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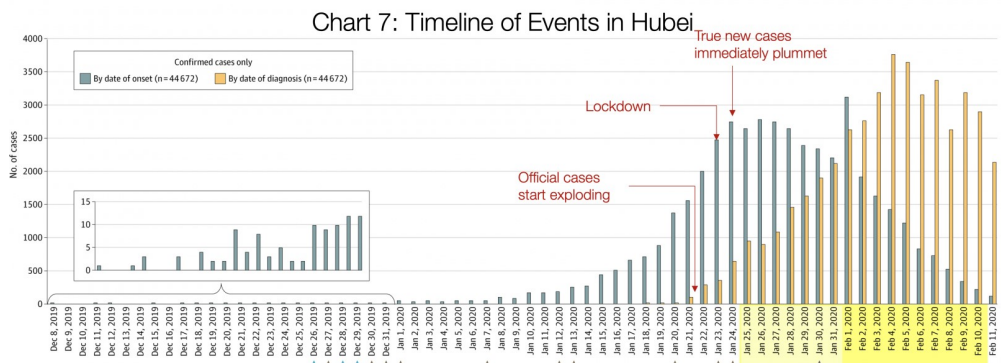
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COVID-19: Interpreting statistics

If it were up to prof. dr. Marcel van Assen, we need to interpret more statistics. "We need to be able to interpret these numbers as they help us decide what course of action to take to mitigate COVID-19". Read his opinion piece here.

Because of my frustration with the news, which mostly consists of confused people talking about COVID-19, I searched for data and statistics on the disease. Fortunately, some interesting websites exist that provide updated data (sometimes several times a day) on the number of diagnosed cases per day per country or the total and daily fatalities per day. Tomas Pueyo, in an article that is read millions of times per day, analyzed and tried to interpret these numbers. Next to interesting statistics, such as the 17.3 days to go from catching the virus to dying on average, and the 26% of contagions happening before there are symptoms, we need to be able to interpret these numbers as they help us decide what course of action to take to mitigate COVID-19.

What is very clear from the statistics from Tomas Pueyo is how social distancing helps to stop spreading the disease. When analyzing the data on the events in Hubei in Chart 7 it becomes clear that after lock-down the number of new cases per day immediately started to get down. From analyses at the country level, it also becomes clear that some Asian countries/regions that were hit by SARS and took extreme measures early on (China [other regions than Hubei], Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore), “flattened the curve” early and do not show exponential growth in the number of Covid-19 cases. On the other hand, we see Korea, European countries and the USA who did not lock-down early and do show an exponential growth of cases, at least until now.



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