

The mystery of why Germany had a very low death rate during the Covid-19 pandemic

'In Germany, we are at the beginning of a pandemic. We see more and more deaths and we don't know how things will progress. And of course, all measures are being taken to further slow the spread at the moment, the goal being to ensure the capacity of the health system.

Europe is currently emerging as the largest Covid-19 outbreak in the world, with a high number of infections and deaths in Italy and Spain. However, that feeling does not seem to be true for Germany. Although the country has the fifth highest number of SARS-CoV-2 infections in the world, its mortality rate is very low.

Of the 50,871 cases of Covid-19 in Germany, only 351 patients died. The reason for explaining this 0.7% figure is still a mystery. "We don't know what caused the death rate in Germany to be lower than other countries," said Marieke Degen, spokesman for the Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

The Robert Koch Institute, which belongs to the German Federal Ministry of Health, is leading the operation to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic in the country.



To compare with Germany, we have to turn through the same numbers in Italy, Spain and the United States. According to Worldometers, the death rate due to Covid-19 in Italy is currently 10.6% with 9,134 deaths out of 86,498 people infected.

The figure in Spain is 7.8% with 5,138 deaths out of 65,719 infected people. In the United States, the country with the most Covid-19 patients in the world, 1,704 people died out of 104,256 cases of infection, bringing the death rate to 1.6%.

While the record high mortality rate in Italy can be explained by the country's aging population model. The Bureau of Population Reference, based in Washington, DC, shows that Germany actually has a similar old population size.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified people over the age of 60 and those with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, blood pressure and heart disease to be at higher risk for more severe symptoms from Covid-19. .

" *We need to unite to protect the elderly from the virus,* " said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. " *Elderly people are people who bring collective intelligence of our society*".

"We are nothing more special than other countries."

Like other countries around the world, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the German government soon issued travel restrictions including banning public gatherings, closing restaurants, bars and other Non-essential service.

In a rare move, Chancellor Angela Merkel broadcast national television calling on the German people to comply with government travel restrictions. This is expected to help reduce the spread of disease.

"This is a serious problem ," said Merkel. *"Since the unification of Germany - no, since World War II - our country has not encountered a challenge that requires the level of unified and united action as it is now."*



It was a clear message to Germany. Except for the Happy New Year speeches, since becoming Prime Minister in 2005, Ms. Merkel has never had to give a speech on national television.

Despite the strong speech of the Prime Minister, however, Germany's strategy of dealing with Covid-19 seems to be similar to that of other European nations. " *We are nothing more special than other countries,* " Martin Stürmer said.

" *Overall, we have a pretty good healthcare system in Germany. We have doctors and highly specialized facilities, and maybe that's part of the reason why [Covid infections] -19] our weight is still alive, compared to the deaths in other countries "*

Mr. Stürmer himself is currently in isolation at home, after a member of his family tested positive for Covid-19.

Stürmer believes that Germany's rapid test method has also contributed to lower mortality.

Earlier, the Robert Koch Institute advised the German government to conduct early Covid-19 testing. The sooner they tested, the more they could slow the outbreak.

" *This is probably the reason why we detected cases very early. And those are also mild illnesses that some other countries may have missed,*" Degen said. RKI member said.

"*If you start seeing deaths, it shows that the virus has been circulating in the community for some time. The pattern of the flu is the same.*"



Data from RKI also shows that the majority of Covid-19 cases in Germany are detected between the ages of 35 and 59. Most of these infections occur in the low-risk population. And it also contributes to a lower death rate in Germany than in Italy, although both countries have an aging population model.

" *Often the mortality rate can be affected by the age of the cases. Death often occurs in the elderly,* " said Stephanie Brickman, senior communications advisor at the WHO regional office in Europe. , said.

" *In the early stages of the epidemic, there may be many cases occurring among adults of working age, before it spreads to an older population with a higher mortality rate.*"

Therefore, in the context of the rapidly increasing number of Covid-19 infections in Germany, the Ministry of Health spokesman continues to call on people to be alert: "*It is still too early to see when it will end.*"

"We are still in the early stages of the disease."

According to the WHO office in Europe, people who have died from Covid-19 around the world have an average infection period of two to three weeks. That means that there is still a possibility: Germany and some other countries have not seen an increased death rate, just because they are in the early stages of the epidemic.

"The epidemic broke out in Italy longer than other countries in Europe, and so many patients will come to their end result, either be discharged or sadly die," Mr Brickman said.

But virologist Stürmer believes it is likely that global mortality rates for Covid-19 will be lower. "*I think worldwide, the mortality rate will drop, because we have so many people with mild symptoms, not tested and therefore they are not reflected in the data,*" he said. .

It is still unclear whether Germany can continue to keep Covid-19's death rate lower than other countries. But health officials in the country are aware that things can change at any time.

*"In Germany, we are at the beginning of a pandemic. We see more and more deaths and we don't know how things will progress. And of course, every solution is being done to continuing to slow the spread at the moment, the goal is to ensure the capacity of the health system is not overloaded ,"*Degen said.

Refer to *Vox*

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