
German Study: Coronavirus Mortality Rate May Be Five Times Lower Than Reported

Description

A German study in one of the hardest-hit regions of the country found an infection fatality rate five times lower than the national average, researchers said.

According to [The National](#), an English-language newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, the Heinsberg Protocol study was conducted in Gangelt, a rural town where the Heisenberg region's first fatalities from the virus occurred.

A team of virologists, led by Hendrik Streeck of University Hospital Bonn, discovered that 15 percent of the population in the town was infected, leading his researchers to a tentative conclusion that the death rate from the disease in the population they studied was only 0.37 percent.

Germany's case fatality rate — which is a crude number that measures the number of deaths against all people diagnosed with a condition — was 2 percent as of Friday, according to [Johns Hopkins University data](#).

According to [Reason](#), the researchers also concluded that those who have had [coronavirus](#) and recover are immune to the disease, at least for a while.



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“A return to our normal life will be easier for us, since we have already learned to play by the rules that hygiene dictates.”

Prof. Dr. Hendrik Streeck

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Streeck and his team warned that the findings, which were preliminary, couldn't necessarily be extrapolated to the entirety of Germany — much less the rest of the world — but the study gave new

hope that the [mortality rate](#) for coronavirus could be much lower than the range of estimates currently being postulated.

The study used antibody tests on those it examined. Researchers were “hoping to test 1,000 people in the town and to date 85 per cent of them have given their permission to be tested,” The National reported Wednesday.

An antibody test — a relatively new development in the [fight against coronavirus](#) — detects if an individual has natural antibodies created by the body to fight the virus in their blood. If detected, it obviously means the individual has [already been infected](#).

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[Hendrik Streeck](#)

[?@hendrikstreeck](#)

Kurzer Blick hinter die Kulissen. Unser Team, das die Studie verantwortet und ermöglicht hat.

Prof. Dr. Martin Exner, Prof. Dr. Gunther Hartmann, Landrat Stephan Pusch, [@ArminLaschet](#), [@landnrw](#) & [@UniklinikBonn](#) [#hsbestrong](#) [#heinsbergprotokoll](#) [#coronavirus](#) [#Covid_19](#)







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“What we did was a representative study within this area where we had a high prevalence of cases already,” Streeck told CNBC.

“It got hit pretty hard by COVID-19. The surprising part [of] what we found was there were 15 percent in that population that didn’t know that they had an infection ... this case fatality rate is not actually different probably in other countries, but you can assume a pretty high rate of infections that are asymptomatic.”

The researchers said they were hopeful that [lockdowns](#) could soon be lifted provided people follow basic hygienic principles.

Even before the study, it’s worth noting, the low death rate [in Germany](#) was considered an anomaly among European nations.

[The New York Times](#)’ Katrin Bennhold, for what it’s worth, said that the primary reasons for this were “early and widespread testing and treatment, plenty of intensive care beds and a trusted government whose social distancing guidelines are widely observed.” The scientists she talked to seemed to focus on testing.

“The reason why we in Germany have so few deaths at the moment compared to the number of infected can be largely explained by the fact that we are doing an extremely large number of lab diagnoses,” Dr. Christian Drosten, a member of the team that developed the first test, told The Times. There’s also the fact that the average age for a coronavirus patient in Germany has been significantly lower than the country’s European neighbors — 49, compared to 62.5 for France and 62 for Italy, The Times reported April 4.

Many of the early patients were skiers who caught the virus at ski resorts in Austria and Italy.

The Heinsberg Protocol study wasn’t the only potentially game-changing research to come out of Deutschland this week. Another study, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, found that the United States is only catching 1.6 percent of all [coronavirus cases](#) via testing.

Overall, the study suggested that on average, countries were only identifying 6 percent of all cases. If this number is accurate, this would mean there were 26 million cases in the United States already, according to [Florida Today](#).

“These results mean that governments and policy-makers need to exercise extreme caution when interpreting case numbers for planning purposes,” study co-author Sebastian Vollmer, professor of development economics at the University of Göttingen, said in a statement.

Both of these studies point to a significantly lower death rate from coronavirus than initially expected. If we’re missing 98.4 percent of infections, that would also change the case fatality rate significantly.

So, do 0.37 percent of people who contract coronavirus die? The answer is that we simply don’t know. What we do know is that a number of studies have shown that initial statistics — particularly the 3.4 percent figure suggested [by the World Health Organization](#) — are very much off. This is what happens when testing is accurate and deployed more widely.

The United States is behind, thanks to a faulty initial test from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) as well as a ban on private labs deploying their own tests.

We’re catching up, but we’ll need widespread testing for both the disease and for antibodies before there’s a semblance of normalcy.

The death rate for coronavirus is still high; even if the tentative results from the Heinsberg Protocol study are close to accurate, that’s still four times more deadly than the seasonal flu.

However, it's also not 3.4 percent — and that's a huge difference from our early conclusions about the coronavirus.