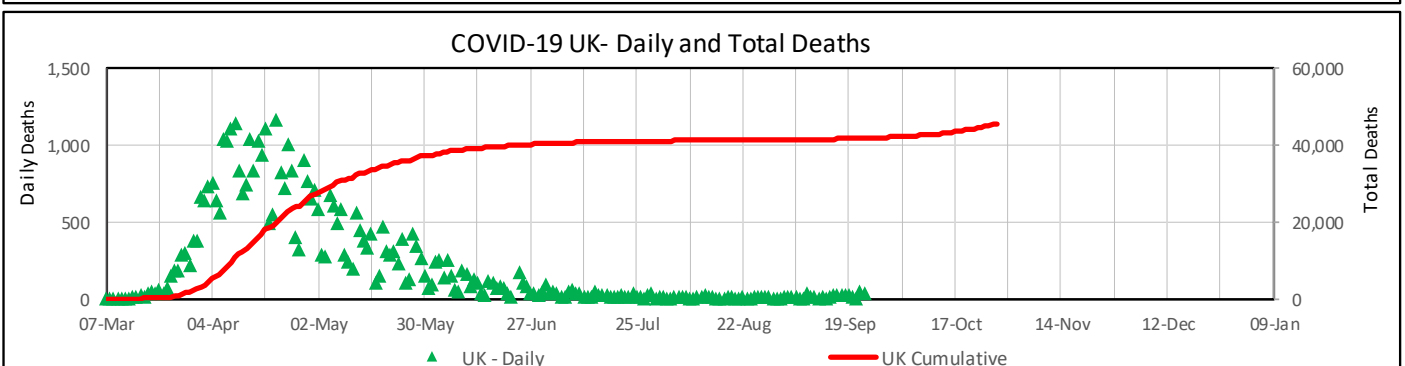
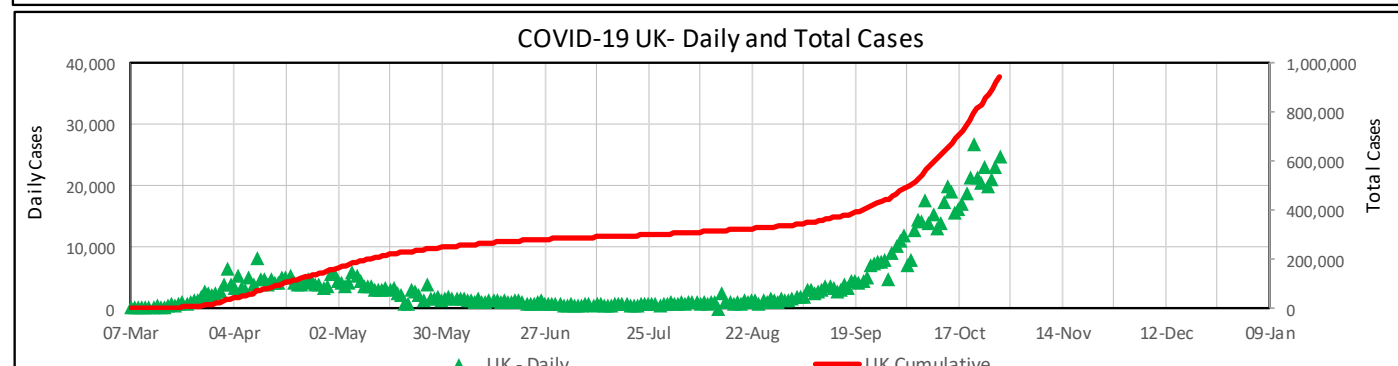
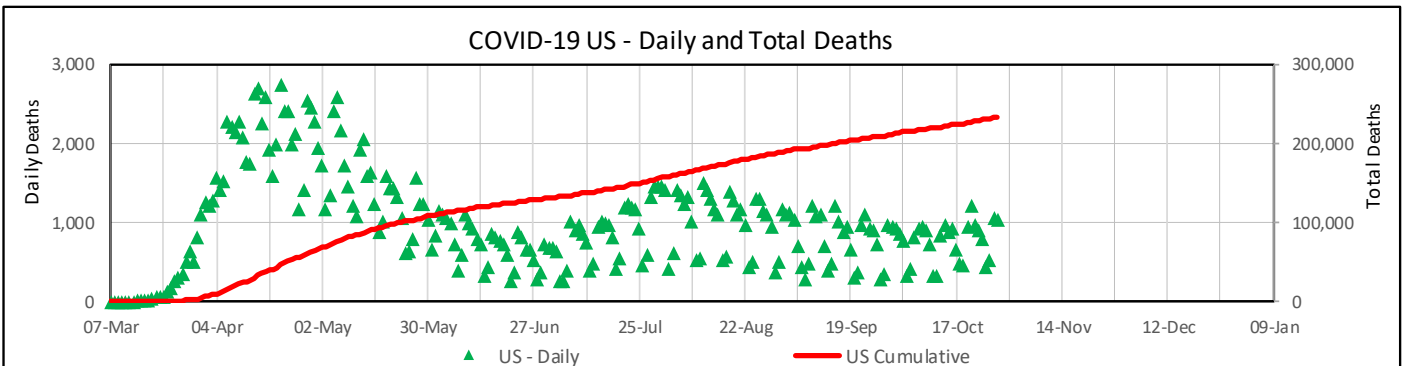
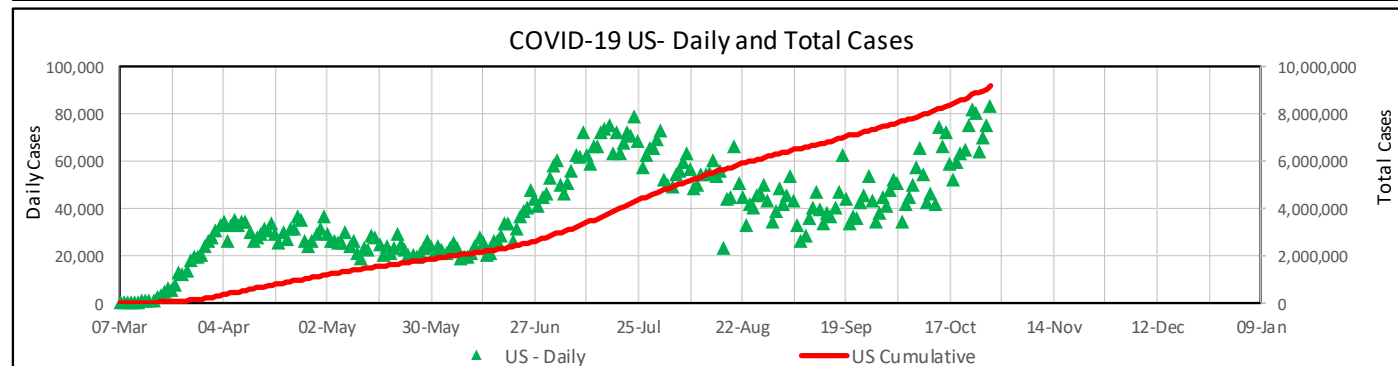
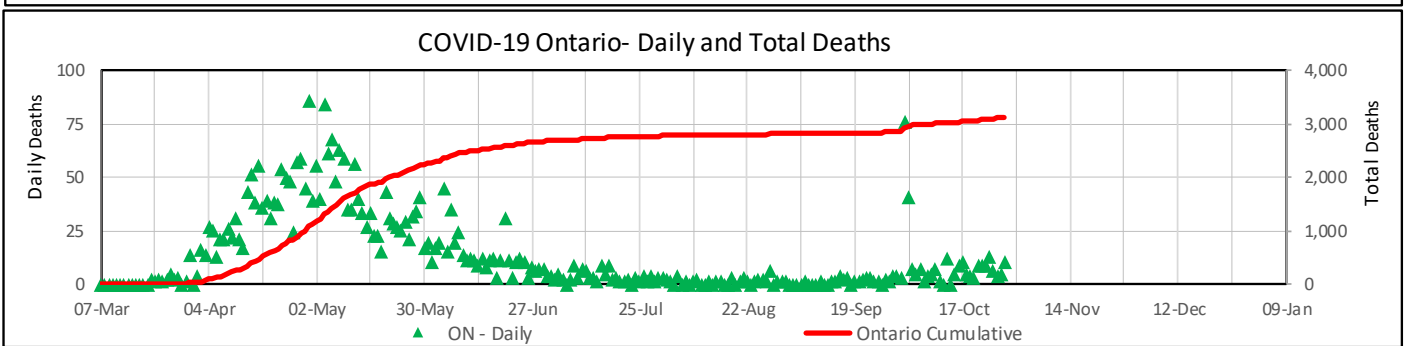
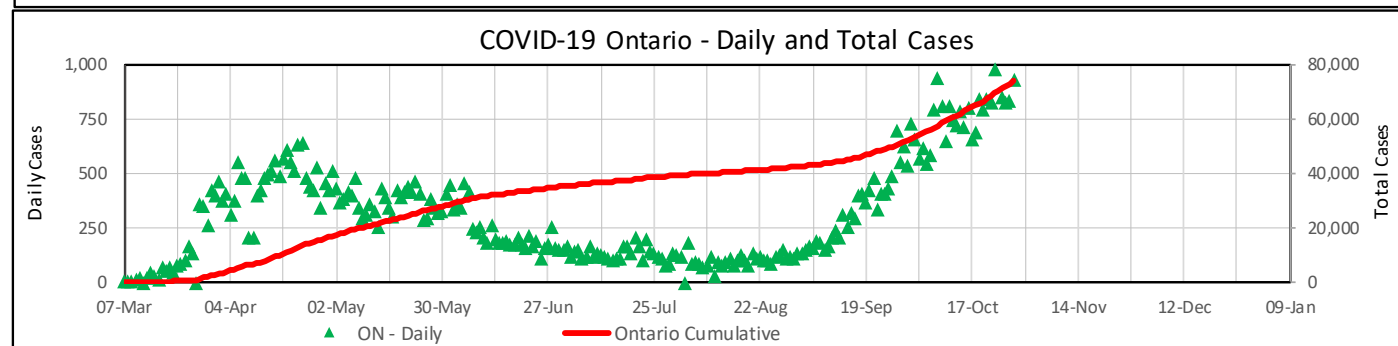
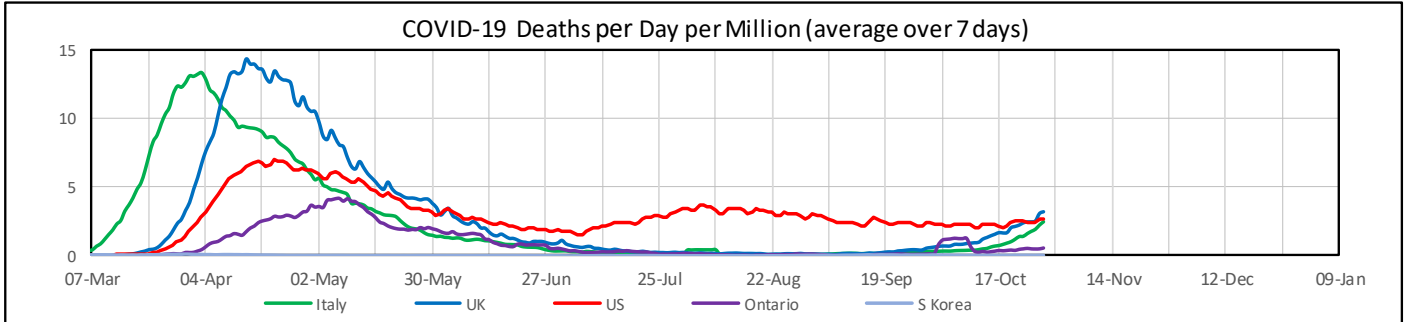
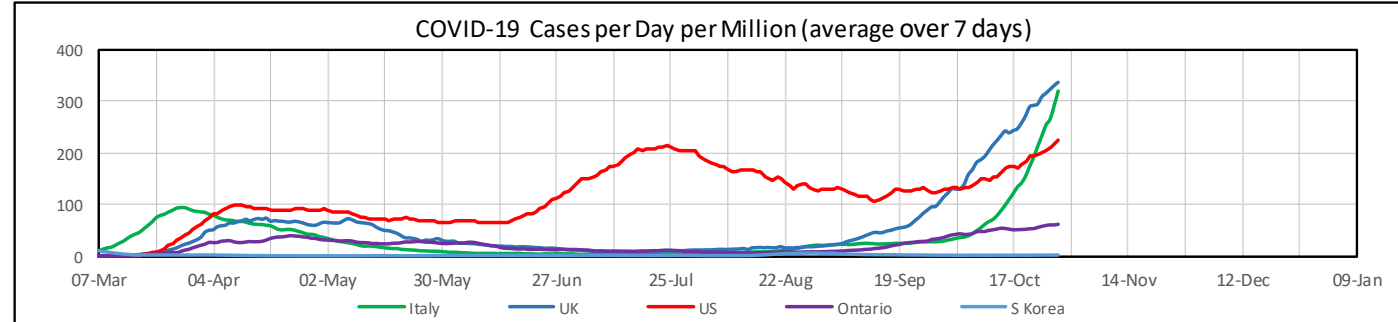
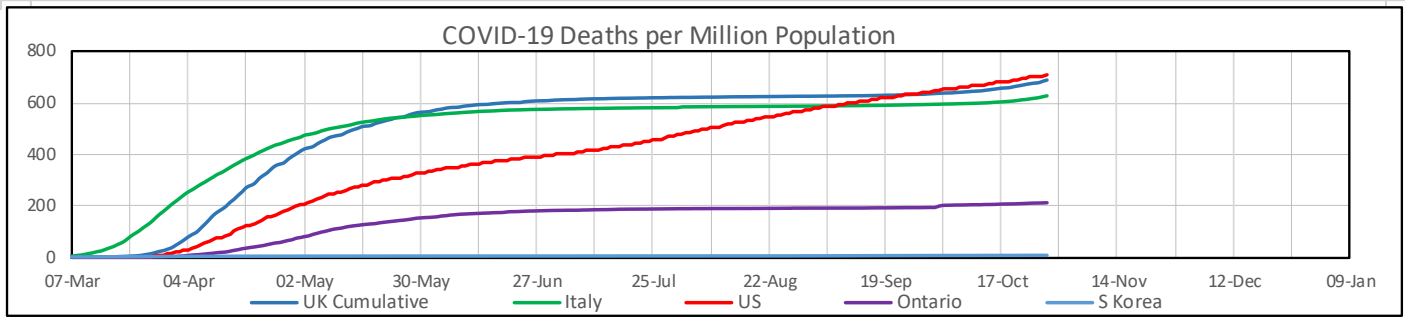
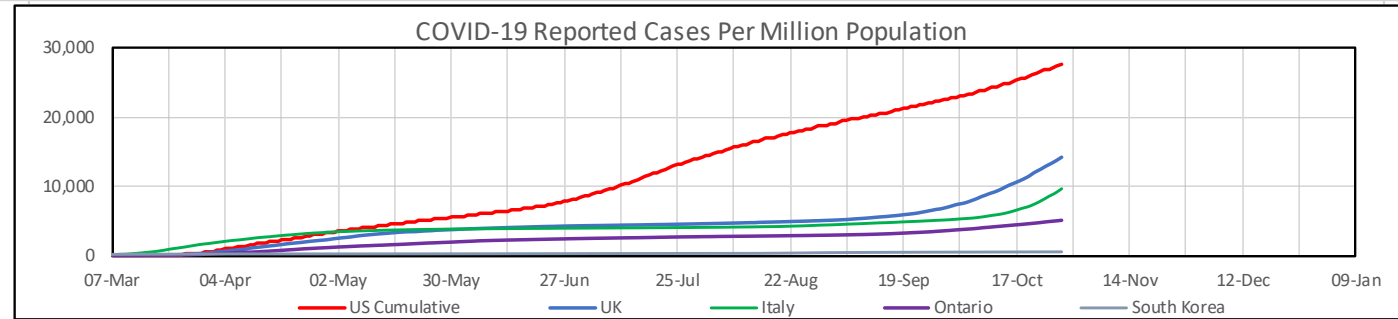


COVID-19 Observations – 29 October 2020 – by Alex Harrington



Things are not looking good. Many places in Europe are imposing strict new shutdowns as cases and deaths take off. The UK, France, Italy, Spain and Germany, among others, have seen cases explode – you can see the data from Italy and the UK in the charts above. Deaths are now starting to rise as well, threatening the ability of hospitals to cope. None of this is helped by those protesting masks and restrictions and distancing. I guess watching people die and hospitals fill isn't convincing enough.

At home, the political idiocy continues. A few days ago they're wailing that Ontario went over 1,000 new cases in a day. The next day they're relieved because it was eight hundred and something. And today they're worried because it's nine hundred and something.

In reality, cases are much worse than the reports. The main problem is the testing process. The number of tests is down, which is clear when you look at the chart on the right. To further complicate the problem, processing times remain long. People have to make appointments which adds to the delay. Say you feel a bit covid-y, you call for an appointment and wait for a day or two to get your test. You get your test and then...you wait for results. You can wait for up to a week, so now we're at close to 10 days or more since you first felt symptoms. It varies a bit, but generally we're a week to ten days behind in case counts. Yet the health experts insist on looking at results each day and reporting that as the current situation, when in fact it was closer to 10 to 14 days ago.

I keep saying we're looking backwards, despite all the evidence we have to tell us what is going to happen in the future – just look at the situation in Europe. We know cases will rise – and we know that in the short term, six months or more, we will not beat this virus. Can we take a lesson from Europe and figure out how to at least stay in the game with the virus?

It's so easy – two things. Masks combined with distancing. Testing.

We are actually not doing too badly in Ontario. Cases are rising but not at the alarming rates we see in Europe and that the US is about to experience, as the charts above show. If we can continue masking, and somehow keep the anti-maskers under control, we can muddle through. But the worst part is still ahead because we haven't had to do a winter yet. So now is the time to tell yourself that this is just something you have to do, it will end eventually, suck it up, shut up, and just do it.

Our Prime Minister has suggested that Christmas may be a problem. The responsible (but hugely unpopular) thing to do is to tell us all to just forget Christmas 2020, and hope that we will be able to make up for it by Christmas 2021. Big groups mean big cases. Just this week, there were over 40 cases traced to a wedding in Southern Ontario. If we're not careful, Christmas will be like hundreds of weddings.

Meanwhile the government continues to make noises about the long-hoped-for vaccine, but if we are expecting a vaccine to get us out of this any time soon, forget about it. Those vaccines need continuous storage at minus 40 degree temperatures or colder. That's a chain of custody nightmare. There will be vaccines eventually, but for now we are still largely responsible for our own health. (Look at what I wrote about vaccines a couple of months ago – that's still true.)

And then there's the US. It continues. Their Corona-spreader-in-Chief tries to infect as many as possible with multiple daily gatherings of the faithful. Reminds me of one of those cult movies with everyone gazing rapturously as they all croak while the leader moves on. I hope they come to their senses, but it is unlikely. The best that can be expected is for some rational leadership in the new year, but it will also involve hundreds of thousands more covid deaths and serious social disruption. I hope they're able to recover from this period.

In the meantime, get your Halloween goodies together and be careful – one of those kids dressed as a corona virus might be the real thing.

Take care of yourselves and don't endanger others.

COVID-19 Summary Data										
	Tests per Million Total to Date	Tests per Day Average over Last 7 days		Tests per Reported Case		Cases per Million		Deaths per Million		Deaths Per Case Total to date (%)
		Total	Per Million	Total	Last 7 days	Total to date	Average per day Last 7 days	Total to date	Average per day Last 7 days	
South Korea	49,976	10,865	188	98	105	502	1.7	9	0.039	1.8%
Italy	246,954	166,986	2,563	30	11	8,008	213	612	1.4	7.6%
UK	418,771	283,198	4,206	32	13	12,507	296	671	2.4	5.4%
US	423,984	1,175,558	3,404	15	17	26,589	199	697	2.5	2.6%
Ontario	345,024	34,452	2,475	70	43	4,758	55	211	0.5	4.4%

South Korea and Canada report people tested. The others report total tests. Total tests can be 10-50% higher than people tested

