



**ADRU**  
Academy of the  
Disaster Research Unit



## SARS CoV 2 Monitoring Report

Week 22, May 25th – May 31st

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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 25<sup>th</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup>

Latin America is the new epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic as of the European countries report lower numbers of new daily cases, which allow them to ease restrictions further. Meanwhile, Iran is facing a rapid rise in the daily cases raising concerns of second waves of the outbreak, which can lead to overwhelming health care systems once again. In Germany, the daily number of new cases is dropping; however, the discussion about the effects of strict measures, including school closures, indicating that the prevention paradox<sup>1</sup>, a well-known phenomenon in health care showing that interventions can achieve large overall health gains for whole populations but might offer only small advantages to each individual, is taking full effect.

As observed last week: The number of COVID-19 related deaths has become a key indicator to track the impact of the pandemic in countries and across the world. However, this number is not easily collected and reported by every country. To support national governments with surveillance and response planning, WHO has partnered with Vital Strategies and other global partners to launch a new [technical package](#) on “Revealing the Toll of COVID-19: A Technical Package for Rapid Mortality Surveillance and Epidemic Response.” Compared with only using COVID-19 confirmed deaths as a measure of impact, rapid mortality surveillance generates daily or weekly counts of mortality data by age, sex, date of death, place of death and place of usual residence. This provides a **more complete picture of impact**, particularly for deaths that may be **indirectly related** to COVID-19. This also addresses **the indirect impact caused by disruptions in healthcare access and supply chains**. When policy-makers can compare estimated weekly number of excess deaths related to COVID-19 compared with pre-pandemic levels, they have a powerful tool to inform their national response and recovery planning<sup>2</sup>.

## Health

**Epidemiology:** In terms of [relative contribution to the global COVID-19 incidence](#), South America has surpassed all other continents, currently representing nearly 30% of the global daily incidence. North America represents 26% of the daily incidence (and steadily decreasing), and Asia represents 22%. Europe has dropped to approximately 18%, and Africa’s relative contribution continues to grow steadily, now more than 4%. (Johns Hopkins COVID 19 Update May 27th 2020)

**Treatment:** as scientist and practitioners explore SARS CoV 19 in greater detail every day the various existing treatment guidelines drafted for the disease require regular reconsideration/updates. On May 27<sup>th</sup> WHO’s [treatment guidelines](#) were updated according to the most up to date information available. Especially the use of anti-virals outside of clinical trials and the use of antibiotics in the absence of symptoms indicating a bacterial infection are discouraged (WHO daily update 129 subject in focus May 28.2020)

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation (2002):The world health report 2002 - Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life, chapter 6 Choosing priority strategies for risk prevention <https://www.who.int/whr/2002/chapter6/en/index1.html>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation (21.05.2020): Revealing the toll of COVID-19, A technical package for rapid mortality surveillance and epidemic response <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/revealing-the-toll-of-covid-19>

**Solidarity Trial update:** on 26.5.2020 [WHO](#) reports that over 400 hospitals in 35 countries are actively recruiting patients and nearly 3500 patients have been enrolled from 17 countries as part of the Solidarity Trial which was established to evaluate the safety and efficacy of four drugs and drug combinations against COVID-19<sup>3</sup>. The [Lancet-published](#) study on the effects of Chloroquine and Hydro chloroquine, both part of the trial, has led to a temporary pause of the hydroxychloroquine arm within the Solidarity Trial while the safety data is reviewed by the Data Safety Monitoring Board<sup>4</sup>. The review will consider data collected so far in the Solidarity Trial and in particular robust randomized available data, to adequately evaluate the potential benefits and harms from this drug. The rest of the trial will continue as planned<sup>5</sup>. The study in The Lancet has meanwhile been retracted after authors could not verify an enormous database of medical records used in the study<sup>6</sup>.

**Changing disease pattern:** After last week's report from Iran in which the country observes a shift in symptoms<sup>7</sup> there is now data becoming available that indicates that COVID-19 mortality in younger populations is being recorded as the disease spreads beyond China, Europe, and the United States to Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Mexico in the Americas. While severe cases and deaths in many countries impacted early in the pandemic tended to be reported in older patients, developing countries are increasingly reporting severe cases and deaths among younger individuals<sup>8</sup>. As illustrated by following graphic<sup>9</sup>, most countries in Africa, South America, and Asia are reporting lower median age for COVID-19 patients, which could be contributing to the elevated incidence of severe disease in younger patients.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organisation (25.05.2020): Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 25 May 2020 <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---25-may-2020>

<sup>4</sup> Mehra M. Prof.Dr., Desai S. MD, Ruschitzka F Prof. Dr, et al ( 22.05.2020): Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis Published: May 22, 2020 DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31180-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31180-6) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31180-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31180-6/fulltext)

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation (25.05.2020): Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 25 May 2020 <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---25-may-2020>

<sup>6</sup> Rabin R., Gabler E., in the New York Times (04.06.2020): Two Huge Covid-19 Studies Are Retracted After Scientists Sound Alarms <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/health/coronavirus-hydroxychloroquine.html>

<sup>7</sup> Radiofarda.com (19.05.2020): Experts In Iran Say Coronavirus Symptoms Changing From Respiratory To Gastrointestinal <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-experts-say-coronavirus-symptoms-changing-from-respiratory-to-gastrointestinal-/30620493.html>

<sup>8</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (27.05.2020): COVID 19 Update <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-27.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=1q5A9yFTkaA>

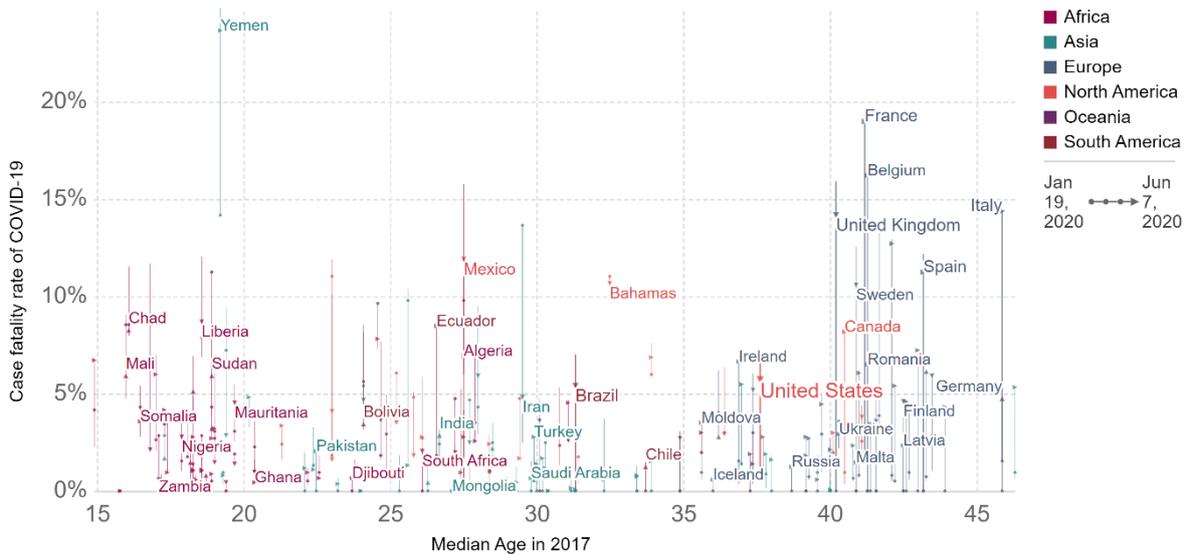
<sup>9</sup> Global Change Data Lab (07.06.2020): Our World In Data - Case fatality rate of COVID-19 vs. Median Age, Jan 19, 2020 to Jun 7, 2020 <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/case-fatality-rate-of-covid-19-vs-median-age?time=2020-01-19..2020-06-07>



### Case fatality rate of COVID-19 vs. Median Age, Jan 19, 2020 to Jun 7, 2020



The Case Fatality Rate (CFR) is the ratio between confirmed deaths and confirmed cases. During an outbreak of a pandemic the CFR is a poor measure of the mortality risk of the disease. We explain this in detail at [OurWorldInData.org/Coronavirus](https://OurWorldInData.org/Coronavirus). The size of the bubble corresponds to the total confirmed deaths up to that date.



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 8th April, 11:30 (London time); UN Population Division  
 Note: Only countries with more than 100 confirmed cases are included.  
[OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus](https://OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus) • CC BY

A myriad of factors—including high population density, pervasive poverty, high prevalence of comorbidities (e.g. diabetes, obesity), and poor access to healthcare—could be contributing to a shift toward more severe disease in younger individuals. As COVID-19 incidence shifts toward developing nations, it will be critical to address all relevant risk factors, including those beyond patient health and demographics, in order to effectively mitigate the COVID-19 risk<sup>11</sup>.

While the government of Iran has lifted most of the COVID-19 restrictions, according to the health officials, the [new daily cases](#) remain high at more than 2000<sup>12</sup>. **Public transport** has been identified as one of the main places that viruses are transmitted in Iran. While wearing **face masks** have been highly recommended, many people do not follow the measure, especially in Tehran. [The Tehran municipality decided](#) to use police patrol to enforce the mandatory face mask rule<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile, the discussion around [making face masks compulsory](#) in all of the administration offices has been continuing<sup>14</sup>.

As the virus continues to spread in the southern and western parts of Iran, where the weather is getting warmer, [the minister of health warned](#) that while some officials and authorities believed that the virus

<sup>11</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (27.05.2020): COVID 19 Update <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-27.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=1q5A9yFTkaA>

<sup>12</sup> Tasnim News Agency (31.05.2020): Coronavirus Updates in Iran: Total Cases Surpass 151,000 <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2020/05/31/2276898/coronavirus-updates-in-iran-total-cases-surpass-151-000>

<sup>13</sup> Tasnim News Agency (29.05.2020): Tighter controls over mandatory face masks in public transport, (in Farsi) <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1399/03/09/2275544/>

<sup>14</sup> Tabnak Professional News Site (30.05.2020): Mandatory face masks for governmental agencies and offices ( in Farsi) <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/981436/>

went away in **warmer weather**, it was not the case<sup>15</sup>. He added that many people mistakenly thought that the spreading of the virus was getting slow. As a consequence, they did not follow the social distancing rules and hygiene protocols, which caused the second wave of the outbreak in at least four provinces of the country.

The role of warmer weather in slowing down the COVID-19 has been one focus area for investigation since the first days of the outbreak. [A recent study](#) on 144 geopolitical areas, carried out by the Institute for Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation of the University of Toronto<sup>16</sup>, suggested that warm weather and humidity will probably not be effective in stopping the spread of the virus. The study, more importantly also aimed to determine whether epidemic growth is globally associated with climate or public health interventions intended to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and concludes:

*“Epidemic growth of COVID-19 was not associated with geographic latitude, nor with temperature during the exposure period, in our global analysis. Only area-wide public health interventions were consistently associated with reduced epidemic growth, and the greater the number of co-occurring public health interventions, the larger the reduction in growth. Taken together, these findings suggest that seasonality is likely to play only a minor role in the epidemiology of COVID-19, while public health interventions (school closures, restricting mass gatherings, social distancing) appear to have a major impact. The important effect of public health interventions needs to be weighed carefully against potential economic and psychosocial harms when deciding when and how to lift restrictions.”<sup>17</sup>*

The health information site HealthLine, who discussed the research findings, cites Brian Labus, PhD, MPH, assistant professor at the School of Public Health at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas as saying:

*“temperature and humidity do play a role in the survival of the virus, but this only plays a small role in its transmission”. Labus concurs with the authors of the study that it is that “The biggest driver of disease transmission is our behavior,”<sup>18</sup>*

## Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Effects

**Health professionals address leaders of the G 20:** On May 26, 2020, over 350 organisations representing over 40 million health professionals and over 4,500 individual health professionals from 90 different countries\*, wrote to the G20 leaders calling for a #HealthyRecovery <https://healthyrecovery.net/><sup>19</sup>. The Guardian’s [take](#) on the open letter<sup>20</sup> includes looking at a recent

<sup>15</sup> Entekhab.ir Professional News Site (1.06.2020) Minister of Health: Will we be defeated by Corona in 90<sup>th</sup> minute <https://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/552881/>

<sup>16</sup> Jüni, P. MD, Rothenbühler M. PhD, Bobos P. MSc, et al (08.05.2020): Impact of climate and public health interventions on the COVID-19 pandemic: a prospective cohort study CMAJ 2020 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.200920>; early-released May 8, 2020 <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/192/21/E566>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: P. 8

<sup>18</sup> Schimelpfening N. in HealthLine (15.05.2020): Warm Weather Won’t Stop the Spread of COVID-19 <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/warm-weather-wont-stop-spread-of-coronavirus>

<sup>19</sup> Healthyrecovery.net (26.05.2020): Letter to G20 Leaders <https://healthyrecovery.net/>

<sup>20</sup> Harvey F. for The Guardian (26.05.2020): World health leaders urge green recovery from coronavirus crisis <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/26/world-health-leaders-urge-green-recovery-from-coronavirus-crisis>



study from Oxford University which found that a [green recovery](#)<sup>21</sup> - as considered by some countries (including [bailouts for fossil fuel-dependent industries](#)<sup>22</sup>, such as aviation, and by pumping money into infrastructure that [reduces greenhouse gases](#), from broadband for remote working to better cycle lanes and electric vehicle charging points<sup>23</sup> - will yield more jobs and a [better return on public investment](#) than returning to business as usual<sup>24</sup>. On the same day WHO published a [manifesto](#) for a green and healthy recovery from COVID-19, with six simple prescriptions (in short: protect nature, ensure that homes and health facilities have water and sanitation, access to clean and reliable energy, and are resilient to climate change, a quick transition to clean energy that will cut air pollution, promote healthy and sustainable food systems, build cities that integrate health into all aspects of urban planning, from sustainable transport systems to healthy housing, stop subsidizing fossil fuels that cause pollution and drive climate change)<sup>25</sup>.

[Transparency International](#) this week published a report in which the NGO looks at likely changes in ten key areas of social, political and economic life – from state capacity to the role of big tech companies in our societies – and their implications for anti-corruption, governance and development. Getting ahead of the curve **Exploring post-COVID-19 trends and their impact on anti-corruption, governance and development** identifies that while national context matters one common feature may be that the COVID-19 crisis risks widening the gap in the quality of governance across the world. Human rights are more likely to be abused in countries with existing low adherence to human rights principles; state capacity is likely to weaken in states already weak, and checks and balances are likely to be further dismantled where they were already thin. However, the wake-up call to citizens may be even stronger where it is most needed, and new technologies may facilitate better public action and engagement, if used well. (GETTING AHEAD OF THE CURVE, page 5)

By using data from Southeast Asian ride-hailing firm Grab, [Reuters](#) compared snapshots of the **traffic congestion** in different Southeast Asian cities before and during the restrictions and lockdowns. The snapshots show how restriction measures such as strict lockdown, home quarantine, and school closure brought some of the world's most congested cities to a halt.

The **Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS)** is one of the organizations involved in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fundraising for [providing vulnerable socioeconomic groups](#)<sup>26</sup> with aid packages, community screening, and sanitizing public spaces are among the activities of IRCS during the pandemic. Concerning international cooperation and aid during the COVID-19 pandemic, Karim Hemmati, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), confirmed that [112 shipments of](#)

<sup>21</sup> Harvey F. For The Guardian (24.03.2020): Covid-19 economic rescue plans must be green, say environmentalists <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/24/covid-19-economic-rescue-plans-must-be-green-say-environmentalists>

<sup>22</sup> Harvey F. for The Guardian (28.04.2020): UN chief: don't use taxpayer money to save polluting industries <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/28/un-chief-dont-use-taxpayer-money-to-save-polluting-industries>

<sup>23</sup> Harvey F. for The Guardian (06.05.2020):UK's coronavirus recovery should have green focus, Johnson urged <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/06/uks-coronavirus-recovery-should-have-green-focus-johnson-urged>

<sup>24</sup> Harvey F. for The Guardian (05.05.2020): Green stimulus can repair global economy and climate, study says <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/05/green-stimulus-can-repair-global-economy-and-climate-study-says>

<sup>25</sup> World Health Organisation (26.05.2020): Manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID 19 <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-manifesto-for-a-healthy-recovery-from-covid-19>

<sup>26</sup> Iran Press International News Agency (03.04.2020): <https://iranpress.com/iran-i145576-red-crescent-helping-2-million-unemployed-in-corona-crisis-official>

[International aid](#)<sup>27</sup>, with 70 shipments from China, had been sent to IRCS so far. Since successive disasters have caused the [IRCS warehouses](#)<sup>28</sup> to face the deficient level of emergency equipment and supply storage, IRCS asked the government for emergency assistance to fill the empty warehouses quickly.

## Cascading risks

Prevention and treatment services for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have been severely disrupted since the COVID-19 pandemic began, according to a WHO [survey](#) released today<sup>29</sup>. The survey, which was completed by 155 countries during a 3-week period in May, confirmed that the impact is global, but that low-income countries are most affected. The main finding is that health services have been partially or completely disrupted in many countries. More than half (53%) of the countries surveyed have partially or completely disrupted services for hypertension treatment; 49% for treatment for diabetes and diabetes-related complications; 42% for cancer treatment, and 31% for cardiovascular emergencies. Rehabilitation services have been disrupted in almost two-thirds (63%) of countries, even though rehabilitation is key to a healthy recovery following severe illness from COVID-19<sup>30</sup>.

The study reveals that **telemedicine and triaging are the mitigation strategies most often used to overcome disruptions**. Other mechanisms are<sup>31</sup>:

- Task shifting / role delegation
- Novel supply chain and/or dispensing approaches for NCD medicines
- Redirection of patients with NCDs to alternate health care facilities

Noncommunicable diseases kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally. Each year, 15 million people die from an NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years; more than 85% of these "premature" deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>27</sup>Iran Press International News Agency (31.05.2020): <https://iranpress.com/iran-i147895-all-humanitarian-aid-to-iran-red-crescent-is-7-million-dollars-red-crescent-chief>

<sup>28</sup>Asriran News Agency (31.05.2020): 112 shipments of COVID-19 international aid arrived in Iran( in Farsi) <https://www.asriran.com/fa/news/731183/>

<sup>29</sup>World Health Organisation (29.05.2020): Rapid assessment of service delivery for NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/rapid-assessment-of-service-delivery-for-ncds-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>30</sup>ibid

<sup>31</sup>ibid

<sup>32</sup>World Health Organisation (01.06.2020): WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 1 June 2020 <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--01-june-2020>



The COVID19 pandemic has led to an increased use of antibiotics, which ultimately will lead to higher bacterial resistance rates that will impact the burden of disease and deaths during the pandemic and beyond<sup>33</sup>

## Risk Communication

**Contact tracing apps**, which are designed to alert people when they are in contact with an infected person, are part of a strategy to contain the outbreak in many countries. [COVID-19 Digital Rights Tracker](#) has documented 47 contacts tracing apps, which are in use in 28 countries, including Australia, South Korea, and Singapore.<sup>34</sup> However, concerns regarding privacy and inaccuracy limit the efficiency of using contact tracing apps. In this regard, [nature](#) outlined a set of questions, as ethical guidelines, to assess whether a contact tracing app is ethically justifiable in terms of the principles of privacy, equality, and fairness.<sup>35</sup>

In Germany, an [open-source Corona-Warn-App](#) has been developed to notify users if they have been exposed to COVID-19.<sup>36</sup> It is based on [decentralized technologies](#), which means that there is not a central database to re-identify individuals and thus can offer more anonymity and secure [data protection](#).<sup>37,38</sup> Through the Exposure Notification framework broadcasting nearby Rolling Proximity Identifier, the [app](#) collects nearby identifiers using Bluetooth low energy technology and storing the identifiers locally, which are only valid for 10-20 minutes.<sup>39</sup> Another option is communicating with the test results of users with symptoms. Users with a positive test result can voluntarily upload their temporary keys up to the last 14 days to the servers. In this way, the Exposure Notification framework can check if any of the corresponding identifiers match the locally Rolling Identifier, and then risks are assessed, and the user receives instruction on necessary procedures.

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<sup>33</sup> ibid

<sup>34</sup> TOP10VPN (12.05.2020): COVID-19 Digital Rights Tracker. <https://www.top10vpn.com/research/investigations/covid-19-digital-rights-tracker/>

<sup>35</sup> Morley J., Cowls, J. Taddeo M., Floridi L. (28.05.2020): Ethical guidelines for COVID-19 tracing apps; protect privacy, equality and fairness in digital contact tracing with these key questions in: [nature https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01578-0](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01578-0)

<sup>36</sup> Die Bundesregierung (29.05.2020) So hilf die Corona-warn-App. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/corona-warn-app-1747738>

<sup>37</sup> BCC news (13.05.2020): German contact-tracing app takes different path to NHS. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52650576>

<sup>38</sup> Tagesschau.de (8.05.2020): Daran hakt es bei der Corona-App <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/corona-tracing-app-101.html>

<sup>39</sup> Corona Warn-App open source project (2020) help us improve the Corona-Warn-App <https://www.coronawarn.app/en/>



## Imprint

### Title

Real time analysis of the global response to the SARS CoV 2 pandemic and identification of best practices to strengthen Health Systems in Iran and Germany

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