# New study in the BMJ provides damning testimony of the impact the pandemic has had on life expectancy

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The actual toll of the COVID pandemic has been assessed in several recent studies and analyses, which have highlighted in detail both the deadliness of the virus and its extensive reach across the globe. Despite these repeated confirmations, high-income nations and the financial oligarchs continue to insist that the cure in the form of elimination of the disease globally remains far worse than the disease, which allows the virus a free rein to upend livelihoods and kill millions so that financial institutions are unfettered by the demands placed on their craving for ever more enrichment.

On November 3, 2021, BMJ (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) published a probing investigation on "the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on life expectancy and premature mortality in 2020" across 37 high-income and upper-middle-income nations. The study is a continuation of previous work done by the same group on estimating excess deaths during the pandemic in 2020. The findings corroborate previous reports and stand as testimony to the malign policies of the ruling elites which can only be construed as deliberate and intentional social murder.

By including in their analysis countries that employed more comprehensive pandemic-fighting measures, the BMJ study provides a stark contrast to the policies followed by the US and Europe. It provides irrefutable evidence against the ignorant mantra of Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, and other apologists for mass death, who put forward the slogan, "The cure can't be worse than the disease." From the standpoint of science and public health, the cure has always been better than the devastation wrought by allowing the virus to rip through communities across the globe.

Rather than using excess deaths, the BMJ study employed data on all-cause mortality, which stands as a more reliable measure of the pandemic's impact, allowing comparisons between countries. The authors explained, "Although using excess deaths has been considered the ideal method for measuring the impact of the pandemic, this metric does not take into account age at death. When people die at an older age, they lose fewer years of remaining life. *Analysis of life expectancy and years of life lost (YLL) provides a more nuanced estimation of premature mortality at a population level.*"

Life expectancy is a measure of how long a population can expect to survive if the factors that contribute to deaths for various ages remain constant for the remainder of their lives. Years of life lost utilizes age distributions for these deaths, giving greater weight to deaths at younger ages. It is calculated using the number of deaths observed rather than "hypothetical life tables." The study notes, "Life expectancy depends solely on mortality, and YLL depends on both the mortality and the age structure of the population."

The study found that in the 15 years before 2020, all 37 countries studied showed a rising trend in life expectancy at birth for both men and women. However, for 2020, the first year of the pandemic, this trend dropped precipitously. The reduction in life expectancy was most significant in Russia, with 2.32 years, followed by the United States with almost two years. Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland were next in descending order.

However, the authors found that life expectancy was not impacted for South Korea, Norway, and Denmark, where strict mitigation measures remained the norm. In

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Taiwan and New Zealand, life expectancy actually climbed, highlighting the beneficial impact that measures eliminating the virus from their borders had on maintaining access to healthcare and population-based interventions that protected citizens from the hazards posed by day-to-day life.

Regarding Years of Life Lost (YLL) in 2020, only Taiwan and New Zealand had a decline (an improvement) in this category. Iceland, South Korea, Denmark, and Norway had no demonstrable change in the expected years of life lost, corroborating the life expectancy data.

However, in the remaining 31 countries, the 222 million years of life lost in 2020 (130 million in men and 92.6 million in women) were 28.1 million higher than expected, showing the impact of the pandemic. Men accounted for 17.3 million of these excess years of life lost, while women lost 10.8 million.

When age categories were evaluated in the 31 worst-hit countries, excess YLL increased with age in both genders, showing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on older populations. However, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan saw excess YLL for the elderly decline, meaning the intensive mitigation measures employed against the virus benefited the elderly the most.

The findings on life expectancy were especially remarkable for younger populations in the US, especially in men. When the US was compared to Lithuania, Poland and Spain, "between the observed and expected age-specific death rates by age intervals," those under the age of 65 in the US and Lithuania were "responsible for a high proportion of the total losses in life expectancy." By comparison, in Poland and Spain, older age groups drove the loss of life expectancy.

This is damning testimony demonstrating that the working class in the US, in particular male workers, have been impacted disproportionately. However, the impact of COVID on younger people has been much more severe in 2021, meaning the figures cited in the study will be far more horrific in the pandemic's second year. In 2020, more than 70,000 people between 25 and 65 died due to COVID. In 2021, over 111,500 in this age bracket have been killed, despite access to COVID vaccines.

The authors found "[that] with a similar burden of *excess deaths* per 100 000 in Spain and the US (161 and 160, respectively), *excess YLL* (per 100 000) was substantially higher in the US (3400) than in Spain (1900), indicating higher numbers of deaths at younger ages in the US compared with Spain. Indeed, the ratio of YLL rate in people aged under 65 and 65 years or older at death was 0.29 in the US, whereas it was only 0.07 in Spain. Despite a lower excess death rate than Lithuania, Poland and Spain, the reduction in life expectancy in the US was higher than in these three countries."

The death toll in the second year of the pandemic has outpaced the first year of the pandemic. Approximately 2.35 million died in the first 12 months since the World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020. With three months left to the second anniversary of this declaration, another 2.64 million have already died as the world enters the sixth wave of the pandemic.

Indeed, with the introduction of the COVID vaccines, there has been a push by governments of high-income countries to completely force open every economic avenue that remains closed regardless of its devastating impact on the working people of the planet upon whose back the financial oligarchs have enriched themselves.

This critical study published in theBMJ by these courageous researchers should be applauded and studied. It carefully demonstrates that the virus can be eliminated and lives can be protected. The policies that have promoted "let the bodies pile high", "let it rip", and "learn to live with the virus", are fraudulent and criminal. In fact, their findings provide irrefutable evidence to indict these ruling criminals responsible for the massive loss of life and livelihood.

However, these same principled scientists who have been decrying the dangers posed by the ruling elite's criminal policies must engage with the working class, the only progressive force for whom the issue of eliminating the pandemic is most urgent. It is the turn to the working class that will generate the necessary response to their analysis.

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