

## Fear mongering over a second wave in Iran

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020

In response to:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/01/iran-rapid-rise-in-covid-19-cases-stokes-fears-of-second-wave>

### Iran's rapid rise in COVID-19 cases stokes fears of second wave

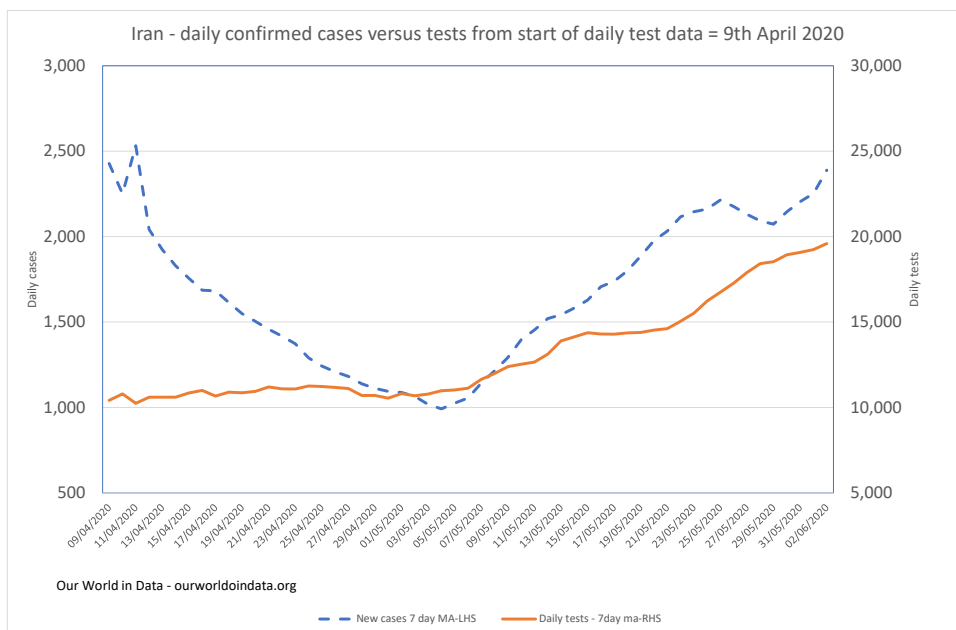
#FakeNews

Iran has recently rapidly increased its daily testing, which has increased by 80% over May. In general terms increased testing will always increase the number of cases identified, the number of new cases identified by testing will depend upon where a country is in its pandemic. At the height of a pandemic it appears that the number of cases per 1,000 tests is very high and then falls as the pandemic comes under control. In any event more testing will tend to lead to more cases.

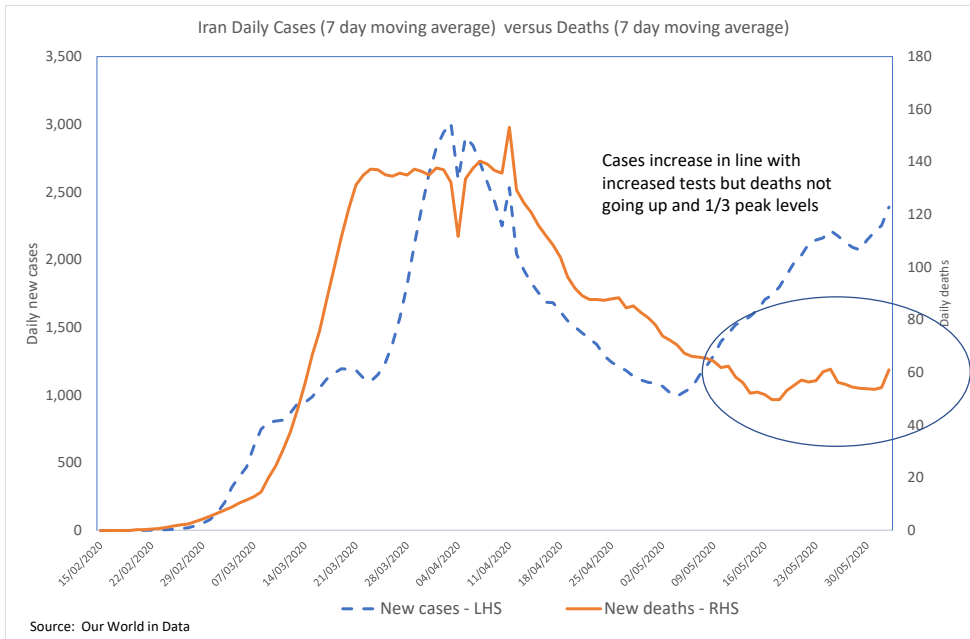
We can't vouch for the reliability of the statistic for Iran that are shown in Our World in Data, but those are the only statistics available (and are the same as those used to create the second wave story). Based on the data that is available;

- Iran had the lowest levels of testing compared to other large developed economies [Chart 1].
- Iran has recently increased its daily testing by 80% since early May, at the same time the number of cases has increased by 134%.
- The number of deaths (the only reliable indicators) has stayed at a low level, only cases have gone up.

The increase in testing and cases goes up in lock-step.



Number of deaths have **not** gone up, only cases;



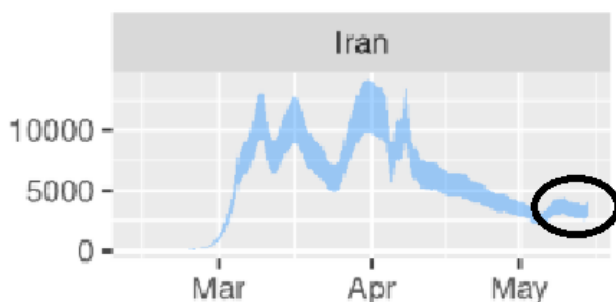
To illustrate these impacts using an independent source, we looked at the website of the Centre for Mathematical Modelling of Infections Diseases (CMMID), with the following link;

[https://cmmid.github.io/topics/covid19/global\\_cfr\\_estimates.html](https://cmmid.github.io/topics/covid19/global_cfr_estimates.html)

Using a methodology that is described in their webpage, where they identify what the case fatality ratio (CFR) should be and for those countries that have a much higher CFR they estimate how many cases are under-reported. In the case of Iran they estimated that at the beginning of May, Iran has only identified around 30% of its actual cases (due to the low testing programme). Roughly speaking the true number of cases will therefore be cases reported divided by 30%.

The number of cases that they now estimate Iran is reporting has increased from around 30% to 51% on the back of the increased testing in May [chart 2]. By way of illustration, a 70% increase in the reported number of cases from 10 to 17 due to increased testing would imply that the real number of cases is flat.  $10/30\%$  is roughly  $17/50\%$ .

Using this methodology (in summary) they estimate what the real cases are. The chart below for Iran clearly shows a significant decline in real cases. The key point is the recent increase in reported cases is not a function of coronavirus but only of the testing regime – **there is no second spike** according to CMMID.



"Iran is in the grip of a second wave of coronavirus" - really?

Based on all of the above we maintain that the headline that “Iran is in the grip of a second wave of coronavirus” is entirely false.

How did Patrick Wintour create this fake news story on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

1. Not providing a frame of reference – 8,778 deaths whilst tragic is very small in a country of 84 million and one of the lower death rates.
2. No mention of Iran’s very low level of testing, or the significant increase in testing.
3. Not mentioning that deaths are around 80% down from their peak.
4. Finding data points which are single days and comparing one day against the other rather than using less erratic and more reliable moving averages.
5. Falsely implying a causal link between lock down and cases, there is no proof for this assertion.
6. Mentioning only in the text that adherence to the rules has fallen by more than 50%. This is likely to be much more relevant than any change in lockdown regime.

Our general impression is that most pro-lockdown (and anti Sweden) stories are dishonest and involve selecting metrics and omitting relevant and important context and explanations – this “story” is a classic example.

Chart 1 – Iran’s low level of testing

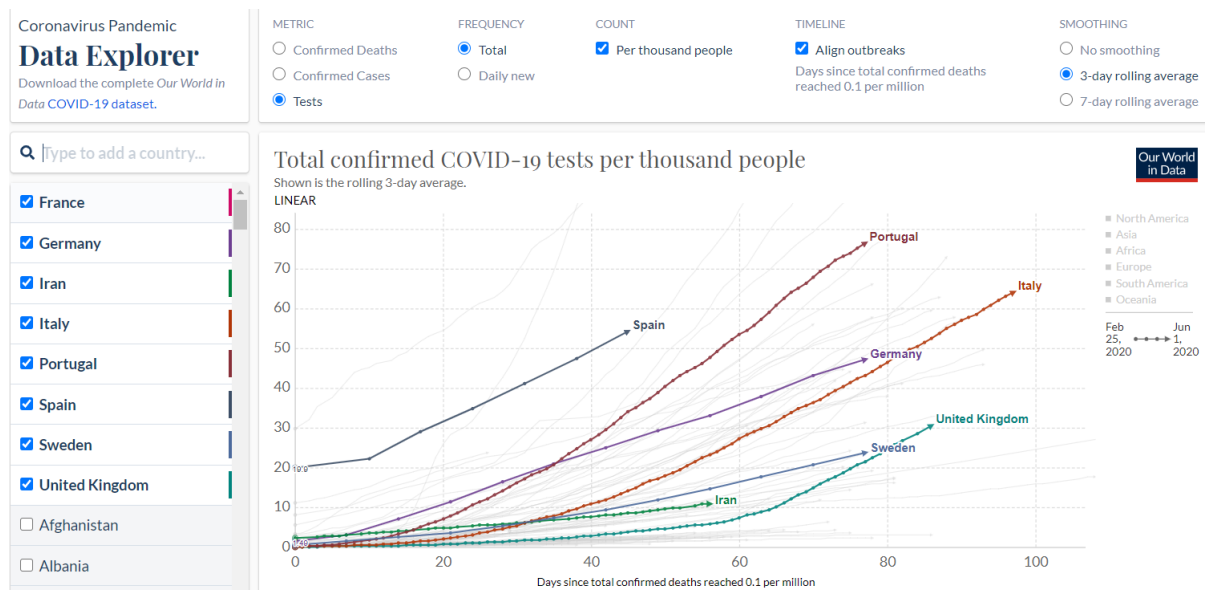


Chart 2 – CMMID

Percentage of symptomatic cases reported.

