

THINK-TANK

Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.



Gailina Liew, Director, Jersey Policy Forum

Getting down to basics

Think back through your life. Have you experienced an event that triggered a sudden change in how you live your life?

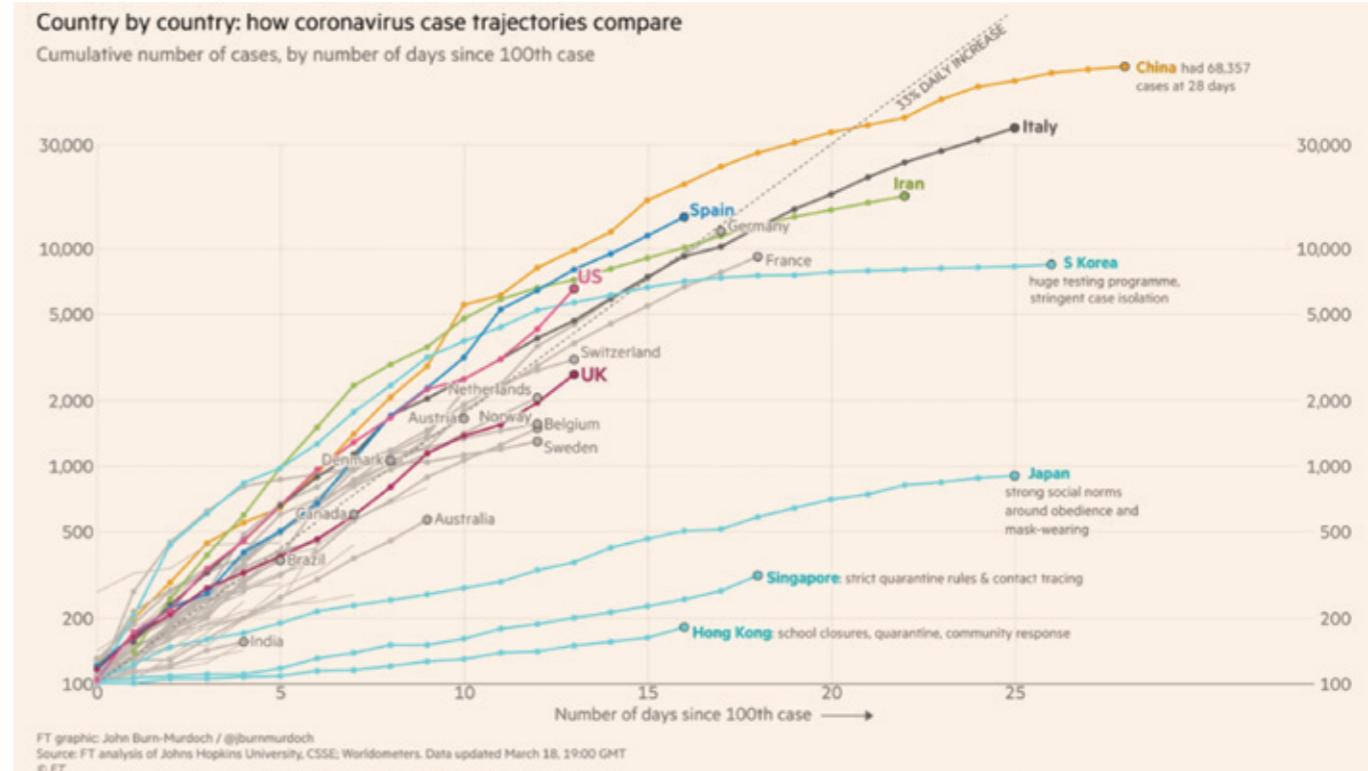
There are some people in Jersey who lived through and remember the days of The Occupation. For others, perhaps it was the loss of a loved one or a windfall like a lottery win. Countries around the world are each going through their own hard reboot, as are each of us. We have

all suddenly been thrust into a new world where we need to figure out how we can maintain meaningful human connection and economic activity while remaining physically distanced from each other so that everyone in our communities can be safe from a silent viral predator that is hitch-hiking its way around the world. For most of us living in democratic societies, it is the first time that our individual freedom of movement is being constrained by

government. The comparative experience of countries with the virus is shown below. (see next page)

At the time of writing, the virus had spread to 144 countries with more than 200,000 confirmed infected people, and more than 8,000 deaths. The countries that have managed to slow the infection rates are ones that have implemented massive testing and meticulous tracking of contact by infected individuals along with state-

Country by country: how coronavirus case trajectories compare
Cumulative number of cases, by number of days since 100th case



enforced strict household quarantine and social distancing measures. What impact does culture have?

It is interesting to see that the countries that have managed to 'flatten the curve' so far are ones where people are accustomed to putting the country's needs before their own individual needs and priorities. And that could be one reason why compliance with similar directives in western democracies like the countries of Europe, the UK and the US are more difficult to achieve. Individuals should have the right to do anything each pleases, right? COVID-19 is confronting that mindset head-on and showing us that we each need to play our part if we want to our communities to survive this challenge.

We might not realise it but we are seeing a massive scenario of what business-geeks and game-theorists will recognise as the 'prisoner's dilemma' playing out (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner%27s_dilemma for detailed explanation). Cooperation between, and amongst, individuals in a community and countries on the global stage is the only way to limit infection rates long enough to get to the other side, when effective treatments and, hopefully, a vaccine will be available. So, what are governments doing?

Each country has their own set of initiatives but the 'aha' moment is that all of them boil down to attending to the basic needs of people. The key question is what do we

Name	Time period	Type / Pre-human host	Death toll
Antonine Plague	165-180	Believed to be either smallpox or measles	5M
Japanese smallpox epidemic	735-737	Variola major virus	1M
Plague of Justinian	541-542	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	30-50M
Black Death	1347-1351	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	200M
New World Smallpox Outbreak	1520 – onwards	Variola major virus	56M
Great Plague of London	1665	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	100,000
Italian plague	1629-1631	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	1M
Cholera Pandemics 1-6	1817-1923	V. cholerae bacteria	1M+
Third Plague	1885	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	12M (China and India)
Yellow Fever	Late 1800s	Virus / Mosquitoes	100,000-150,000 (U.S.)
Russian Flu	1889-1890	Believed to be H2N2 (avian origin)	1M
Spanish Flu	1918-1919	H1N1 virus / Pigs	40-50M
Asian Flu	1957-1958	H2N2 virus	1.1M
Hong Kong Flu	1968-1970	H3N2 virus	1M
HIV/AIDS	1981-present	Virus / Chimpanzees	25-35M
Swine Flu	2009-2010	H1N1 virus / Pigs	200,000
SARS	2002-2003	Coronavirus / Bats, Civets	770
Ebola	2014-2016	Ebolavirus / Wild animals	11,000
MERS	2015-Present	Coronavirus / Bats, camels	850
COVID-19	2019-Present	Coronavirus – Unknown (possibly pangolins)	6,400 (as of Mar 15, 2020)

Source: VisualCapitalist.com

really need to survive? Access to clean water, food, safe shelter, healthcare and the internet. Our need to maintain meaningful human connection for mental health and economic activity is enabled by the internet in today's world so it made the list. That's it. If our governments can provide these basic things to their peoples, everything else will

be rebuilt when we get to the other side. Economies are built and driven by people. COVID-19 has given governments all over the world the opportunity to refocus on providing these basic needs to the people as the over-riding imperative and there is little room for politics. And that may be the proverbial 'silver lining.'