

OPINION: Based on the data, isn't it time to start opening up Massachusetts again?

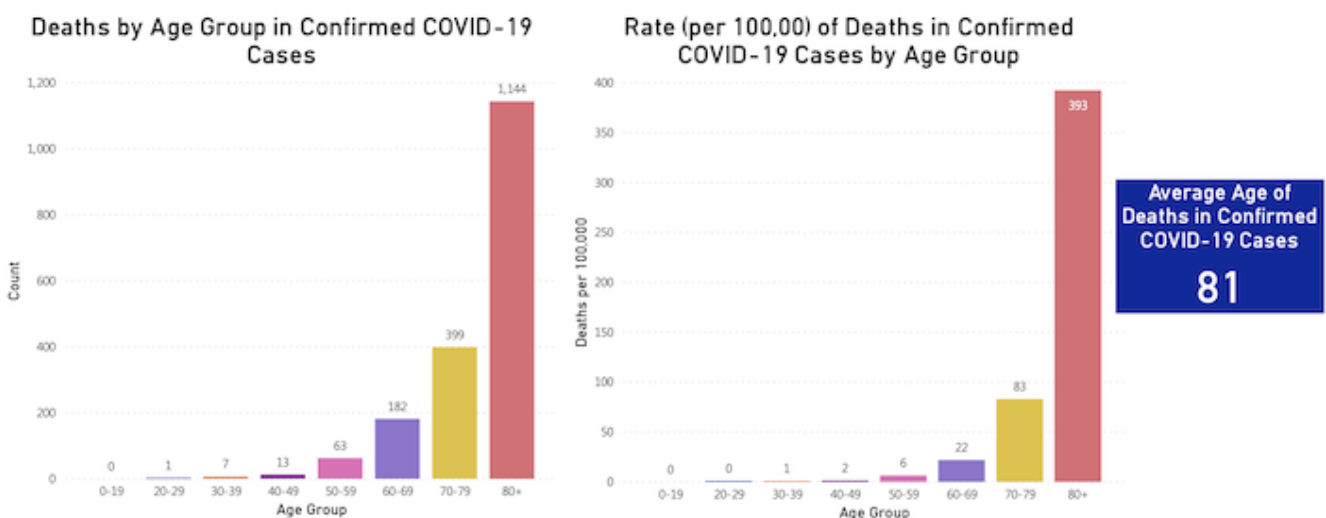
Yesterday, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health released its most detailed COVID-19 report yet. While it's a lot of data to consume and analyze, it's hard to argue that Massachusetts needs to continue to hibernate its population.

The first data that caught my attention is that the average age of confirmed COVID-19 deaths is 81 years old. Out of the 1,809 deaths attributed to COVID-19, 1,144 were people over 80 years old, or 63%. In fact, 95% of all deaths are people 60 and older. Only 21 people under the age of 50 have died, or 1.1% of the total deaths. This virus is killing the elderly and rarely people 50 and under.



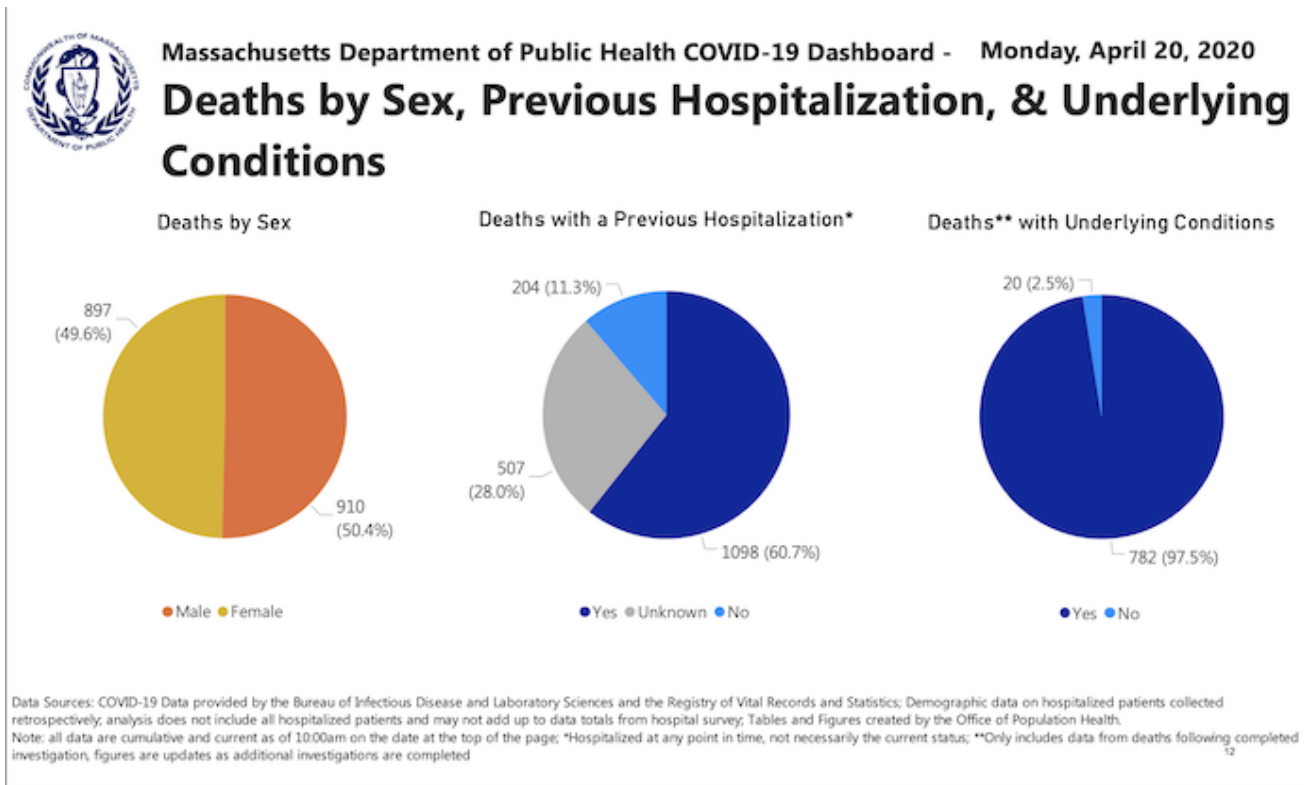
Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard - Monday, April 20, 2020

Deaths and Death Rate by Age Group



Data Sources: COVID-19 Data provided by the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences and the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics; Population Estimates 2011-2018: Small Area Population Estimates 2011-2020, version 2018; Tables and Figures created by the Office of Population Health.
Note: all data are cumulative and current as of 10:00am on the date at the top of the page

Second, 97.5% of the people that died had underlying health issues.



This data reaffirms what I learned in March as Italy COVID-19 deaths were peaking and 99% of those dying had preexisting conditions and nearly 50% of those that died had three or more preexisting conditions. The average death was also in the 80s.

Finally, nearly a third of random participants in a Massachusetts study tested positive for antibodies linked with coronavirus, without even knowing they had COVID-19.

The Mass. General study took samples from 200 residents on the street in Chelsea, MA. Participants remained anonymous and provided a drop of blood to researchers, who were able to produce a result in ten minutes with a rapid test.

Sixty-four of the participants tested positive – a “sobering” result, according to Thomas Ambrosino, Chelsea’s city manager.

“We’ve long thought that the reported numbers are vastly under-counting what the actual infection is,” Ambrosino told

the Boston Globe. "Those reported numbers are based on positive COVID-19 tests, and we're all aware that a very, very small percentage of people in Chelsea and everywhere are getting COVID-19 tests."

This means a very large percentage of the population has COVID-19 and doesn't even know it because they don't get sick or the symptoms are so mild they don't notice it. Elderly are already dying in large numbers while we have our state locked down, suggesting that the problem is likely with the nursing homes and a lockdown isn't going to

I'm not suggesting we open up Massachusetts like it was pre-coronavirus. What I'm saying is it's time to let the least vulnerable population go back to work and perform everyday activities with new precautions in place (no concerts, major sports events, etc.) while protecting the most vulnerable population. Continue to lock down the nursing homes, ramp up testing and of course the social distancing and washing hands that have been so impactful. The experts need to tell us the best way to open back up and I'm sure it will be a phased approach, but the conversation needs to start today and the actions need to come sooner than later or the economic damage could be devastating.

RI has a good plan to start reopening:



REOPEN RI

Six Key Indicators for Reopening:

1. Has the rate of spread continued to decrease?
2. Do we have the capacity to quickly identify community spread on an ongoing basis before a major outbreak occurs?
3. Do we have necessary supports in place for vulnerable populations, and for anyone in quarantine?
4. Does our healthcare system have the capacity and the PPE to handle future surges?
5. Do businesses, schools, child care sites, faith organizations and recreational spaces have plans for long-term social distancing?
6. Are we prepared to reimpose measures, or reclose certain sectors of the economy, if it becomes necessary?