

## The Coronavirus Plague in Alne

A Personal View by Robert Brech

I have been reading “Covid by Numbers *Making Sense of the Pandemic with Data*” by Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter FRS, OBE, Cambridge University Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk & Dr Anthony Masters, chartered statistician, and I have coupled this with some observations from other sources. Try covering up the right-hand side of each table while you make an estimate.

***How many children died from Covid?*** Have a guess before reading on

<u>Under-18s Cause of death<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>Deaths in England One year from the first lockdown in March-2020</u>
Neurological conditions	1200
Heart failure	1100
Respiratory conditions	450
Covid (children with underlying medical conditions)	19
Covid (healthy children)	6

***Was it safer to stop flying after 9/11?*** Have a guess before reading on

Many Americans gave up flying between states after 9/11 and turned to driving instead as they thought it would be safer. However, on a per mile basis, driving is about 750 times more dangerous than flying and so it turned out. 1,600 additional Americans were killed on the roads in the following year as a direct result of their decisions to take what they thought was the safer option<sup>2</sup> – more than half the number who died in the Twin Towers.

***Is nuclear energy more dangerous than conventional fuels? And, if so, by how much?*** Have a guess before reading on

<u>Per terawatt-hour of energy produced by:</u>	<u>Deaths<sup>3</sup></u>
Coal	25
Oil	18
Natural gas	3
Nuclear power	<0.1

1 Daily Telegraph 12-Nov-2021 from Nature.com and *Nature Medicine*.

2 An authoritative estimate quoted in the Sunday Times of 14-Nov-2021

3 <https://ourworldindata.org/safest-sources-of-energy>

Christmas Edition (Some Interesting Statistics)

**Does nuclear energy produce more emissions than conventional fuels? And, if so, by how much? Does nuclear energy produce more emissions than solar or wind power generation? And, if so, by how much?** Have a guess before reading on

<u>Per gigawatt-hour of energy produced by:</u>	<u>Greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes)<sup>4</sup></u>
Coal	820
Oil	720
Natural gas	490
Solar	9
Nuclear power	3
Wind	3

**How many people died in the three high-profile, high emotion nuclear "disasters" of Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima?** Have a guess before reading on

<u>Nuclear "disaster":</u>	<u>Deaths<sup>5</sup></u>
Three Mile Island failure	0
Chernobyl (Russian design fault, not used in the West)	30 to 60
Fukushima <sup>6</sup> failure after tsunami	1

**How did Covid affect the 15-29 age group in 2020? How many youngsters died who wouldn't have without the pandemic?** Have a guess before reading on

<u>Deaths in the 15-29 age group in 2020:</u>	<u>Deaths<sup>7</sup></u>
Covid deaths	115
Reduction in accidental deaths through lockdowns	-300
Combined	185 fewer deaths

In terms of deaths, this age group did well out of Covid, particularly during the lockdowns which reduced traffic to a minimum. 300 of them are alive today who, in all probability, would otherwise have died in accidents against 115 who actually died of Covid. The pandemic, and the measures taken against it, saved the lives of more young people than it killed – but we don't know who they are!

4 Our World in Data quoted in the Sunday Times of 14-Nov-2021

5 Wikipedia

6 Some additional deaths occurred in the subsequent evacuation but not as a result of the nuclear failure

7 Cambridge University Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter FRS, OBE

**How many people are in UK hospitals with Covid?**

**How many hospital beds are there in the UK?**

**What proportion of hospital beds is taken up with Covid patients?**

Have a guess before reading on

UK hospital beds	240,000
UK hospital beds taken up by Covid patients (01-Dec-2021) <sup>8</sup>	7,340
Proportion of hospital beds taken up by Covid patients	3%

However, we should be mindful of the definitions. Jenny McDonald from Kent wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* on 15-Nov-2021 “Last week, my uncle died, aged 96, of old age and frailty. He had contracted Covid six months’ ago, from which he had fully recovered. However, his death certificate recorded Covid as a contributory cause and will be added to the government’s statistics. Is it any wonder that recorded Covid deaths remain so stubbornly high?”. Two days’ later, Terence Morrison told us in the same paper that his sister, aged 84, was comatose and close to death in a Liverpool hospital when he was told that she had just tested positive for Covid. Covid of course appeared on the death certificate.

**We have been used to seeing the news of 40,000 or 50,000 “cases” per day.**

**But this is useless information without knowing how many tests are being taken.**

**So, how many daily tests are taken to produce the 50,000 cases?**

**And what proportion of tests are thus positive?**

Have a guess before reading on

Daily cases	50,000
Daily tests <sup>9</sup>	1,300,000
Proportion of “cases” to tests	3.8% or 1 in 26

**How many people do you have to have in a group to have a better than even chance that at least 2 of them have the same birthday?**

- a) 23
- b) 46
- c) 92
- d) 183

Try it out!

8 <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/healthcare>

9 <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/testing>