have not been infected.

While the number of new cases is on an upward trend, the government spokesman, Ali Rabeie, said that Iran [had passed the managing phase of the pandemic](#), and they were in the containment phase<sup>13</sup>.

The chairman of the [national epidemiological](#) committee announced that changing focus from identifying the hospitalized cases to detecting infected people in the entire community was the main reason why the number of confirmed cases had been increased in Iran<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organisation (15.06.2020): Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and adolescents temporally related to COVID-19 retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/multisystem-inflammatory-syndrome-in-children-and-adolescents-with-covid-19>

<sup>7</sup> Global Change Data Lab (17.05.2020) Our world in Data, retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/daily-covid-cases-3-day-average?time=2020-03-01..&country=~IRN>

<sup>8</sup> Tasnim News Agency(9.06.2020) Tehran: the Achille's heels in the corona outbreak; an upward trend in new infections in Khuzestan. Retrieved from <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1399/02/20/2262413/>

<sup>9</sup> Reuters (10.05.2020): Iran locks down southwest county after spike in coronavirus cases, retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-iran/iran-locks-down-southwest-county-after-spike-in-coronavirus-cases-idUSKBN22M0Q7>

<sup>10</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (11.05.2020): COVID 19 Update, retrieved from: [https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-11.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=H\\_u4rrTRNfU](https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-11.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=H_u4rrTRNfU)

<sup>11</sup> Salje H., Tran Kiem C., et al (13.05.2020): Estimating the burden of SARS-CoV-2 in France retrieved from: <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/05/12/science.abc3517>

<sup>12</sup> Ministerio de Sanidad Espania (13.05.2020): Los primeros resultados del ENECovid19 muestran que el 5% de la población ha desarrollado anticuerpos frente a la enfermedad, retrieved from: <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/gabinete/notasPrensa.do?metodo=detalle&id=4914>

<sup>13</sup> Iran Press International News Agency (18.05.2020): We are at the phase of containing coronavirus: Government spokesman, retrieved from: <https://iranpress.com/iran-i147351-we-are-at-the-phase-of-containing-coronavirus-government-spokesman>

<sup>14</sup> Hamshahronline (17.06.2020) The main reason for the rise in number of infections; increased risks of death due to multiple organ failure in infected people ( in Farsi). Retrieved from <https://www.hamshahronline.ir/news/512434/>



## Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Effects

In Iran [Schools across the country reopened](#) with limits on 16 May. All the school had been closed since 5 March. Attending the classes is not compulsory for students, and they can only go to schools to solve their problems<sup>15</sup>. [Mosques also temporarily reopened](#) on 12 May, while some parts of the country, specifically the Khuzestan province in the Southwest of the country, are experiencing a rise in the daily new confirmed cases<sup>16</sup>. It has led [to the lockdown of the cities with](#) the rise in the new cases. Violating social distancing rules is the main reason for the new wave of the infection, according to the governor of Khuzestan<sup>17</sup>.

## Vulnerabilities

[Children](#) with disabilities are among the vulnerable groups who face health risks in times of epidemic. Closures of schools, deficient medical equipment, social distancing measures, and reduced quality of care, can increase health risks or death due to COVID-19 among children with disabilities<sup>18</sup>. Discriminatory guidelines restrict the care and resources for people with disabilities who have COVID-19. For example, in the case of limited ventilators, people with disabilities can be ignored or left behind. In some countries like Canada, disability organizations have made policy recommendations to promote the right of people with disabilities<sup>19</sup>.

In a recently published [policy brief](#), the United Nations Sustainable Development Group urged governments, civil society, health authorities and others *"to unite and address the short- and longer-term mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic"*. The report highlights the needs of vulnerable populations, including first responders and front-line healthcare workers, older adults, children, women, and refugees or those in conflict settings. In addition to fear of illness or death and the growing challenges posed by mis- and disinformation, individuals are also experiencing a broad scope of secondary mental health effects, including financial insecurity or social isolation. The report advises that emergency psychosocial support should become more widely available, including remote mental health care. Furthermore, the report calls for prioritizing the protection and promotion of human rights of those with severe mental health conditions, as their needs can often be neglected in major emergencies<sup>20</sup>.

While many countries are still in the phase of responding to and managing the pandemic, developing strategies and policies [for a transition state from response to recovery](#) has become a hot topic. However, the complex nature of the pandemic will not permit the countries for a full recovery. The typical

<sup>15</sup> Al Monitor (04.05.2020): [Iran to begin opening schools May 16](https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/05/iran-open-schools-coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-mosques.html) retrieved from: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/05/iran-open-schools-coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-mosques.html>

<sup>16</sup> Didili Z. for the New Europe (13.05.2020): [Mosques in Iran reopen temporarily](https://www.new-europe.eu/article/mosques-in-iran-reopen-temporarily/), retrieved from: <https://www.new-europe.eu/article/mosques-in-iran-reopen-temporarily/>

<sup>17</sup> Reuters (10.05.2020): [Iran locks down southwest county after spike in coronavirus cases](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-iran/iran-locks-down-southwest-county-after-spike-in-coronavirus-cases-idUSKBN22MOQ7), retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-iran/iran-locks-down-southwest-county-after-spike-in-coronavirus-cases-idUSKBN22MOQ7>

<sup>18</sup> The Conversation (11.05.2020): [Children with disabilities face health risks, disruption and marginalization under coronavirus](https://theconversation.com/children-with-disabilities-face-health-risks-disruption-and-marginalization-under-coronavirus-137115), retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/children-with-disabilities-face-health-risks-disruption-and-marginalization-under-coronavirus-137115>

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group (13.05.2020): [Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-covid-19-and-need-action-mental-health), retrieved from: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-covid-19-and-need-action-mental-health>

cycle of emergency and disaster risk management is not precisely the same in biological hazards like the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, there is an urgent need for a holistic approach and considerable international collaboration and macro-level changes in the global and national levels<sup>21</sup>.

Over half of Europe's coronavirus deaths have been in nursing homes, [data suggests](#), and older people are especially vulnerable to the virus<sup>22</sup>.

## Risk Communication

Technology/AI: health authorities in Singapore are beginning to develop creative ways to encourage physical distancing. A pilot project will utilize the Boston Dynamics robot dog "Spot" to patrol public parks and broadcast pre-recorded messages reminding residents to adhere to physical distancing guidance. Spot will also reportedly be capable of estimating the number of individuals in the park, but it will not use facial recognition or other systems to identify or track individual people. If the pilot goes well, authorities will consider expanding the program to busier park hours and to more locations. Spot is also being used to deliver medication to patients in designated isolation facilities<sup>23</sup>. The European Council highlights that *"Emergency measures using technological solutions, including AI, should (also) be assessed at the end of the crisis. Those that infringe on individual freedoms should not be trivialized on the pretext of a better protection of the population<sup>24</sup>. The provisions of Convention 108+ should in particular continue to be applied<sup>25</sup>"*.

<sup>21</sup> Fakhruddin B., Blanchard K., Ragupathy D. (2020): Are we there yet? The transition from response to recovery for the COVID-19 pandemic, retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590061720300399>

<sup>22</sup> Huet N. for Euronews (17.05.2020): Coronavirus: Care homes could be where over half of Europe's COVID-19 deaths occur, says new study retrieved from: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/17/coronavirus-care-homes-could-be-where-over-half-of-europe-s-covid-19-deaths-occur-says-new>

<sup>23</sup> Stankiewicz K. for CNBC (15.05.2020): Boston Dynamics' dog-like robot Spot is being used on coronavirus social distancing patrol retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/15/boston-dynamics-dog-like-robot-spot-used-on-social-distancing-patrol.html>

<sup>24</sup> Council of Europe (2020): AI and control of Covid-19 coronavirus <https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/ai-and-control-of-covid-19-coronavirus>

<sup>25</sup> Convention 108+ is the first binding international instrument which protects the individual against abuses which may accompany the collection and processing of personal data and which seeks to regulate at the same time the transfrontier flow of personal data. Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/108#:~:text=Details%20of%20Treaty%20No.,108&text=01%2F10%2F1985%20%2D%205%20Ratifications.&text=This%20Convention%20is%20the%20first,transfrontier%20flow%20of%20personal%20data.>



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