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## A LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

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Dear Participant,

We would like to take this moment to thank you for coming to this year's conference, and to introduce ourselves and the rest of the UNIS-UN organizing and executive committees.

The UNIS-UN Conference was founded in 1976 by Ms. Sylvia Gordon, a teacher at the United Nations International School. Her dream was to create an event that would draw attention to the world's most pertinent issues while embodying the values of education and cross-cultural understanding shared by UNIS and the UN. Over the years, UNIS-UN has evolved into the largest student-run conference held in the United Nations General Assembly, with over 500 students attending from six continents.

Each year, the responsibility of carrying on UNIS-UN and the legacy of Ms. Gordon is placed on a group of highly dedicated UNIS students, who have shown responsibility and passion for continuing her efforts. Our planning begins in April by interviewing and selecting students for our Executive Committee. We are then divided into six commissions: Editing, Finance, Logistics, Visiting Schools, Speakers, and Technology. Together, we work with UNIS students making up the Organizing Committee to plan all aspects of the conference, from website design and social media presence to speaker and participant invitations and more.

This year, the responsibilities of the UNIS-UN executive committee significantly changed. We had to adapt to overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic in nearly every aspect of this year's conference. From transitioning from an in-person conference in the General Assembly Hall to a fully online platform, commissions had to take on completely new tasks that at times were very daunting. However, through teamwork and collaboration, we've planned a conference we are incredibly proud of.

Over the coming days, you will have the opportunity to listen, discuss, and debate the most prominent issues originating from the coronavirus pandemic. As you hear from speakers and debate panelists we hope that you will not only express your own voice but also carry what you learn and experience here through to your own countries and communities. We've worked hard to plan a marvelous experience for you, and we are excited to welcome you to our 45th annual UNIS-UN Conference.

Here's to a wonderful conference!

Sincerely,

Jack Hochman and Eva Lifsec  
*Co-Chairs of UNIS-UN*



## FOREWORD

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The 2019 novel coronavirus was first reported to the WHO on the 31st of December, 2019. In the span of 14 months, 108 million people have contracted the virus, and as of today, there have been over 2.4 million deaths. Every country has felt the impact of COVID-19. Economies have faltered, politicians have gained and lost legitimacy, national lockdowns have ensued, the 1% got richer while millions have lost their incomes, and we have seen the fastest created vaccine begin to roll out.

This working paper seeks to address the emerging impact the coronavirus has had on our world. The articles cover a range of topics from domestic life to the economy, and we hope that it will bring to light not only the new issues that have emerged, but also the deep rooted issues that plague the global order and that have shown up in the foreground of this pandemic. It is our aim that the following collection of articles and infographics incite discussion and encourage objective and critical thinking about the state the global community finds itself in today. We hope it will promote discourse about the management of healthcare and the economy, help you understand the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted minorities and low income communities, and facilitate the exchange ideas on tenable solutions to the outlined issues and crises. As you hear from debate panelists and speakers, this information is at your disposal for contribution to the discussion.

## DEBATE MOTION I

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*“Strict lockdowns are the most effective way in which states can protect their citizens.”*

In debating this we encourage students to consider both the benefits and drawbacks of strict lockdowns. Internationally there has been differing intensities of government mandated lockdown and social distancing precautions. Copious data has proven that strict lockdowns have correlated to less COVID-19 related deaths. Nonetheless, soaring unemployment and increasing global poverty has raised questions as to the extent governments should impose strict lockdowns. To what extent do governments have the jurisdiction to impose mandatory lockdown procedures if they interfere with the economic wellbeing of their populations? To whom do governments owe protection most? Should governments focus on short-term or more long-term social welfare? Do the economic implications of strict lockdowns outweigh the benefits of their initiation? Or vice versa? Should lesser developed countries (LDCs) take different approaches to combating COVID-19 than developed countries (MDCs)? How can governments measure “protection” and further ensure it? Do lockdowns violate civilian social contract; conversely is their absence indicative of government failure to protect/upend the rights of populations? These guiding questions are some we hope will be addressed when arguing for or against this motion.

## DEBATE MOTION II

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*“It is ethical for COVID vaccine makers to make a profit from vaccine development?”*

In debating this, we would like for you to consider the benefits and disadvantages of pricing the vaccine highly in order to make a profit, both for stakeholders in the companies and for society. With over 5 million people vaccinated so far, and millions more soon to be vaccinated, this major step in fighting the pandemic seems to be underway. However, with a variety of vaccines being offered, at drastically different price points, the question of how the vaccine should be priced has become a prominent one. To what extent is it justifiable for vaccine makers to price their vaccines highly in order to get a profit, when such pricing may mean that some won't have access to it? Consider also the argument of profits being the incentive which spurred pharmaceutical companies to create the vaccine, and its validity. Who has the authority to decree this? Should the government regulate vaccine pricing? Consider also, the huge amounts of public funding gone into vaccine development (The USA's Operation Warp Speed, for example, has provided pharmaceutical companies with over \$9 billion of funding); Is it ethical for pharmaceutical companies to profit off of a vaccine, given such notable government support? These guiding questions are some we hope will be addressed when arguing for or against this motion.

## XENOPHOBIA AND IMMIGRATION

Temisola Akinwande

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With over 60 million cases and close to 1 million fatalities worldwide, the Covid-19 virus has become an infamous player in our daily existence. Every day, it disrupts the livelihoods and businesses of many. The virus has forced many businesses to close due to a decrease in consumer rates and loss of income. Schools, workplaces, shops and other institutions are facing major conflicts and drastic choices. National economies are being fragmented, while hospitals and clinics are forced to bear the arduous burden of attending to the waves of patients who are being admitted in the hundreds of thousands. The battle countering this disease is far from over.

As Covid-19 continues to ravage communities and nations, a different infection- one that may prove more harmful- is approaching at a faster rate. In the subsequent weeks and months of the virus' outbreak, reports of discrimination and racial violence targeted towards those of East Asian origin and heritage in the West became commonplace. Cries for a tighter stance on immigration, particularly from right-wing groups in places such as Italy, Austria, the UK, France, Holland and Germany became heard.

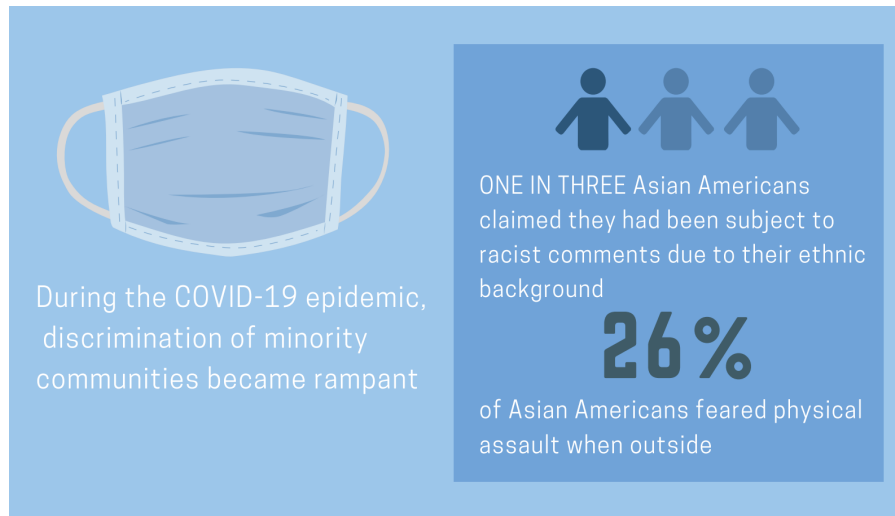
In the aftermath of violent changes in society such as epidemics, pandemics, terrorist incidents or any national conflicts, discrimination of certain groups - particularly minority communities - becomes rampant.<sup>1</sup> When the 1853 yellow fever epidemic struck the US, Eastern European immigrants were targets of discrimination and violence due to the notion that they were susceptible to contracting and spreading the disease. During the 2014 Ebola outbreak, people of African descent bore the brunt of being racially attacked and publicly stereotyped based on their complexions, appearances, and features. Even after the attacks on 9/11, many Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian communities in the United States were faced with direct harm and intolerance because of their racial, ethnic, religious and cultural identities. Historically, this frequent stigmatisation of certain groups emerges out of despair. When a catastrophe such as 9/11 takes place and shocks all realms of society, it is not uncommon for fear to lead to an immediate desire to scapegoat specific groups as perpetrators of the traumatic event.

According to a study conducted in June 2020 by Pew Research Centre in the United States, 39% of Asian Americans stated that they had encountered people who acted uncomfortable around them in public. One-in-three claimed they had been subject to racist comments or jokes due to their ethnic background since the outbreak of the pandemic. 26% of Asian Americans said that when they went out in public, they feared someone may physically assault them<sup>2</sup>. CBS News covered an article that reported over 2,000 hate crimes against Asian-Americans. Attacks may range from online abuse to discrimination in school and the workplace, as well as violent physical harassment.

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<sup>1</sup> Haynes, Suyin. "As Coronavirus Spreads, So Does Xenophobia and Anti-Asian Racism." *Time*, 6 Mar. 2020,

<sup>2</sup> Ruiz, Neil, et al. "Many Black and Asian Americans Say They Have Experienced Discrimination Amid the COVID-19 Outbreak." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, 1 July 2020,



This does not stop in the United States alone, though. In Canada, for example, 81% of Chinese-Canadians stated they feared harassment on public transport<sup>3</sup>. In Italy, a woman of Chinese origin was denied service in a bank. Intolerance against people of East Asian origin and heritage skyrocketed by 21% amidst the pandemic in the United Kingdom. One major incident took place in the UK in February. While walking down Oxford Street, a Singaporean student named Jonathan Mok was brutally beaten by teenagers who told him that they “did not want [his] coronavirus in our country.” Mok’s posting of his wounds on his Facebook page sent shockwaves and outrage across the UK and the world<sup>4</sup>. Many more racially-motivated confrontations took place and most went widely unnoticed. They were, and still are, prevalent.

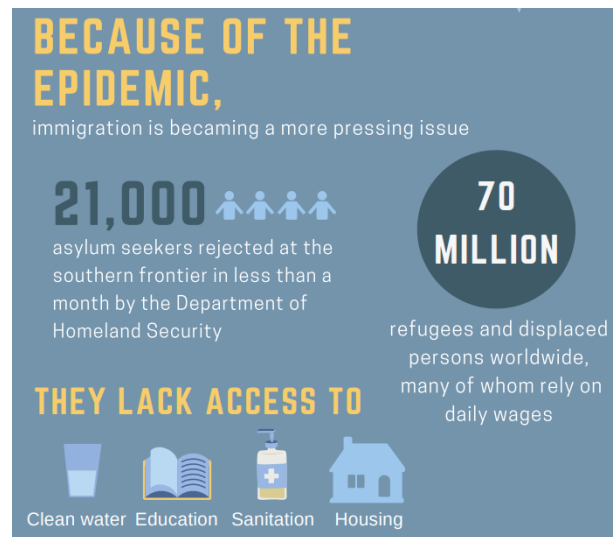
Immigration has also become a more pressing issue in the wake of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, countries such as the US already had stringent policies on their borders which greatly diminished the chances for those willing to seek asylum. In a response to the spread of infection, settlement to the United States has been temporarily suspended, meaning that those who had applied and been approved for visas to enter the United States now have little to no chance of making it there. In less than a month, the Department of Homeland Security rejected over 21,000 asylum seekers at the southern frontier, expelling them back to Mexico. Refugees and migrants on the US-Mexico border and all over the world suffered the most abject health and economic decline ever conceivable<sup>5</sup>. As of now, there are about 70 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide, many of whom rely on daily wages. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, over three quarters of displaced people and migrants lost their jobs and income. The lack of access to clean water, sanitation, housing, education and- more crucially at this time- disease testing equipment is taking an immeasurable toll on their daily lives. Across refugee camps globally, Covid cases continue to

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Canadian Citizenship. “Poll Shows the Impact of Discrimination on Canadian Immigrants amid COVID-19.” *CISION*, 23 June 2020,

<sup>4</sup> BBC News. “Coronavirus: Teens Arrested over ‘racially Aggravated’ Attack.” *BBC News*, 6 Mar. 2020,

<sup>5</sup> “Impact of Covid on Asylum Seekers and Refugees Report - HIAS.” Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, 2020.

rise and host countries are at their breaking point<sup>6</sup>. In a report released by the UNHCR, 168 nations worldwide fully or partially closed their borders, with 90 of them making no exceptions for asylum seekers.

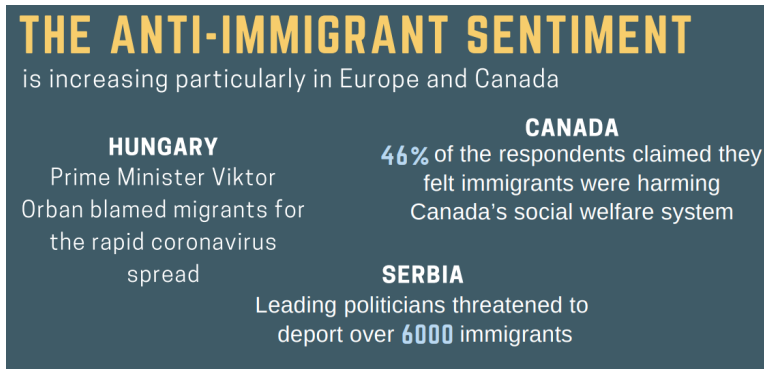


With this comes the question of who should be welcomed into a new country. As cases of covid increased, so did anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly in Europe and even Canada. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban fueled his right-wing supporters by blaming migrants for the rapid coronavirus spread, claiming that “we are fighting a two-front war; one front is migration and the other belongs to the coronavirus.” To further stress his point he goes on to say that there is “a logical connection between the two as they spread with movement.”<sup>7</sup> This rhetoric was shared with nations such as Italy, where Matteo Salvini pinpointed African and Asian immigrants for the high infection rates, insinuating that they brought it with them as they travelled from their countries of origin. Croatia’s Health Minister declared that migrants pose an increased risk of spreading the virus while some of Serbia’s leading politicians threatened to deport over 6,000 immigrants. In France, Germany and Spain, right-wing groups continually demand a suspension of the Schengen visa which permits travel through EU borders without a passport. This is a route thousands of migrants embark on every year<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. “COVID-19 Brief: Impact on Refugees –.” *USGLC*, 14 Dec. 2020,

<sup>7</sup> Zargar, Haris. “COVID-19 | Europe’s Far Right Whips out Anti-Migrant Rhetoric to Target Refugees during the Coronavirus Crisis.” *Bliss*, 16 May 2020

<sup>8</sup> Pianigiani, Gaia, and Emma Bubola. “As Coronavirus Reappears in Italy, Migrants Become a Target for Politicians.” *The New York Times*, 1 Sept. 2020



Historically, Canada has been recognised and praised for its openness towards accepting immigrants. In the wake of the pandemic, however, this is beginning to seem questionable. New reports and surveys conclude that cheerful attitudes towards immigrants are slowly starting to diminish. Right-wing groups, in particular, are the forefront of the campaign pressuring the government to toughen laws on accepting migrants and refugees. Prior to the pandemic, close to 6 in 10 claimed they felt comfortable about the arrival of newcomers. In another poll, over 50% of respondents stated that they felt immigration strengthened Canada's economy and social and cultural atmosphere. Now, however, a deep sense of discomfort and anxiousness amongst some Canadians is showing.<sup>9</sup> In a survey conducted this year by McMaster University in Ontario, 46% of the respondents claimed they felt immigrants were harming Canada's social welfare system, which has received international acclaim in the last several years. Half of the respondents said that immigrants were unwilling to adopt Canadian values. What is most striking is that the majority of people stated that the government should do more to curb the influx of immigrants; a mere 22% of respondents believed that immigration would be the best possible solution to fix the economic damage caused by the pandemic<sup>10</sup>.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed how fractured human society is in our relationship with one another. It has presented how bias, fear and stigma all contribute to what we know as prejudice today. However, the world has also seen those who have chosen not to be silent in the midst of turmoil. Young people of East Asian heritage in France, for instance circulated a hashtag online called #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus (or #IAmNotAVirus) to raise their voices against racism. All over the United States, hotlines and nonprofit services such as STOP AAPIHATE have been founded to allow Asian-Americans to speak out and educate others on their experiences.<sup>11</sup> Such acts go a long way as they force us to confront the issues we choose to breeze over. As we have fought in the past to put an end to yellow fever, Ebola, and terrorism, we should never forget that a more lethal disease - hatred - is following closely behind. Covid-19 may be curable with a vaccine, but stigma lies deeper in the mind than any pathogen can in the bloodstream. It's up to us to diagnose it before we allow the illness to infect the generations to come.

<sup>9</sup> Newbold, Bruce. "COVID-19 Has Hardened Canadian Views on Immigration." *McMaster University*, 2 Oct. 2020,

<sup>10</sup> Newbold, Bruce. "COVID-19 Has Hardened Canadian Views on Immigration." *The Conversation*, 1 Oct. 2020

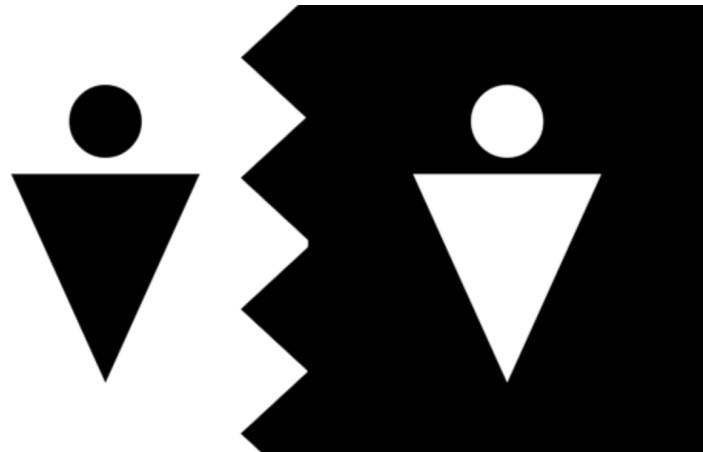
<sup>11</sup> BBC News. "Coronavirus: French Asians Hit Back at Racism with 'I'm Not a Virus.'" *BBC News*, 29 Jan. 2020

## RACIAL DISPARITIES

Xuan Lan Tran

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Throughout history, systemic racism in the medical field has taken the lives of black, indigenous, and people of color all around the world. But more recently, COVID-19 has revealed that racial discrimination in healthcare systems appear due to established disparities in occupation, housing, and socioeconomic status. Historical prejudice and stereotyping, as well as statistics given with little or no context, can lead the general public to further neglect racially marginalized communities.



According to the New England Journal of Medicine, data by Wisconsin and Michigan from early April showed that the percentage of Black people affected by the pandemic was twice as high as the amount of Black people in the area. Similar disparities have also been recorded in other areas. Past epidemics and natural disasters suggest a pattern which concludes that socially marginalized populations will suffer the most. However, showing lone figures on how COVID-19 disproportionately affects racial minorities in hopes of spreading awareness and combating racism may actually have the opposite effect: non-contextualized statistics may cause people to believe that the unique genetic differences of racial minorities leaves them more susceptible to the disease.

Figures given without explanation may also lead to racial stereotyping about people of color. For example, Black Americans during 20th century tuberculosis outbreaks in the urban South were dismissed as they were believed to be too stubborn to practice proper hygiene. Similar stereotypes have been made against Asian and Latinx Americans. These issues with a lack of contextualized data can lead to ignoring racial disparities with the belief that the higher COVID-19 statistics in racial minorities is innate and cannot be helped. Data given without proper analysis can cause geographic division and worsen marginalization for racial minorities, according to sociologist Loïc Wacquant. Wacquant refers to this phenomenon as “territorial stigmatization”. As for how territorial stigmatization applies to the COVID-19 pandemic,

neighborhoods which are already struggling may suffer more due to near-oppressive monitoring and scrutiny, scapegoatism of local residents, or alienation from the general public.<sup>12</sup>

The Center for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) published an article which compiled multiple sources to analyze racial inequities due to COVID-19. As stated in their article, historically established disparities in medical institutions contribute to higher rates of infection, hospitalization, and death in BIPOC. Also notable are the effects of social determinants on COVID-19, the ramifications of which are amplified by race. Factors like higher likelihoods of being uninsured in non-Hispanic White Americans<sup>13</sup>, cultural or language barriers in healthcare,<sup>14</sup> lack of accessible transportation and discrimination in systems intended to aid in health and wellbeing all contribute to higher rates of COVID-19 in BIPOC. Some racial minorities may also distrust and intentionally avoid healthcare systems because of prior experience with inequalities in treatment, or because of the historical context of said inequalities, such as multiple examples of forced sterilization in the medical field or the higher maternal mortality rates in women of color.<sup>15</sup>



Occupational disparities also play a role in COVID-19 inequities. Certain racial or ethnic minorities work in essential fields like public transport, farms, factories, grocery stores, or healthcare facilities<sup>16</sup>. All of these fields are undervalued, despite being considered “essential workers” in the pandemic, and therefore lead to working conditions that cause a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. Many of these jobs involve high risk factors of infection like being unable to take paid sick leave, requiring close contact with consumers or other workers, or completely lack the ability to work remotely. 17% of Black workers work in front line fields, with over 25% working in the public transportation field.

Due to educational barriers, some racial minorities may have fewer future job options which may also lead to lower paying or less stable jobs. An example of this occupational instability became clear as the spiking unemployment rate during April was 16.7% for Black Americans while it was 14.2% for White Americans.<sup>17</sup> This limited occupational flexibility leads to the aforementioned occupational disparities, and

<sup>12</sup>Chowkwanyun, Merlin, and Adolph L. Reed. “Racial Health Disparities and Covid-19 — Caution and Context.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 383, no. 3, 2020, pp. 201–203., doi:10.1056/nejmp2012910.

<sup>13</sup>Institute of Medicine. 2002. *Care Without Coverage: Too Little, Too Late*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/10367>.

<sup>14</sup> Institute of Medicine. 2003. *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/10260>.

<sup>15</sup> Pagán, Angélica Marie, et al. “Spring 2020 Journal: Mitigating Black Maternal Mortality.” Edited by Lisa McCorkell et al., *Berkeley Public Policy Journal*, 13 Apr. 2020, [bppj.berkeley.edu/2020/04/13/spring-2020-journal-mitigating-black-maternal-mortality/](http://bppj.berkeley.edu/2020/04/13/spring-2020-journal-mitigating-black-maternal-mortality/).

<sup>16</sup> “Composition of the Labor Force.” *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1 Oct. 2019, [www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2018/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2018/home.htm).

<sup>17</sup> Gould, Elise, and Valerie Wilson. “Black Workers Face Two of the Most Lethal Preexisting Conditions for Coronavirus-Racism and Economic Inequality.” *Economic Policy Institute*, 1 June 2020, [www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-covid/](http://www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-covid/).



coupled with economic disparities, racial minorities are forced to take jobs that place them at a higher risk for COVID-19.

Finally, racial and/or ethnic minorities are more likely to stay in crowded conditions which make following preventative measures such as social distancing harder. Likewise, disproportionate unemployment rates for BIPOC due to COVID-19 leads to greater chances of homelessness, eviction, or sharing housing.<sup>18 19</sup>

Data published by The Lancet from 50 studies with 18,728,893 patients conducted in both the United States and the United Kingdom found that Black and Asian individuals have a higher likelihood of contracting COVID-19. Data also showed that Asian individuals may have a higher likelihood of ICU admission and death from COVID-19 even with sex/gender, age, and coexisting conditions (but these studies have not yet been peer reviewed.) In these studies, it was found that Black people were twice as likely to be infected with COVID-19 at a pool adjusted ratio of 2.02:1 as compared to White people, while Asian and Latinx people were also more likely to be infected than White people at rates of 1.61 and 1.77, respectively. On mortality rates and ethnicity, studies showed that Asian individuals had a higher risk of death than White individuals at a ratio of 0.23:0.22, but when peer reviewed, this increased risk became lower. Adjusted analyses did not show a higher risk of death for Latinx or Black individuals.<sup>20</sup>

The findings of these studies imply that the severe impact of COVID-19 on Black, Latinx, and Asian communities is largely due to the disproportionate infection rate. Multiple factors can explain why there is a higher risk of infection and even death in these minority groups. Individuals from Asian, Latinx, and Black backgrounds may live in intergenerational households. As of 2009, Asian Americans made up 26% of intergenerational households, Black Americans being 24% of intergenerational households, and Latinx being 23% of intergenerational households- all of which resulted in crowded living conditions.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, lower socioeconomic status amongst these racial minorities increases the likelihood of residences with more communal facilities or shared areas. In a Bureau of Labour Statistics Current Population Survey for the year 2018, research showed that Black workers were more likely to be in fields that required close proximity to others and chronic subjection to infectious conditions.<sup>22</sup> Asians were also found to have a higher risk of fatal infection, even when comorbidities such as diabetes and cardiovascular conditions were factored in. The most recent Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre report showed that Asians and Black people were disproportionately hospitalized and placed in the intensive care unit.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Race And Education: How Race Affects Education." *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*, 25 Nov. 2006, [www.aecf.org/resources/race-matters-how-race-affects-education-opportunities/](http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-matters-how-race-affects-education-opportunities/)

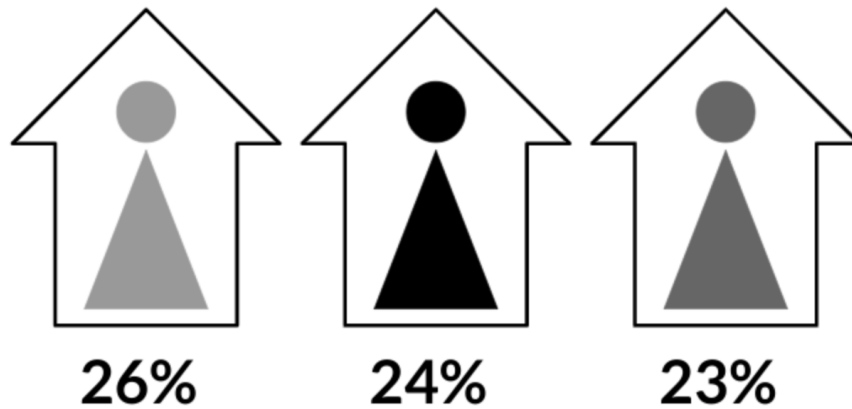
<sup>19</sup> "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 24 July 2020, [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html).

<sup>20</sup> Sze, Shirley, et al. *Ethnicity and Clinical Outcomes in COVID-19: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, vol. 29, 12 Nov. 2020.

<sup>21</sup> "Chapter 3: Demographics of Multi-Generational Households." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, 31 Dec. 2019, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/03/chapter-3-demographics-of-multi-generational-households/#race-and-ethnicity](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/03/chapter-3-demographics-of-multi-generational-households/#race-and-ethnicity).

<sup>22</sup> "Composition of the Labor Force." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1 Oct. 2019, [www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2018/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2018/home.htm).

<sup>23</sup> Richards-Belle, Alvin et al. "COVID-19 in critical care: epidemiology of the first epidemic wave across England, Wales and Northern Ireland." *Intensive care medicine* vol. 46,11 (2020): 2035-2047. doi:10.1007/s00134-020-06267-0



Systemic racism has been shown to contribute to race-based disparities in clinical COVID-19 data. Racism exists on individual, community, organizational, and institutional levels, all of which lead to discrimination, oppression, and marginalization against ethnic minorities. As applied to healthcare, this causes disparities in treatment and care, barriers in accessing care, distrust, and psychosocial stress. Economic and political powers have resulted in racial inequalities in socioeconomic status and cause higher rates and risks of infection, hospitalization, and death. As a result, this pandemic becomes a syndemic problem in both the US and the UK.<sup>24 25</sup>

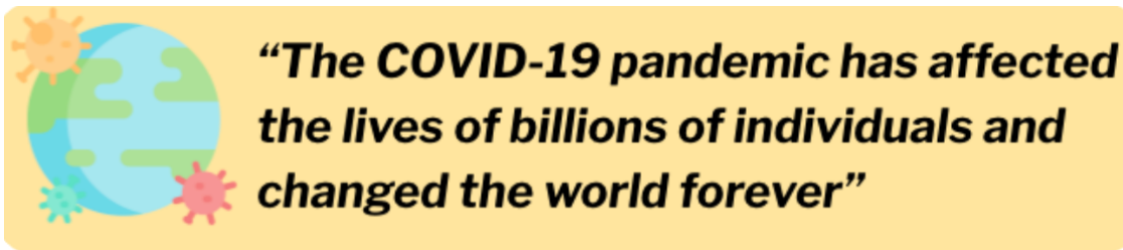
<sup>24</sup> Sze, Shirley, et al. *Ethnicity and Clinical Outcomes in COVID-19: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, vol. 29, 12 Nov. 2020, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100630>.

<sup>25</sup> "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 24 July 2020, [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html#fn19](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html#fn19).

## HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Nina Rohde

“The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the lives of billions of individuals and changed the world forever,” has unfortunately become a phrase so often used that it has become permanently embedded in the minds of the majority of the world’s population. Every coming day, there seems to be a development more ominous than the day before, and good news has become hard to come by. This dire situation has manifested many pressing societal and systemic issues that have amplified much needed discussion about what can be done to change for the better. The most thoroughly examined topic and the one at the centre of the discussion is healthcare. Every country and government responded differently to the emergence of SARS-CoV-2, and many healthcare systems have encountered scrutiny and calls for reform. Covid-19 has become a case study for the advantages and disadvantages of private and public healthcare, and how equally it is distributed.



Health insurance is different all over the world. With every country having a unique system with its own principles, the success of a nation in preventing major loss due to the pandemic was based on both the healthcare system and how the government responded. In most western countries, healthcare is mandatory and universal, with exceptions including the United States. Countries like the Netherlands have universal health insurance, but it is completely private, while Germany also has universal health insurance, but it is mostly public. In most countries, the difference between public and private insurance is not drastic, with private insurers usually only offering slightly more modern facilities and coverage for people who can afford it. Public insurance is usually government or tax-funded, and private insurance is composed of both for profit and non profit companies.

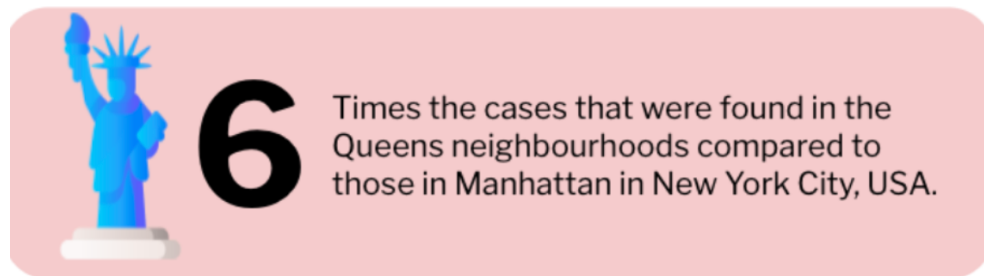
South Korea has been hailed for its response to Covid-19 through extensive early testing and using contact tracing to minimize the spread of the virus. The early response by the government minimized an influx of patients and prevented stress on the healthcare system, which “flattened the curve,” a phrase referring to keeping stress off of hospitals by reducing the rate of transmission.<sup>26</sup>

The United States, on the other hand, had an arguably unorganized response. Without being able to properly stop the spread of the virus early, the US now holds the most cases in the world. Adding to this,

<sup>26</sup> Maizland, Lindzay, and Claire Felter. "Comparing Six Health-Care Systems in a Pandemic." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Apr. 2020, [www.cfr.org/background/comparing-six-health-care-systems-pandemic](http://www.cfr.org/background/comparing-six-health-care-systems-pandemic). Accessed 19 Jan. 2021.

due to a plummeting economy, many citizens lost their jobs. As the majority of health insurance is provided through employers, millions of Americans no longer could afford nor had access to insurance. This would go on to inflate the already large number of 27.5 million uninsured. Although the US government has made testing free and sent out multiple relief bills, so many Americans- being unable to afford treatment- has led to many deaths and thousands of families stuck with crippling hospital bills that they are unable to pay. Due to inadequate measures and the public not following protocols, many hospitals and healthcare systems have been overwhelmed by the number of critically ill patients. This leans more towards the government's inaction and less of the healthcare system itself.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, the healthcare systems of our modern society all have pros and cons and handle the pandemic differently, based on what kind of structure they have. Despite the heavily divided political world we find ourselves in today, many countries have set aside their differences and stepped up and recognized the importance of cooperation. The virus does not discriminate, and wreaks havoc with or without borders, so multilateral cooperation to stop the spread and develop vaccines and treatments has become more of a priority than ever. The multilateral partnerships of many countries have let treatments such as the vaccine, and beneficial developments such as the early warning systems, develop much faster and more effectively. The response to covid-19 has become evidence that when everyone works together, it is possible to tackle global issues. The United Nation's leadership has been called into question and must change alongside everyone. The world has been shown that it can solve things like climate change and gender equality in the near future, but only if everyone bands together.

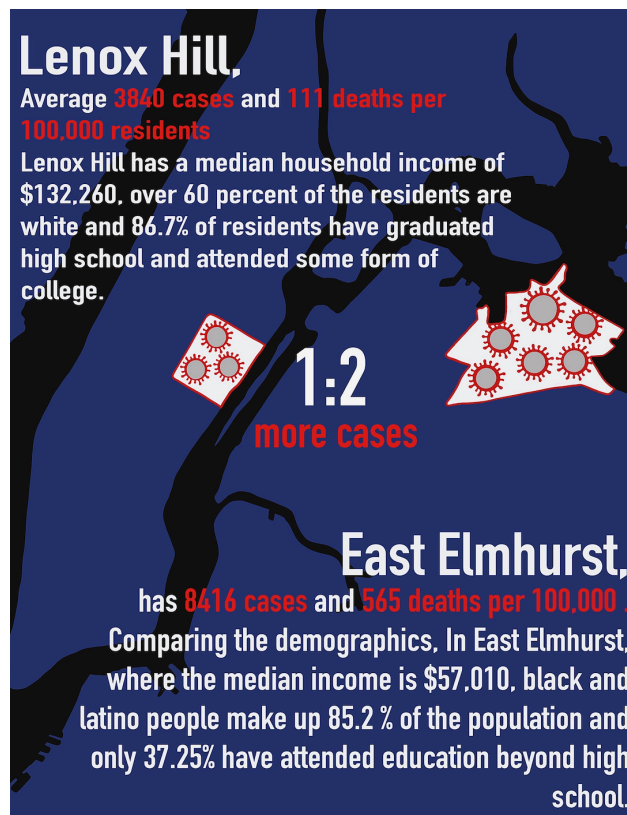


The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the discrepancy between access and quality of healthcare across modern society in major ways. The world has become increasingly aware of what role one's income, location and social status have on the health standards and availability of medical care. In the United States, especially in big cities like New York City, the severity and impact of the pandemic varied greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood. During the height of the pandemic in April, Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights were reporting six times as many cases as in Manhattan, even though Manhattan has more than double the population<sup>28</sup>. The reason for such an extreme disparity can be traced back to multiple factors that put one at a disadvantage when preventing infection and seeking quality care.

<sup>27</sup> Nova, Annie. "Millions of Americans have lost health insurance in this pandemic-driven recession. Here are their options." *CNBC*, [www.cnbc.com/2020/08/28/millions-of-americans-lost-health-insurance-amid-pandemic-here-are-options.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/28/millions-of-americans-lost-health-insurance-amid-pandemic-here-are-options.html). Accessed 20 Jan. 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Correal, Annie, and Andrew Jacobs. "A Tragedy Is Unfolding": Inside New York's Virus Epicenter." *The New York Times*, 9 Apr. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/nyregion/coronavirus-queens-corona-jackson-heights-elmhurst.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/nyregion/coronavirus-queens-corona-jackson-heights-elmhurst.html).

Comparing two neighborhoods from the opposite sides of the infection rate spectrum tells researchers and New Yorkers alike, the links between healthcare and socioeconomic standing. Lenox Hill, a neighborhood in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, as of January 11th has on average 3840 cases and 111 deaths per 100,000 residents, while East Elmhurst has 8416 cases and 565 deaths per 100,000 <sup>29</sup>. Comparing the demographics, Lenox Hill has a median household income of \$132,260, over 60 percent of the residents are white and 86.7% of residents have graduated high school and attended some form of college.<sup>30</sup> In East Elmhurst, where the median income is \$57,010, black and latino people make up 85.2 % of the population and only 37.25% have attended education beyond high school.<sup>31</sup> Minorities and the working class have faced a great deal of suffering and difficulty attaining the resources needed to stay safe and healthy during the pandemic. Various environmental and systemic factors have caused an increase in the mortality rate and transmission of the virus in East Elmhurst and other hard-hit neighborhoods.



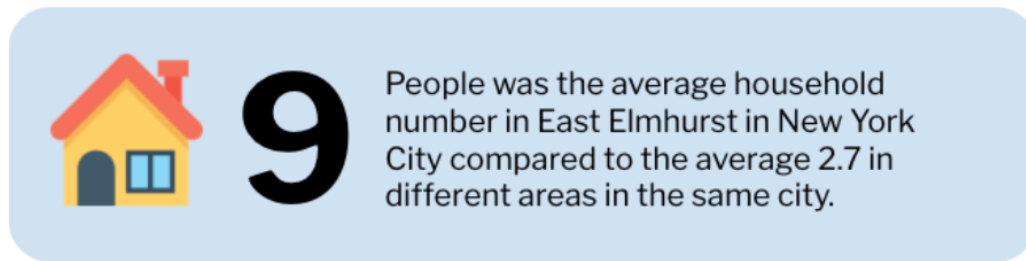
Adequate housing is hard to come by for people with low wages. In East Elmhurst, the average household size is 9 people, compared to the citywide average of 2.7 people, because splitting the rent is the

<sup>29</sup> "Covid-19 Total Data." *NYC Health*, [www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-totals.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-totals.page)

<sup>30</sup> "Lenox Hill Demographics." *Point2Homes*, [www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/NY/Manhattan/Lenox-Hill-Demographics.html](http://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/NY/Manhattan/Lenox-Hill-Demographics.html)

<sup>31</sup> "East Elmhurst Demographics." *Point2Homes*, [www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/NY/Queens/East-Elmhurst-Demographics.html](http://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/NY/Queens/East-Elmhurst-Demographics.html)

only option.<sup>32</sup> Small spaces which house so many people creates the ideal conditions for the spread of the virus, and coupled with a high rate of underlying conditions like asthma and other chronic respiratory issues, the reason behind COVID-19's severe impact seems more clear. As shown by the data, much of the community is only high school educated and the lack of education makes it much harder to get better jobs. Many Elmhurst residents are self-employed, such as uber drivers or delivery workers, which means that they also don't have affordable access to healthcare. For those that do have employers, low income makes insurance barely affordable, and as covid-19 treatments vary in price, being unable to pay medical bills contributes to the astoundingly high death rate in East Elmhurst and other parts of New York City. Other western countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK have guaranteed universal healthcare. Although the public healthcare systems might not provide as many benefits as the private companies, they are still good enough to provide necessary, basic care.



COVID-19 has undoubtedly left a mark on history and brought awareness to many vital issues in the form of a much needed wake up call. It has affected the lives of millions, and will continue to do so far into the future. While the impact is devastating and has caused great loss, as a society we must emerge on the other end of the tunnel demanding real change that will make a happier, healthier population. Healthcare systems will never be perfect, but continuing to improve them and making health disparities obsolete should be a top priority. Everyone- no matter their race, income, living situation or background- deserves quality care and safety.

<sup>32</sup> "East Elmhurst neighborhood in East Elmhurst, New York (NY), 11368, 11369 detailed profile <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/East-Elmhurst-East-Elmhurst-NY.html>." *City-Data*, [www.city-data.com/neighborhood/East-Elmhurst-East-Elmhurst-NY.html](http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/East-Elmhurst-East-Elmhurst-NY.html)

## EDUCATION


Sydney Berna

The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in a massive change in the way that students all over the world are being educated. Online education was already increasing in the past decade due to technological advances and improvements, and the remote learning industry could grow to reach \$78.5 billion worldwide by 2025. Statistics on the e-learning market size in 2020 indicate that mobile learning remains one of the fastest-growing markets in the sector. It has maintained an average steady growth rate of over 23% in the past years.<sup>33</sup> Despite the increase in these advances, the catastrophe of COVID-19 has forced online learning to accelerate more rapidly and it is now the only education option for much of the world due to the inability to meet in person and the risks posed from in-person learning.

There are advantages to learning online. Having access to education, even if on-screen, is better than not having the ability to learn. Classes on-screen are convenient, flexible, and students can repeat lessons and return to them for enhanced understanding. Online education also removes the commute, bringing the classroom right into your home. Less commuting is more eco-friendly and could even mean more rest at home, since less time is spent on going to and from school. Another compelling advantage of online learning is that it also promotes the self-discipline and motivation of the student, and increases technical skills that can transfer to future employment opportunities.

### EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic has forced online learning to accelerate rapidly, and it is now the only education option for most children. COVID-19 has severely disrupted school systems, particularly the lives of students and teachers.



**SCHOOL CLOSURES AFFECTING  
1.5 BILLION STUDENTS IN  
191 COUNTRIES**

While there are many advantages to learning virtually, there are equally as many disadvantages. The ability to offer an online education to children in the developed world is a luxury when compared with the many children around the world who do not have access to technology or even basic educational structures. Those who are unable to access adequate technology or funding are being left behind, and consequently, students are facing major setbacks in their education. According to UNESCO, “the COVID-19 pandemic has forced school closures in 191 countries, affecting at least 1.5 billion students and 63

<sup>33</sup> "Global E-Learning Industry." *Globe News Wire. ReportLinker*, [www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/11/19/2129923/0/en/Global-E-Learning-Industry.html](http://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/11/19/2129923/0/en/Global-E-Learning-Industry.html). Accessed 13 Jan. 2021.

million primary and secondary teachers.” UNESCO adds that “disparities in distance education are particularly evident in low-income countries” and that “nearly 90% of students in sub-Saharan Africa do not have household computers while 82% are unable to get online”.<sup>34</sup> Even students who do have access to sufficient technology, equipment, and fast internet connections are also presented with challenges. School closures have further created many new obstacles for working parents, and depending on the type of employment, many families are at an even greater disadvantage. Therefore, online education can be adequate, however the level of adequacy is dependent on many variables.


There are other disadvantages to learning virtually which are highlighted by the eLearning Industry. These include: difficulties focusing on screens for long periods of time, potential technology issues, a sense of isolation, difficulty training teachers, and managing students’ screen time.<sup>35</sup> Much can be lost on the screen, from gestures to facial expressions and even jokes from the teacher. These subtle actions are useful in understanding the content and can enhance the students’ learning. Many believe that it is easier to learn within a physical classroom because it allows students to be ready to engage in dialogue and answer questions. It is also easier to stay focused when in the physical classroom, since distractions from the outside world increase when learning remotely and online. This fact alone is an argument that online learning may be adequate but not ideal for many, particularly those who are easily distracted or have competing demands at home. To be successful during online learning, students must be motivated, disciplined, self-directed, and good at time management. Top distractions for students consist of electronic devices such as iPhones, which include social media, texting, and television. Furthermore, home environments, including family members, can be particularly distracting for students. Also at home, students can sit in front of the screen in a place like the bedroom, which may be appealing but can get in the way of learning and diminish productivity. Finally, the distractions and the lack of physical interaction can cause students to be less engaged and lead to underperformance. This can harm their educational experience and hinder essential learning.

## CHALLENGES

**Difficulties faced:**

- focusing on screens for long periods of time
- potential technology issues
- a sense of isolation
- training teachers
- managing students’ screen time.

**Those who are unable to access adequate technology or funding are being left behind.**



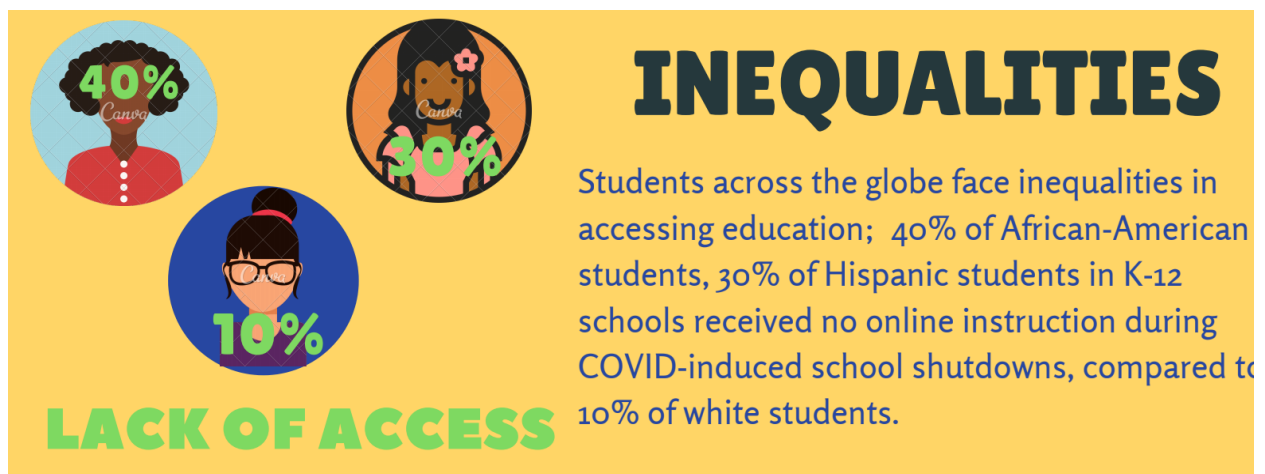
<sup>34</sup> "Startling disparities in digital learning emerge as COVID-19 spreads: UN education agency." *UN News*, 21 Apr. 2020. *Global perspective Human stories*, news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1062232. Accessed 13 Jan. 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Gautam, Priyanka. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning." *eLearning Industry*, 10 Oct. 2020. *eLearning Industry*, elearningindustry.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-online-learning. Accessed 13 Jan. 2021.



There is a great deal of inequality in online schooling, essentially due to the immense disparities in income levels. Private schools are generally more well-funded and their students tend to come from higher income families. This allows for these students the ability to afford computers, phones, technology, and count on faster internet connections. Many public school students face technology limitations such as slow connections or lack of adequate equipment.

Beyond income disparities, there are also drastic and unfair racial inequalities in the U.S. education system in particular, and this could further widen the gap between the haves and the have nots. According to a McKinsey analysis, “40% of African-American students and 30% of Hispanic ones in K-12 schools received no online instruction during COVID-induced school shutdowns, compared to 10% of white students.”<sup>36</sup> Foundations and nonprofits can help remedy the situation by targeting special areas, but when a problem is so large and systemic, only governments have the means to tackle such injustice. Governments from the federal to the local level need to direct increased funding towards the most disadvantaged school districts. This will never even the playing field, but an emphasis from both the public and private sectors on providing technology and teachers to areas with a disadvantage is not only good public policy, it is also necessary for adequate learning.



<sup>36</sup> Dorn, Emma, et al. "COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime." *McKinsey & Company*, 1 June 2020, [www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#). Accessed 13 Jan. 2021.

The last major obstacle in the shift to the increasing amount of education online is its direct impact on families, particularly those with working parents. School closures have created many new responsibilities for working parents, especially those with young children under the age of twelve. According to a new Care.com online survey of 1,000 parents with children under the age of 15, “Nearly three-fourths, 73%, of parents say they plan to make major changes to their professional lives to accommodate the lack of child care, About 15% of those are considering leaving the workforce altogether.”<sup>37</sup> Kids of that age generally need extra support and require more attention, creating many interruptions for parents throughout their workday. Young children can be more easily distracted and need personal care at home, including lunch and breaks. They also need scaffolding and support to improve their ability to understand classroom lessons. Essential workers, such as healthcare, transportation and delivery workers, or food and agricultural workers, need to continue critical infrastructure operations. Since working remotely is not an option in these fields, many have had to either leave their children unsupervised or are forced to pay for additional childcare that they may not be able to afford. Additionally, an exhausted parent coming home from work is now required to bring their child up to speed in learning, creating a change in family dynamics that can become tense and difficult to manage.

COVID-19 has upended the lives of nearly everyone on the globe. This virus has severely disrupted school systems, teachers, and students. The impact of the pandemic on the education system has clearly changed the methods of how teachers impart their information, the way that students learn and absorb knowledge, and the adjustments that many working parents are forced to make. Online education is adequate for many, but not for all. There are many factors that affect students who may not have the resources and advantages that other, more privileged students may have. Moving forward, it is important that entities such as local and national governments, nonprofits and foundations, and companies in the private sector join together to do all they can to ensure that all students are receiving the tools and resources for a sufficient and equal education for all.

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<sup>37</sup> Paisner, Emily. Weblog post. *Care@Work*, 6 Aug. 2020, [workplace.care.com/workingparentssurvey](https://workplace.care.com/workingparentssurvey). Accessed 13 Jan. 2021.

## DOMESTIC LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE PANDEMIC

Maya Mukherjee

The biggest global news item of 2020 by far has been the outbreak and rapid spread of COVID-19 across the world. Even as research organizations and pharmaceutical companies rush to find an effective and safe vaccine, the daily lives of citizens have been radically altered. Whether it translates into deaths of loved ones, sick family members, jobs lost, mental health crises, or increased domestic violence, COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on family lives in 2020.

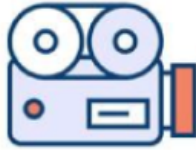
Within the family unit, life in the pandemic has transformed. In countries with significant informal sectors such as Brazil and India, some people continued to work outside the home to feed their families. In most other sectors across the world, however, families became almost entirely homebound due to mandated lockdowns. Millions around the globe lost their jobs and incomes, while others had to make a sudden shift to working from home with the use of videoconferencing. The resulting dissolution of boundaries between work life and home life caused workdays to get longer. Students too went online using similar tools. In the absence of physical class time- parents, especially mothers- needed to play a support role as supplementary teachers and caregivers, even during school hours. As a result, family life during the pandemic saw adults juggle remote work and remote learning with their children. In addition, social distancing meant that all travel, outdoor entertainment, sports, and shopping was impossible, causing connection with the outside world to decline. Socializing went remote too and families connected with loved ones via WhatsApp, social media, and video conferencing. Surveys from around the world found that by and large, families grew more connected and fonder of one another. A survey found that in the US, 73% of families connected by watching TV and movies together.<sup>38</sup> Streaming services got a huge boost, with Netflix seeing its biggest global growth spurt in history between April – June 2020.<sup>39</sup> While families did their best to cope, several studies have shown that remote work and learning, and lack of physical contact with friends and family, has taken its toll on the mental health of populations around the planet.



**Millions around the globe  
lost their jobs and incomes, while others had to  
make a shift to working from home with the  
use of video conferencing.**

<sup>38</sup> “How Has COVID-19 Impacted Family Life?” *Life360*, Life360 Inc., 9 June 2020, [www.life360.com/blog/how-has-covid-19-impacted-family-life/](http://www.life360.com/blog/how-has-covid-19-impacted-family-life/).

<sup>39</sup> Walsh, Joe. “Netflix Subscriber Growth Slows After Surging During Pandemic.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 20 Oct. 2020, [www.forbes.com/sites/joewalsh/2020/10/20/netflix-subscriber-growth-slows-after-surging-during-pandemic/?sh=11107e0b244e](http://www.forbes.com/sites/joewalsh/2020/10/20/netflix-subscriber-growth-slows-after-surging-during-pandemic/?sh=11107e0b244e).



In the US, 73% of families connected by watching TV and movies together.

Streaming services got a huge boost, with Netflix seeing its highest global growth spurt in history between April – June 2020.



An analysis of 19 surveys across 8 different countries reveals that the pandemic has caused unprecedented damage to mental health, in many cases high enough to warrant clinical action. Elevated levels of depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), psychological distress, anxiety, and stress were detected. These mental challenges tended to be higher among females, people under 40, and people who were exposed more to social media.<sup>40</sup> A Canadian study forecasted that sudden unemployment would result in 400 to 2,000 more suicides during the pandemic.<sup>41</sup> This trend of growing suicides during the pandemic was echoed in analyses from 3 additional countries.<sup>42 43</sup> Yet another study, a US collaboration between MIT, Harvard University, and the social media platform, Reddit, showed that chat groups pertaining to suicides had more than doubled during the pandemic, compared to the same time period last year. The groups most suicidal were the ones with pre-existing borderline personality disorders and PTSD. The study also found that in the absence of a social support network, those with pre-existing eating disorders hyper-focused on the news and relapsed into detrimental behaviors.<sup>44</sup>

To make matters worse, the rise in mental health challenges has been accompanied by a disruption in support services. A recent study done by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 130 countries found that the pandemic had disrupted mental health services in 93% of the countries surveyed.<sup>45</sup> More than 80% of high-income countries reported deploying telemedicine and teletherapy to bridge gaps in mental health, compared with less than 50% of low-income countries.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Xiong, Jiaqi, et al. "Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health in the General Population: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Elsevier B.V., 1 Dec. 2020, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7413844/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7413844/).

<sup>41</sup>McIntyre, Roger S., and Yena Lee. "Projected Increases in Suicide in Canada as a Consequence of COVID-19." *Psychiatry Research*, Elsevier, 19 May 2020, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165178120310386](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165178120310386).

<sup>42</sup>Mamun, Ullah. "COVID-19 Suicides in Pakistan, Dying off Not COVID-19 Fear but Poverty? - The Forthcoming Economic Challenges for a Developing Country." *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, July 2020, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32407859/](http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32407859/).

<sup>43</sup>Thakur, Vikram. "COVID 2019-Suicides: A Global Psychological Pandemic." *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Aug. 2020, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32335196/](http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32335196/).

<sup>44</sup>Trafton, Anne. "Using Machine Learning to Track the Pandemic's Impact on Mental Health." *MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, MIT News Office, 5 Nov. 2020, [news.mit.edu/2020/covid-19-impact-mental-health-1105](http://news.mit.edu/2020/covid-19-impact-mental-health-1105).

<sup>45</sup>"COVID-19 Disrupting Mental Health Services in Most Countries, WHO Survey." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 5 Oct. 2020, [www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey](http://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey).

<sup>46</sup>Broom, Douglas. "5 Things to Know about Mental Health across the World." *World Economic Forum*, 9 Oct. 2020, [www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/mental-health-day-covid19-coronavirus-global/](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/mental-health-day-covid19-coronavirus-global/).

"The pandemic had disrupted mental health services in 93% of the 130 countries surveyed... More than 80% of high income countries reported deploying telemedicine and teletherapy to bridge gaps in mental health, compared with less than 50% of low income countries.



Limited access to mental health support and peer support coupled with increased substance abuse and a feeling of powerlessness during the pandemic has also worsened domestic violence.<sup>47</sup> Lockdowns and restrictions on travel, social distancing requirements, and the fear of infecting older parents and relatives put a limit on a victim's ability to seek refuge with family and friends. Likewise, a pandemic induced global economic downturn also made it a challenge for the victim to leave their abuser. Emerging data from UN Women shows that 243 million females have been subjected to violence in the last 12 months. In many countries such as France, Argentina, Cyprus, and Singapore, reports indicate that domestic violence has gone up between 25% and 35%.<sup>48</sup> According to one report, the number of domestic violence cases brought to local law enforcement tripled in China in the days following the enforced lockdown.<sup>49</sup> It is important to underline that where victims were already in abusive households, they may find themselves trapped and combatting more extreme violence.<sup>50</sup> Combined with overwhelmed medical, judicial, and legal services, the problem of domestic violence has only become worse.

<sup>47</sup> Usher, Kim, et al. "Family Violence and COVID-19: Increased Vulnerability and Reduced Options for Support." *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., 7 May 2020, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7264607/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7264607/).

<sup>48</sup> Mlambo-Ngcuka, Phumzile. "Violence against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic." *UN Women*, 6 Apr. 2020, [www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic).

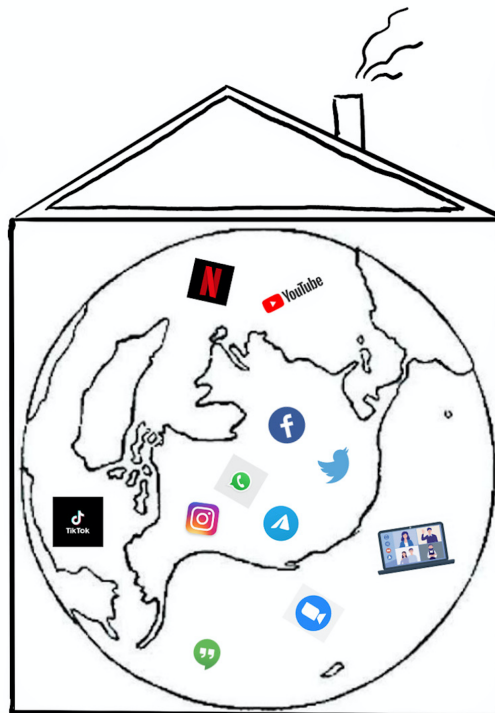
<sup>49</sup> Allen-Ebrahimian, Bethany. "China's Coronavirus Quarantines Raise Domestic Violence Fears." *Axios*, 7 Mar. 2020, [www.axios.com/china-domestic-violence-coronavirus-quarantine-7b00c3ba-35bc-4d16-afdd-b76ecfb28882.html](http://www.axios.com/china-domestic-violence-coronavirus-quarantine-7b00c3ba-35bc-4d16-afdd-b76ecfb28882.html).

<sup>50</sup> Godin, Mélissa. "How Coronavirus Is Affecting Victims of Domestic Violence." *Time*, Time, 18 Mar. 2020, [time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/](http://time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/).

"243 million females have been subjected to violence in the last 12 months... In many countries such as France, Argentina, Cyprus, and Singapore, domestic violence has gone up between 25%-35%."



The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed domestic life across the globe. Social distancing, mandated lockdowns and travel, and entertainment restrictions have resulted in families working remotely, helping their children cope with remote learning, while also socializing remotely. While lockdowns and social distancing have meant more time together as a family, they have also had a negative impact on mental health, particularly if the individual had pre-existing conditions. Equally importantly, there is an indication from around the world that domestic violence cases have grown and existing ones have become more intense. Support for increased mental health problems and domestic violence needs to be made a priority at the national and global levels.

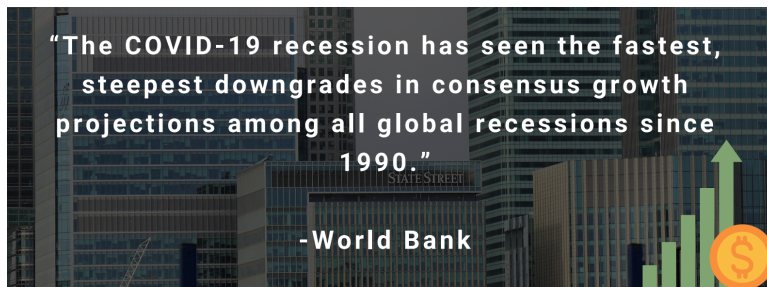


## THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC SLUMP FROM 2019 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Advait Sunil

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The global economy has suffered over the course of the past year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. According to the World Bank, “The COVID-19 recession has seen the fastest, steepest downgrades in consensus growth projections among all global recessions since 1990.”<sup>51</sup> This has been a problematic but true representation of today’s global economy. One of the main effects of this pandemic is that it has given rise to unprecedented rates of unemployment which has inflicted stress upon governments, businesses, and citizens. The International Labour Organization defines unemployment as “the inability of an economy to generate employment for those persons who want to work but are not doing so, even though they are available for employment and actively seeking work.”<sup>52</sup> According to *Global Finance Magazine* (as of late October 2020), it is estimated that over 100 million people across the world have lost their jobs from the declaration of the pandemic in February 2020 until early December 2020.<sup>53</sup> This extraordinarily high number is a derivative of the need to cut costs for businesses which will lead to more people without incomes. Therefore, it begs a question of whether or not the economy can make a full recovery in the upcoming years.



The governments of the world face more problems than solutions with unemployment on the rise under the current economic stall. The June 2020 Global Economic Prospects found that the baseline forecast envisioned a 5.2% contraction in global GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2020 - the deepest global recession in decades.<sup>54</sup> This is in stark contrast to 2019 which had a 2.9% increase in global GDP. Depleting tax revenues further compound problems faced by governments. Because fewer people are working, there are less people earning enough income to pay taxes, thus having a large impact on the government’s finances. These finances are also getting drained through the claims of benefits from more jobless people. As stated by Rom Economics, “Unemployment in an economy means that fewer people will be working

<sup>51</sup> Puzder, Andy. “U.S. Economy Showing Strains From Virus, Business Restrictions.” Washington Post. Washington Post Inc., 2020. 14 Dec. 2020. Web.

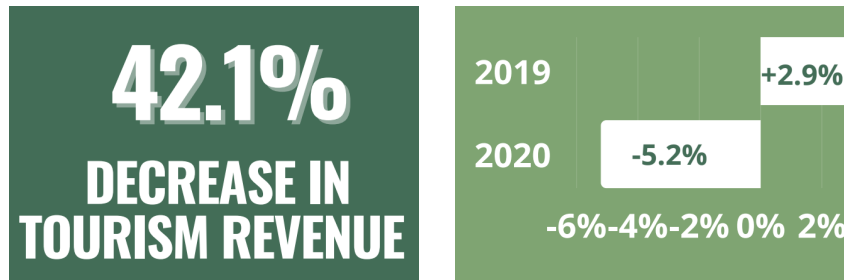
<sup>52</sup> Min, Joo. “Indicator Description: Unemployment Rate.” *ILOSTAT*. International Labor Organization Inc., 2021. Web.

<sup>53</sup> Ventura, Luca. “Unemployment Rates Around the World 2020.” *Global Finance*. Global Finance Magazine Inc., 2020. 22 Oct. 2020. Web.

<sup>54</sup> Azizi, Mo. “The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World.” World Bank. World Bank Inc., 2020. 8 June. 2020. Web.



and more people will be claiming benefits. More people claiming benefits creates a drain on the government's finances and means they have to spend more on benefit payments and less on other areas of the economy – so there is an opportunity cost.” As an example, the global revenue for the travel and tourism industry will be an estimated 396.37 billion U.S. dollars in 2020 - a decrease of around 42.1% from the previous year. <sup>55</sup> Additionally, this is significantly lower than the original 2020 forecast of around 712 billion dollars. To provide some context, the number of scheduled flights worldwide for the week of December 21st 2020, was down by 40.5% compared to the week of December 23, 2019. <sup>56</sup>



In October 2020, data collected from Statista (Plecher) shows that payments from state and federal governments in the United States alone for unemployment benefits totaled 8.43 billion dollars, which is over 5 billion dollars more than what was required at the start of the pandemic. <sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, while the affluent online corporations only kept getting richer during the pandemic (e.g: retailers such as Amazon, Ebay, Best Buy, Gamestop, etc.), the poorer branches of the world struggled to claim jobs to find a meal for the next day, let alone make profits. And since the pandemic has been going on for nearly 10 months, there has been prolonged unemployment, which may have caused loss of vital skills and productivity. A staff writer from Reference claims, “This is because professional skills, such as those found in medical and engineering fields, need constant use and upgrades in order to keep up with the latest technological innovations.” <sup>58</sup> With the world going remote for most of 2020, it has severely damaged industries that require physical interaction to get profits such as hotels, restaurants, gyms, bars, and grocery stores. Furthermore, individuals who remain unemployed for long periods of time face challenges in finding new jobs, resulting in a need for reskilling or retooling. <sup>59</sup> Thus, the government would need to reteach these skills. This stress would necessitate more money needing to be allocated from the budget which has already been reduced severely. <sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Lock, S. “Forecasted Change in Revenue From the Travel and Tourism Industry Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic worldwide from 2019 to 2020.” Statista. Statista Inc., 2020. 20 Oct. 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Mazareanu, Z. “Year-on-year Change of Weekly Flight Frequency of Global Airlines from January 6 to December 21, 2020, by Country.” Statista. Statista Inc., 2020. 23 Dec. 2020. Web.

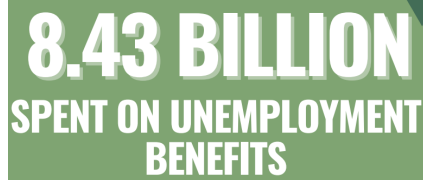
<sup>57</sup> Diffin, Eric. “Total Monthly Unemployment Insurance Benefits Paid in the United States Between October 2019 and October 2020.” Statista. Statista Inc., 2020. 1 Dec. 2020. Web.

<sup>58</sup> Nickel, Gerard. “What Are the Effects of Unemployment on Society?” *Reference*. Ask Media Group LLC. 25 Mar. 2020. Web.

<sup>59</sup> Puzder, Andy. “U.S. Economy Showing Strains From Virus, Business Restrictions.” *Washington Post*. Washington Post Inc., 2020. 14 Dec. 2020. Web.

<sup>60</sup> Rosca, Matei, Bjarke Smith-Meyer, Paola Tamma and Hannah Brenton. “The Global Coronavirus Economy: How Bad Will it Get?” *Politico*. Politico Inc., 2020. 2 Sep. 2020. Web.





**8.43 BILLION**  
**SPENT ON UNEMPLOYMENT**  
**BENEFITS**

The World Bank claims, “Globally, the per capita income has contracted in the largest fraction of countries since 1870. Advanced economies have been projected to shrink 7 percent, with that weakness damaging the outlook of many emerging market economies. Those developing countries are forecast to contract by 2.5 percent as they cope with their own domestic outbreaks of the virus.” This would represent the weakest showing by this group of economies in at least sixty years.

Unemployment also affected the average individual(s), regardless of their job status, even to the point of bringing the cascade effect which caused job losses. Those workers who are left to do more work after a company lays off part of their staff are not likely to receive any additional compensation for the extra hours they are working, which may lead to mental fatigue and general dissatisfaction.

The costs of unemployment to the individual are not hard to imagine. According to Stephen Simpson, “When a person loses their job, there is often an immediate impact on that person’s standard of living. Prior to the Great Recession, the average savings rate in the U.S. had been drifting down toward zero (and sometimes below), and there are anecdotal reports that the average person is only a few weeks away from serious financial trouble without a paying job.”<sup>61</sup> Even for those eligible for unemployment benefits and other forms of government assistance, it is often the case that these benefits replace 50% or less of their regular income.<sup>62</sup> That means these people are consuming far less than usual. However, the economic consequences can go beyond just less consumption.<sup>63</sup> Simpson states, “Many people will turn to retirement savings in a pinch, and draining these savings has dire long-term ramifications.”

Corporations have also struggled with the impacts of unemployment with the recent pandemic. Unemployment in an economy means that a lot more people will have less disposable income. This was exemplified in 2020 as spending on most goods and services was a challenge. As a result, firms experienced lower sales revenue and not only saw a fall in profits, but many even had to close. Inferior goods were also the only goods that gave profit as the low prices seemed more pleasing than ever. Less money meant less expensive products, which was the end-goal for consumers, but a few steps back for many firms. Hence, the GDP went down by a big margin, and the global economy found it harder to cope.

<sup>61</sup> Simpson, Stephen D. “The Cost of Unemployment to Society”. *Investopedia*. Dot Dash Publishing Family Inc., 2021. 24 Sep. 2020. Web.

<sup>62</sup> Zin, Jecko. “Effects of Unemployment.” *Rom Economics*. Rom Economics Inc., 2020. 14 Sep. 2017. Web.

<sup>63</sup> Choe, Stan. “How Soon Will the Economy Recover From COVID-19? A panel of 48 top Experts Are Getting Optimistic.” *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago Tribune Inc., 2020. 8 Dec. 2020. Web.

The World Bank forecasts that the pandemic recedes in such a way that domestic mitigation measures can be lifted by early 2021 in advanced economies and later in developing countries. They also believe that adverse global spillovers will ease during the second half of 2021 and that a widespread financial crisis will be avoided. As stated by the World Bank, “This scenario would envision global growth reviving, albeit modestly, to 4.2% in 2021. However, this view may be an overly optimistic position. Should COVID-19 outbreaks persist, if restrictions on movement be extended or reintroduced, or if disruptions to economic activity be prolonged, the recession could be deeper. Businesses might find it hard to service debt, heightened risk aversion could lead to climbing borrowing costs, and bankruptcies and defaults could result in financial crises in many countries. Under this downside scenario, global growth could shrink by almost 8% in 2020.” Hence, businesses are certain to be impacted as the recession will not have the same impact as it will today. It can either become prolonged and worsened, or lead the way to a successful economic rebuild.<sup>64</sup>

Despite these problems, the global economy should make a slow and gradual recovery with the confidence that vaccines will provide for the governments, employers, and workforce. Slowly, more companies will resume and increase operations that will require them to engage the workforce or even recruit for new skills. With this in mind, Andy Puzder states, “Even during the pandemic, the economy has generated a historic increase of 12.3 million jobs since April.”<sup>65</sup>

**INCREASE OF  
12.3 MILLION  
JOBS**

International trade rebuilt on fair practices, reduction of monopolies, reduced nationalism in economic policies, and significant increases in government spending in employment generating areas can collectively drive the engine of next generation global economic growth. History is privy to the world overcoming economic recessions in the past and the human spirit for survival and growth could ensure that the economy is back on the rails again over the next decade.

<sup>64</sup> Azizi, Mo. “The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World.” World Bank. World Bank Inc., 2020. 8 June. 2020. Web.

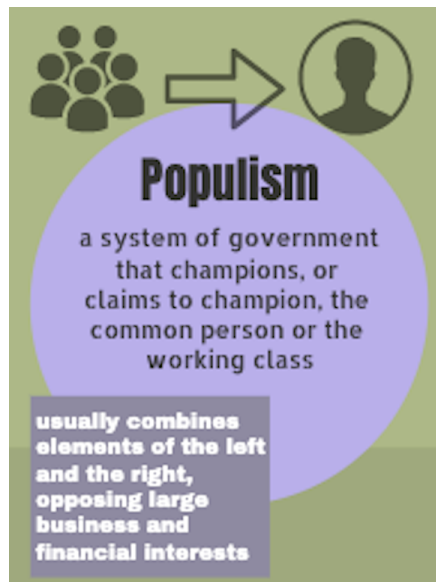
<sup>65</sup> Carlsson-Szlezak, Philipp, Paul Swartz, and Martin Reeves. “Why The Global Economy Is Recovering Faster Than Expected.” Harvard Business Review. Harvard Business Review Inc., 2020. 3 Nov. 2020. Web.

## EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT ON PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Olivia Tyndale

Example by leadership is a pattern in which a leader or government greatly influences the opinions of a population. When government officials exhibit a certain mindset, their followers and citizens tend to follow. This can be seen in the recent COVID-19 pandemic where the mindset and tone towards the virus has impacted how well certain health guidelines have been followed. Example by leadership in government can greatly undermine the risks of the pandemic and negatively impact the consideration of global health guidelines. This can be seen currently in two differing populist states: the United States and Hungary.

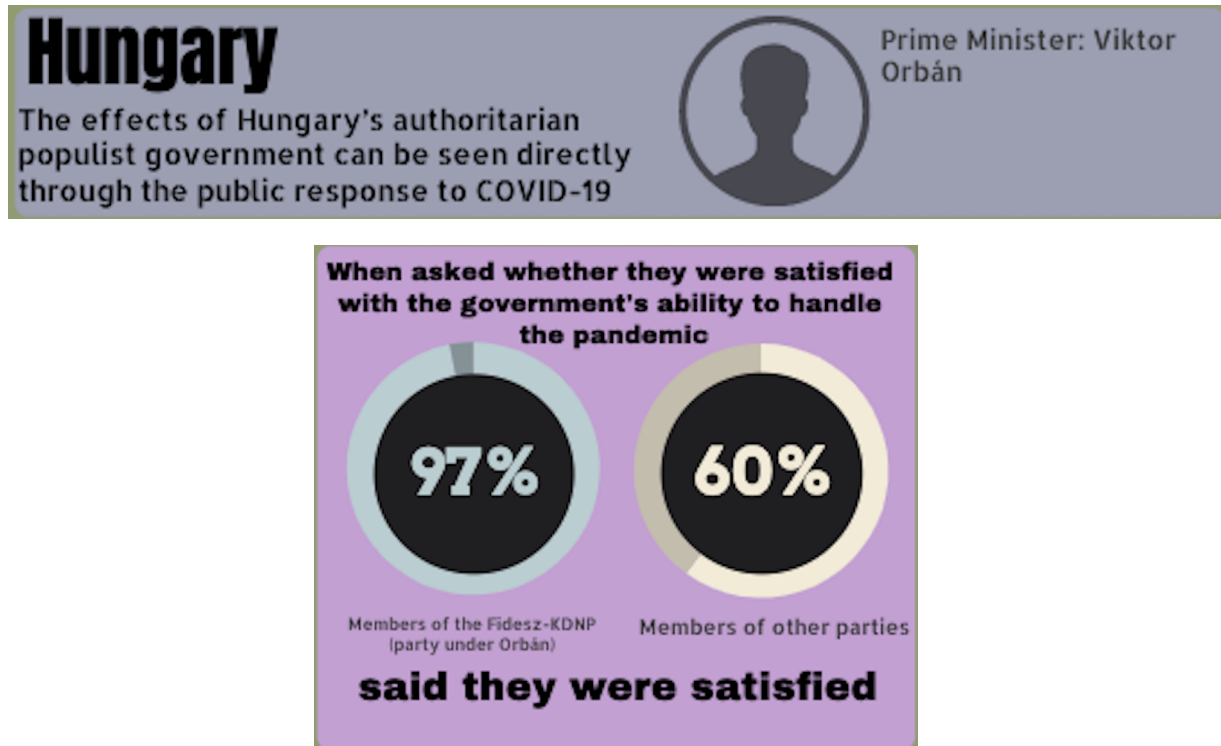
Populism is a system of government that champions, or claims to champion, the common person or the working class.<sup>66</sup> Populism usually combines elements of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist organizations. The term populism can designate either democratic or authoritarian movements. Populism is typically critical of political representation and anything between the relationship of the people and their government. In its most democratic form, populism can be used to give power and opportunity to less powerful members of society. However, populism is most often associated with an authoritarian form of politics. Populist politics, following this definition, revolves around a charismatic leader who claims to appeal to the will of the people in order to consolidate power for themselves.<sup>67</sup> Political parties lose their importance while elections serve to confirm the leader's authority.



<sup>66</sup> Munro, André. "Populism." Encyclopedia Britannica, [www.britannica.com/topic/populism](http://www.britannica.com/topic/populism).

<sup>67</sup> Müller, Jan-Werner. "The People Must Be Extracted from Within the People": Reflections on Populism." *Constellations*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2014, pp. 483–93. Crossref, doi:10.1111/1467-8675.12126.

This form of populism is most prominent in the current Hungarian government. Since coming into power in 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has systematically changed Hungary's political system. Over the last ten years he's slowly dismantled the country's democracy, turning Hungary into a hybrid regime where political competition is limited. The effects of Hungary's authoritarian populist government can be seen directly through the public response to COVID-19 in Hungary. According to a study by Dávid Dorosz, when different parties were asked whether they were satisfied with the government's ability to handle the pandemic, members of the Fidesz-KDNP (the party under Orbán) were overwhelmingly confident. To be more exact, 97% of study participants stated that they were satisfied. On the contrary, roughly 60% members of other parties who participated in the study were satisfied.



Hungary was relatively successful in handling the pandemic during the first wave of infections. The infection and death rates were under control due to a government shut down early in the .<sup>68</sup> However, the government has been less successful in handling the second wave of infections. It was clear the lockdown imposed during the spring hit the economy very harshly, therefore the government concluded imposing a lockdown again is not the solution. This is in line with a severe increase both in the number of new infections as well as deaths<sup>69</sup>. Although the pandemic was handled relatively well at first, Orbán and his party decided to prioritize economic stability during the second wave. This has impacted the views of

<sup>68</sup> Herrera, Helios, et al. "The Political Consequences of the Covid Pandemic: Lessons from Cross-country Polling Data." Vox EU, 6 Nov. 2020. Vox EU, [voxeu.org/article/political-consequences-covid-pandemic](https://voxeu.org/article/political-consequences-covid-pandemic).

<sup>69</sup> Dorosz, Dávid, et al. "COVID-19 in Hungary: Challenges and Opportunities for Progressives." American Press, [cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2020/12/17120823/COVID19-in-Hungary.pdf](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2020/12/17120823/COVID19-in-Hungary.pdf).

the people in his party who, during this second wave, have not followed health guidelines as much as they did previously while still being satisfied with how Orbán has handled the pandemic<sup>70</sup>. Even though those most critically affected by the pandemic have been disapproving of Orbán's recent response, most of the population still have his support.

A similar pattern can be seen in the United States in the Republican party. Although not as severe as Hungary, in recent years, the United States has been threatened by similar authoritarian populism. In the U.S., the rise of authoritarian populism has gone hand in hand with the decline of trust in government and the rise of ideological polarization. According to the Center for American Progress, this decline of trust in the U.S. government dates back to the mid-1960s. Fifty years ago, close to three-quarters of the U.S. population trusted the federal government. This number has now dropped to below 25 percent. This decline continued during the first year of the Trump administration. Simultaneously, politics in the United States have become more polarized. In the past, a common complaint about America's democracy was the policy positions of major candidates were almost indistinguishable, suggesting political parties lacked any firm principles.<sup>71</sup>



Similar patterns of polarization and lack of trust can be seen in how COVID-19 has been covered by the media, leading to ignorance surrounding health guidelines. In the United States, the pandemic quickly became very politicized. Due to the politicization of media in the United States, the information regarding the virus itself was polarized<sup>72</sup>. According to a study by Stuart Soroka, P. Sol Hart, and Sedona Chinn, "When such coverage is both highly politicized and polarized, motivated reasoning and a predisposition of the public to rely on political over scientific views mean that news coverage can amplify partisan differences in risk perceptions and responses to an issue."<sup>73</sup> As a result, misinformation regarding the pandemic is spreading through news coverage to further political agendas on either side. For example, right-wing news sources, such as Fox News, have consistently spread information underplaying the importance of medical procedures such as social distancing and wearing a mask to back President Trump's claims the pandemic is not a threat.<sup>74</sup> As a result, these news sources have caused a massive shift in opinion on the right regarding the dangers of the virus itself. According to Pew Research Center, 50% of Democrat

<sup>70</sup> Beauchamp, Zack. "Hungary's 'Coronavirus Coup,' Explained." Vox Media, 15 Apr. 2020, [www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/4/15/21193960/coronavirus-covid-19-hungary-orban-trump-populism](http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/4/15/21193960/coronavirus-covid-19-hungary-orban-trump-populism).

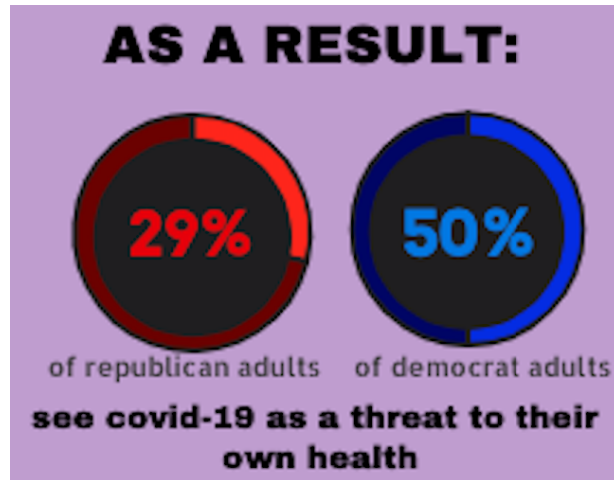
<sup>71</sup> Rohac, Dalibor, et al. "Drivers of Authoritarian Populism in the United States." Center for American Progress, 10 May 2018, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2018/05/10/450552/drivers-authoritarian-populism-united-states/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2018/05/10/450552/drivers-authoritarian-populism-united-states/).

<sup>72</sup> Rothwell, Jonathan, and Christos Makridis. "Politics Is Wrecking America's Pandemic Response." Brookings Press, 17 Sept. 2020, [www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/09/17/politics-is-wrecking-americas-pandemic-response/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/09/17/politics-is-wrecking-americas-pandemic-response/).

<sup>73</sup> Soroka, Stuart. "Politicization and Polarization in COVID-19 News Coverage." SAGE Public Health Emergency Collection, 2020 Aug 25.

<sup>74</sup> "COVID-19 Impact: How the Pandemic Is Affecting Politics." University of South Carolina: Department of Communications and Public Affairs, 14 Apr. 2020, [www.sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/04/covid\\_impact\\_on\\_politics\\_barbieri.php#.X-1s49hKiUk](http://www.sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/04/covid_impact_on_politics_barbieri.php#.X-1s49hKiUk).

adults in the United States see COVID-19 as a threat to their own health while only 29% of Republican adults see the virus having the same threat.<sup>75</sup>



Populism has greatly affected the mindset of what is needed for the pandemic. Additionally, authoritarian populist governments negatively impact how well health guidelines like social distancing are followed. These patterns can be seen in the United States and Hungary where common populist tactics like polarization and politicalization of media are used to alter how the virus is viewed and how well a government is responding. The high rate of infection is not present in more democratic governments such as New Zealand. Although the country has a much smaller population, due to the transparency between the government and its citizens, New Zealand was the first country to go 100 days without a single case.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore necessary to move away from populist culture to better serve the needs of others during this pandemic.

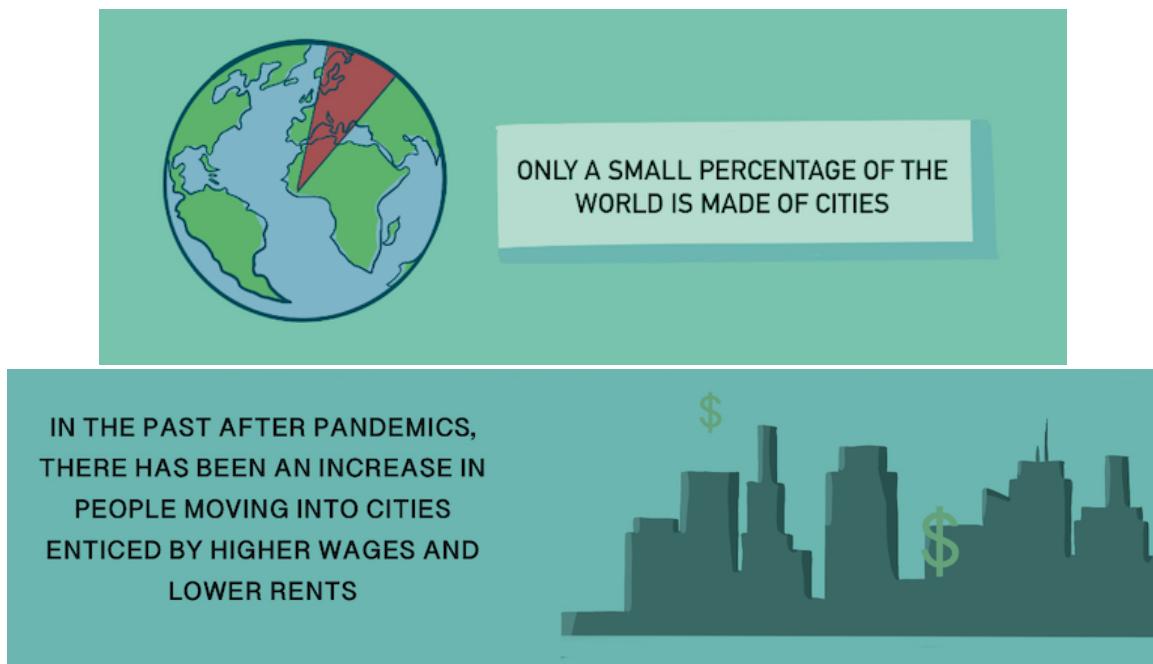
<sup>75</sup> Tyson, Alec. "Republicans Remain Far Less Likely than Democrats to View COVID-19 as a Major Threat to Public Health." Pew Research Center, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/22/republicans-remain-far-less-likely-than-democrats-to-view-covid-19-as-a-major-threat-to-public-health/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/22/republicans-remain-far-less-likely-than-democrats-to-view-covid-19-as-a-major-threat-to-public-health/).

<sup>76</sup> F. P. Polack and Others, et al. "Successful Elimination of Covid-19 Transmission in New Zealand: NEJM." New England Journal of Medicine, 31 Dec. 2020, [www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2025203](http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2025203).

## INTERSECTION OF URBANIZATION AND A PANDEMIC

Mikayla Pyke-Sharpe

Although only a small percentage of the world is made of cities, it must still be acknowledged that they create opportunities for forms of cultural exchange. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, cities may never be the same. Many of the issues cities are facing involve hospital capacities, mental health issues, and the survival of small businesses. However, it must also be acknowledged that cities have been the center of both pandemics and epidemics in the past, begging the question, why should COVID-19 affect the ability of cities to recuperate? In the past, an increase in people moving into cities enticed by higher wages and lower rents have followed pandemic outbreaks. This change would also give gentrified cities the chance to reorganize. Overall, following pandemics, there will always be a reason for people to move into cities due to decreases in rent, artistic opportunities, job opportunities, and urbanization as a whole. "Urbanization has always been a greater force than infectious disease."<sup>77</sup>



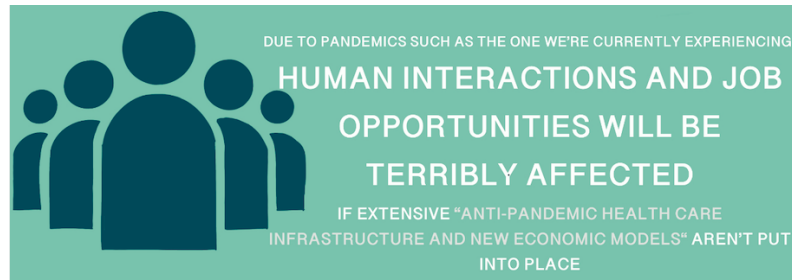
Although urban cities as a whole may not perish, human interactions will be highly affected. As well known, pandemics survive and spread in densely populated areas. It can then be inferred that as a result of this pandemic, human interactions will bring about fear rather than joy.<sup>78</sup> Small businesses not only share joy with customers, they also provide jobs. Due to pandemics such as the one we are currently experiencing,

<sup>77</sup> Florida, Richard, et al. "How Life in Our Cities Will Look after the Coronavirus Pandemic." Foreign Policy, [foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/01/future-of-cities-urban-life-after-coronavirus-pandemic/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/01/future-of-cities-urban-life-after-coronavirus-pandemic/).

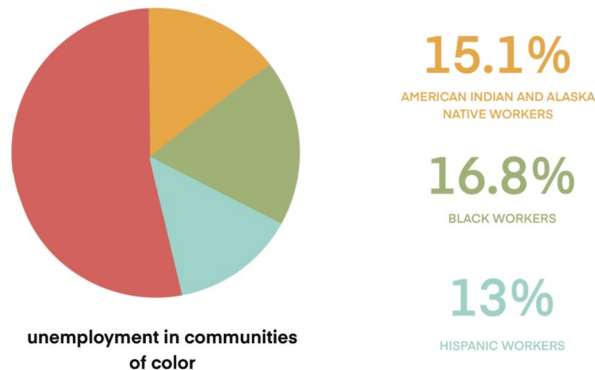
<sup>78</sup> Politico Magazine. "Coronavirus Will Change the World Permanently. Here's How." Politico, [www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/19/coronavirus-effect-economy-life-society-analysis-covid-135579](https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/19/coronavirus-effect-economy-life-society-analysis-covid-135579).



human interaction and job opportunities will be terribly affected if extensive “anti-pandemic health care infrastructure and new economic models” aren’t put into place.<sup>79</sup>



This will also acknowledge the grave health and economic disparities that are faced by certain demographics (minorities) within urbanized areas. Communities of color have long been subject to workplace discrimination, lack of health care, and have also been victim to redlining. Although COVID-19 does not discriminate on the basis of race, it does disproportionately affect those who were at a disadvantage in comparison to the rest of society prior to its arrival. The percentages of unemployment in communities of color were also astronomically high. To be more exact, “16.8 percent for Black workers, 15.1 percent for American Indian and Alaska Native workers, and 13 percent for Hispanic workers.”<sup>80</sup>



Prison systems were also highly affected by COVID-19. There has been a continuous disconnect between public health officials and prison health experts that has been highlighted as a result of COVID-19. This has cemented the understanding that “correctional health is public health.”<sup>81</sup> Due to the various people who travel to and from correctional facilities, it has become increasingly difficult to execute contact tracing.

<sup>79</sup> Florida, Richard, et al. "How Life in Our Cities Will Look after the Coronavirus Pandemic." *Foreign Policy*, foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/01/future-of-cities-urban-life-after-coronavirus-pandemic/.

<sup>80</sup> Maxwell, Conor, and Danyelle Solomon. "The Economic Fallout of the Coronavirus for People of Color." *Center for American Progress*, www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/04/14/483125/economic-fallout-coronavirus-people-color/.

<sup>81</sup> Jordan, Alison O., et al. *Addressing COVID-19 and Correctional Facilities: A Social Work Imperative*. June 2020, www.socialworkers.org/



It has also been found that those in correctional facilities have a high rate of pre-existing health problems. Likewise, prisons have a high population of those with mental illness, substance abuse issues, and people who come from unstable housing. These factors put them at higher risk of contracting infectious diseases. In correctional facilities, it is also quite difficult to keep up with basic sanitary needs as well as privacy due to the close quarters. By far, the largest issue that correctional facilities are currently facing is the ability to take the needed precautions to halt the spread of the virus.

Another population that has been facing the same issues as correctional facilities are assisted living institutions. Almost all of its population is at higher risk of contracting the virus as a result of their age and/or chronic conditions. Likewise, within these facilities, it is easier to spread the virus as a result of the close contact between residents and staff. On average, one in five assisted living residents were found to have the virus as opposed to the one in forty within the general public.<sup>82</sup> Since they are not federally regulated, it has proven difficult to collect data within the assisted living populations. This leaves states with the choice of whether or not to publish the data.<sup>83</sup> Only fourteen states are reporting on assisted living facilities and half of those states are reporting deaths among staff in these facilities. Due to limited amounts of data concerning assisted living, it has left many studies without the proper understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on assisted living facilities.<sup>84</sup>



Between our failures within the incarceration system and our inability to protect our elderly, COVID-19 has brought to light many of our society's deficiencies which need to be addressed.

<sup>82</sup> True, Sarah, et al. "Overlooked and Undercounted: The Growing Impact of COVID-19 on Assisted Living Facilities." KFF, 1 Sept. 2020, [www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/overlooked-and-undercounted-the-growing-impact-of-covid-19-on-assisted-living-facilities/](http://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/overlooked-and-undercounted-the-growing-impact-of-covid-19-on-assisted-living-facilities/).

<sup>83</sup> Yi, Sarah H., et al. "Characterization of COVID-19 in Assisted Living Facilities — 39 States, October 2020." CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 Nov. 2020, [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6946a3.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6946a3.htm).

<sup>84</sup> True, Sarah, et al. "Overlooked and Undercounted: The Growing Impact of COVID-19 on Assisted Living Facilities." KFF, 1 Sept. 2020, [www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/overlooked-and-undercounted-the-growing-impact-of-covid-19-on-assisted-living-facilities/](http://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/overlooked-and-undercounted-the-growing-impact-of-covid-19-on-assisted-living-facilities/).

## GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

Daniel Hohl

As COVID-19 ravages through the world, it is important to consider what societal characteristics allowed the disease to flourish, and how these same characteristics act as a warning of what awaits us with climate change. COVID-19, like climate change, is a global problem that cannot be solved by individual cities, states, countries, or continents. Both problems need to be combatted globally, as difficult as that has been.

COVID-19 was first discovered in October of 2019 and originates from the city of Wuhan in the eastern Hubei province of China. Scientists speculate that the disease was carried by bats, but how it jumped to people is unknown. Since then, COVID-19 has spread throughout the world, especially specific areas of Europe and the entirety of the United States. As the death toll surpasses 2 million people worldwide<sup>85</sup>, it is important to analyze how the disease has had such an impact globally, as well as specifically in the United States.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, distrust in science, specifically in the U.S., has resulted in a far less effective and efficient response. Throughout the last 10 months, elected officials have spread false information regarding how to respond to COVID. For instance, President Donald Trump claimed on Twitter at the start of the new year that the CDC was exaggerating the COVID death toll.<sup>86</sup> Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease expert, at first, did not recommend masks<sup>87</sup> (a comment that he would

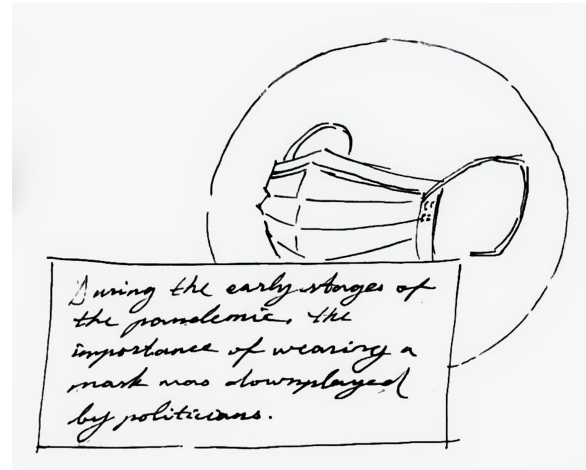
<sup>85</sup> Petterson, Henrik - Manley, Byron - Hernandez, Sergio. "Tracking Coronavirus' Global Spread." *CNN Health*  
<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-maps-and-cases/>.

<sup>86</sup> Kilander, Gustaf. "Fauci blast Trump's baseless tweets, accusing CDC of exaggerating Covid death toll: These are real people." *Independent*  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-fauci-covid-deaths-cdc-b1781698.html>

<sup>87</sup> Panetta, Grace, 'Fauci says he doesn't regret telling Americans not to wear masks at the beginning of the pandemic' *Business Insider*  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/fauci-doesnt-regret-advising-against-masks-early-in-pandemic-2020-7>

later correct). Senior government officials confused developing science with inaccuracy to try to undermine belief in scientific fact. Comments in this manner from trusted politicians played down the severity of this virus and the importance of doing something as simple as wearing a mask.

It was not only the Republicans. Democratic leader Andrew Cuomo, Governor of New York, stated on March 19th that he thinks “the fear is more contagious than the virus right now,”<sup>88</sup> which also downplayed the severity of the virus. This comment by Cuomo claimed an overreaction and an irrational fear of the virus on a day that saw 1,133 new cases.<sup>89</sup> Both political parties in the face of a rapidly developing situation communicated false information about COVID-19, and both parties have failed to create a powerful public health system. The two major parties have had little common ground in terms of guidelines, economic bailout, healthcare funding, and healthcare debt relief. Partisan stalemates from both sides have prevented any unity which in the end only hurts the American people, the economy, and prolong this pandemic.



Misinformation, spread and endorsed by politicians, reaches far beyond COVID-19. Climate change is as controversial between the two parties in regard to the cause, need for attention, and economic effect. For instance, in early 2019, Florida republican governor Ron DeSantis responded with “Next question” when asked if he believed the scientists who said humans cause climate change.<sup>90</sup> Like COVID-19, avoidance of an inevitable problem endangering humanity will only lead to making the situations worse. For instance, the 172 billion dollar Green New Deal, which focused on a net-zero greenhouse gas energy industry by 2040, failed in the senate 43-57 in the Spring of 2019.<sup>91</sup> The future of climate change is very dark when both political parties cannot agree to initiate major infrastructure renovation that is crucial to the economic and civilian safety of the United States.

The response to COVID-19 has been inconsistent in the United States, with the Federal government failing to provide a unified plan. As hotspots ricochet throughout the 50 states, it has become apparent that a unified response is essential for effective combat of COVID-19. The underlying cause of this inconsistent response is the lack of agreement between parties. This results in giving every state, city, and county the

<sup>88</sup> Lopez, German. “How New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo failed, then succeeded, on Covid-19.” *Vox* <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/21401242/andrew-cuomo-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-new-york>

<sup>89</sup> Unknown Author. “New York City Coronavirus Map and Case Count.” *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/nyregion/new-york-city-coronavirus-cases.html>

<sup>90</sup> Gross, Samantha, “Does Gov. Does DeSantis believe in climate change?” *Tampa Bay Times* <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2019/01/11/does-gov-desantis-believe-in-climate-change/>

<sup>91</sup> Carney, Jordain. - Green, Miranda. “Senate blocks Green New Deal” *The Hill* <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/435899-senate-blocks-green-new-deal>

ability to choose how they respond to COVID-19. The differing responses between right and left-wing states, and the cities and counties within those states, has led to a staggering amount of illness and death.<sup>92</sup>

South Korea led the way in showing the world how to respond to COVID-19 by proving that a divided government is far less effective than a unified one. Aggressive contact tracing starting in late February, and a month-long enforced lockdown, saw the virus contained by late March. Although the vast majority of the people respected the quarantine orders, there were, like every other country, people who didn't listen and refused to lockdown. However, the main difference between the nation's response was that Korea prohibited those who were exposed to the virus from leaving their homes. South Korea, like the United States, had political opposition to the COVID-19 response. Both the prime minister, Chung Sye-Kyun, who normalized not wearing a mask, and the President, who claimed the virus would disappear in February, opposed a national lockdown. Both of them changed their opinion as irrefutable evidence was shown to them.



South Korea's notable response to COVID-19 was built upon political and partisan unity amongst the issue as well as an enforced and scientifically founded response.<sup>93</sup> South Korea paved the way and showed the world how to contain this virus without a major civilian or economic shutdown. This proves how vital a unified government is during the situation the world faces now.

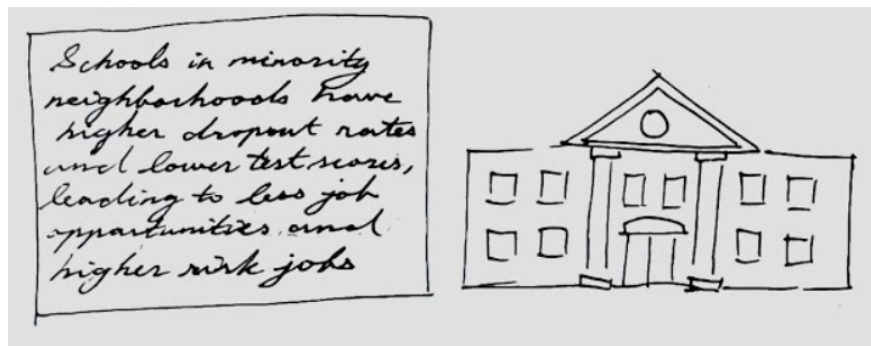
COVID-19 is reflective of systematic racism in the United States. Ethnic and religious minorities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 because of systematic racism in education, housing, and healthcare. Schools in minority neighborhoods have higher dropout rates and lower test scores than schools in white neighborhoods. Therefore, these communities tend to have students who are less likely to attend college and tend to receive fewer job opportunities. Jobs such as farms, factories, grocery stores, and public transportation are all disproportionately staffed by minorities.<sup>94</sup> These jobs have limited flexibility during COVID-19 and put workers at greater risk than jobs that require higher education. Crowded living spaces, as well as underfunded and lower quality hospitals, are common characteristics of minority neighborhoods that also contribute to the situation of COVID-19 amongst minorities.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Kilander, Gustaf. "Fauci blast Trump's baseless tweets, accusing CDC of exaggerating Covid death toll: These are real people." *Independent* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-fauci-covid-deaths-cdc-b1781698.html>

<sup>93</sup> Sang-hue, Choe. "South Korean Leader Said Coronavirus Would 'Disappear.' It Was a Costly Error." *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/27/world/asia/coronavirus-south-korea.html>

<sup>94</sup> Algreron, Austin. "African Americans are still concentrated in neighborhoods with high poverty and still lack full access to decent housing." *Economic Policy Institute* <https://www.epi.org/publication/african-americans-concentrated-neighborhoods/>

<sup>95</sup> Godoy, Maria. "What Do Coronavirus Racial Disparities Look Like State By State?" *NPR* <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2019/01/11/does-gov-desantis-believe-in-climate-change/>



America's inability to correct systematic racism is making a unified response to COVID-19 more difficult. This inequality will affect the efficiency and effectiveness of a response against global warming which is, in turn, disproportionately affecting minorities- specifically African Americans. A UN study on social inequality to climate change concluded that disadvantaged groups have increased exposure to climate hazards, increased susceptibility to damage caused by climate hazards, and decreased ability to cope with and recover from the damage.<sup>96</sup> Systematic inequalities affecting minorities cannot be overlooked when dealing with a national, regional, or global crisis because they limit the ability of a society to progress past a problem as a whole. Until racial inequalities end, a unified and effective response to COVID-19 and climate change will not only face more burdens, but will be less effective. COVID-19 has emphasized many ongoing and overlooked problems in America. Lack of agreement between parties is preventing a unified, effective, and scientific response to national and global problems, and racial inequality is keeping society from progressing past an issue as a whole. Individualism can and will serve no positive benefit with a global or national issue. A distrust in science fueled by controversial politicians running on outdated and factually incorrect beliefs has caused hundreds of thousands to die. These problems are all concerning given the requirement of a global, unified, and scientific response to the current and the future state of climate change.

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<sup>96</sup> Islam, Nazrul - Winke, John. "Climate Change and Social Inequality" *United Nations*  
[https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152\\_2017.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152_2017.pdf)

## WEALTH GAP

Millicent Honor

There has always been a prominent global wealth gap. Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the world's richest increased their wealth by 20% while many others on the verge of poverty faced its impacts due to unfair advantages associated with race, occupation, and knowledge of the economy.



COVID-19 has disproportionately affected minority groups across America because minorities face obstacles that white people do not. These inequalities affect their education levels which then result in lower high school completion rates and limited job opportunities and/or salary potential.<sup>97</sup> A large percentage of minority groups often find themselves working in positions of manual labour that require fewer skills and education such as salon workers, food preparation, and janitorial jobs. Many of these jobs were affected when the pandemic arrived and these people had to stop working as cities went into lockdowns. As a result, many lost income.<sup>98</sup>

In contrast, white people who received a better quality education than their minority counterparts are still more likely to be working jobs and positions that could be executed remotely. They find themselves with more disposable income because they cannot spend their money on plane tickets and meals out. While the more impoverished minorities work harder and get sick, the wealthier, predominantly white, can stay home and multiply their assets. Eight out of every ten lawyers in America are white. 72% of CEOs are white.<sup>99</sup> 68% of accountants are white.<sup>100</sup>

In contrast, 59.7% of taxi drivers are minorities and 42.7% of landscaping service workers are Hispanic or Latino.<sup>101</sup> In New York City, jobs like accountants worked remotely through COVID-19 and had a constant flow of income, while nail salons were closed from March 2020 until July 2020, which meant its workers were furloughed for about five months.<sup>102</sup> In Los Angeles, 29% of Black people claimed

<sup>97</sup> "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups." *CDC* [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fracial-ethnic-minorities.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fracial-ethnic-minorities.html)

<sup>98</sup> "Not everybody can work from home Black and Hispanic workers are much less likely to be able to telework" *Economic Policy Institute* <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-and-hispanic-workers-are-much-less-likely-to-be-able-to-work-from-home/>

<sup>99</sup> "Jones, Stacy. "White Men Account for 72% of Corporate Leadership at 16 of the Fortune 500 companies." *Fortune* <https://fortune.com/2017/06/09/white-men-senior-executives-fortune-500-companies-diversity-data/>

<sup>100</sup> "Accountants & Auditors" *Data USA* <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/accountants-auditors>

<sup>101</sup> "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics* <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>

<sup>102</sup> "All barber shops, nail salons ordered to close" *Crain's New York Business* <https://www.crainsnewyork.com/coronavirus/all-barbershops-nail-salons-ordered-close>

that COVID-19 seriously affected them to the point that they could not afford groceries and other necessities. In contrast, only 18% of white Americans claimed that they were affected by the virus.<sup>103</sup>



As global stock markets skyrocketed, investments in technological companies soared due to the high demand of computers for virtual environments.<sup>104</sup> Poor people could not invest in stock markets because they were forced to save their money to afford necessities. Additionally, due to inequalities in education, those with lower incomes were not familiar with the stock market.<sup>105</sup>

The closure of many corporations led to further widening the wealth gap. According to Forbes, “The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the demise of companies that were already in trouble.” Brooks Brothers closed 51 of their 250 locations. Cirque du Soleil laid off 3,480 workers. JCPenny (which was in \$4.2 billion in debt) closed its remaining 850 locations.<sup>106</sup> Due to the closing of these companies, millions of people lost their jobs.

As businesses closed, the field shrank and surviving corporations received more attention from consumers. Amazon flourished, as they had money reserved and there was a great demand for the products they sold and services they provided. During the pandemic, Amazon doubled its net profit which currently stands at \$5.2 billion this year. As a result, Jeff Bezos’s net worth went up by \$48 billion, further widening the wealth gap.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> “Lauter, David, “California’s Latinos, Black people feel the effects of the pandemic most acutely, polls find.” *Los Angeles Times* <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-08-06/racial-gaps-impact-coronavirus-latinos-blacks-poll>

<sup>104</sup> “Total billionaire wealth surges to record high of \$10.2 trillion during coronavirus crisis, research says.” *CNBC* <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/07/coronavirus-billionaire-wealth-hits-record-high-of-10point2-trillion.html>

<sup>105</sup> “The Real Reason Poor People Can’t Save” *Frugaling*, <https://frugaling.org/the-real-reason-poor-people-cant-save/#:~:text=By%20investing%20their%20funds%2C%20they,wealthy%20and%20poor%20individuals%20diverges>.

<sup>106</sup> “Coronavirus Bankruptcy Tracker: These Major Companies Are Failing Amid The Shutdown” *Forbes* <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hanktucker/2020/05/03/coronavirus-bankruptcy-tracker-these-major-companies-are-failing-amid-the-shutdown/?sh=64d5b02f3425>

<sup>107</sup> “Amazon Doubled Its Profits During A Pandemic” *The Verge* <https://www.theverge.com/2020/7/30/21348368/amazon-q2-2020-earnings-covid-19-coronavirus-jeff-bez>





Lastly, the wealth gap broadened due to the economic stimulus measures implemented by the government during COVID-19. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was introduced to support small businesses that face economic difficulty. The PPP's goal was to support small businesses with less than 500 employees and to keep the workers on payroll because they would be vulnerable during the pandemic. However, the money ended up going to larger firms because they had the resources to promptly apply for the program. As of April 16th, the \$350 billion PPP fund stopped accepting new applications because their funds ran out.<sup>108</sup> As a result, many of the small companies did not receive their loans and others did not receive enough to offer any financial assistance. The plan was ineffective, and the wealthy companies enjoyed government support while smaller companies became penurious and subsequently fired their workers. Due to this, 8 million Americans slipped into poverty.<sup>109</sup>

Ultimately, the wealth gap widened by 20% during the pandemic due to the unjust benefits corresponding with race, occupations, and the manipulating of the economy. The rich have capitalized on the pandemic as an opportunity while others struggled on the verge of poverty.

<sup>108</sup> “‘A Pandemic In A Pandemic’: Coronavirus Deepens Racial Gaps In America” *Reuters*  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-race-money-insight/a-pandemic-in-a-pandemic-coronavirus-deepens-racial-gaps-in-america-idUSKBN25G1EW>

<sup>109</sup> “Coronavirus: 8 Million More Americans In Poverty Due To the Pandemic” *Independent*  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/coronavirus-pandemic-us-poverty-unemployment-b1185566.html>



## HOW THE MEDIA HAS SPREAD MISINFORMATION SURROUNDING THE CORONAVIRUS

Benjamin Gazze

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COVID-19, which is most commonly referred to as the Coronavirus, is a dangerous virus that evolved into a global pandemic in 2020. It was first identified in Wuhan, China in 2019. As of today, the virus has infected 82.5 million people and has taken the lives of over 2 million people<sup>110</sup>. While many measures have been taken to stop the spread of the virus, and while vaccines are currently in the process of being distributed, the virus is still affecting many people all around the world, with misinformation holding a large part of the blame.

Information is critical in this society because it lends to our understanding of the world as well as aids our ability to gauge and solve problems. Misinformation, however, has the potential to cause harm or, in some cases, prove to be fatal. False information can be separated into two categories. The first is misinformation which is described by Harvard as “inadvertently drawing conclusions based on wrong or incomplete facts.” The second is disinformation which is described as the “deliberate spread of falsehoods to promote an agenda<sup>111</sup>.”

An example of disinformation and the destruction it may cause can be seen within “#Pizzagate”. This conspiracy gained traction during the 2016 presidential election and alleged that Hillary Clinton and various aides were involved in crimes which included child-trafficking. Eventually, this convinced a man by the name of Edgar M. Welch to storm a Washington-based pizza parlor wielding a military rifle and a handgun<sup>112</sup>. While this stands as an extreme example, similar misinformation can also be deadly during a pandemic such as COVID-19.

Social media has served to further and enhance the spread of false information because of the freedom users have to post and share content that may or may not be accurate. This can happen in many forms. Public figures using their platforms tend to speak frequently about subjects they may not be experts in. Social media influencers spread and amplify misinformation. Activists may exploit the delicate emotions of victims and provide disinformation as the cause of their pain. While many social media platforms, such as Facebook, have been taking steps to remove information which has been identified as false, the central hook for social media platforms revolves around the user-freedom-interface provided by large companies. This complicates the process of removing false information.

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<sup>110</sup> Petterson, Henrik - Manley, Byron - Hernandez, Sergio. “Tracking Coronavirus’ Global Spread.” *CNN Health* <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-maps-and-cases/>.

<sup>111</sup> Igoe, Kathrine. “Establishing the Truth: Vaccines, Social Media, and the Spread of Misinformation.” *Harvard* <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ecpe/vaccines-social-media-spread-misinformation/>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Aisch, Gregor - Huang, Jon - Kang, Cecilia. “Dissecting the #pizzagate Conspiracy Theories.” *NYT* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/10/business/media/pizzagate.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

In the digital age, information can be accessed by a wide audience. The act of sharing a website or article to one or many social media sites allows others to see and believe the information that the article provides. In the context of the current pandemic, because there are varied ways as to how governments and health agencies are combatting the virus, this creates an information vacuum in which misinformation and rumors can spread easily.

Over the last few months, there have been 2,311 reports of rumors, stigma, and conspiracy theories published in 25 languages from 87 countries surrounding the pandemic<sup>113</sup>. This is not including the lesser known misinformation and future misinformation that may affect audiences based on their race, location, gender, or ones based on racist or sexist ideals.

**2,311 REPORTS**  
of rumors, stigma, and  
conspiracy theories  
from **87** countries  
surrounding the pandemic

One well-known example of misinformation surrounding COVID-19 challenges the effectiveness of masks. When we breathe, we emit microscopic droplets, called aerosols, which can carry COVID-19. The function of a mask is to stop these particles from reaching others, especially when an individual coughs or sneezes<sup>114</sup>. However, many conspiracy theories claim that masks are harmful or do not function correctly. One popular theory states that COVID-19 particles can enter through the holes in a mask, while oxygen particles cannot. An example of this theory can be seen in a town hall that was open to residents of Palm Beach County, Florida. During the town hall, one representative often referred to masks as items that restrict “God’s wonderful breathing system.”

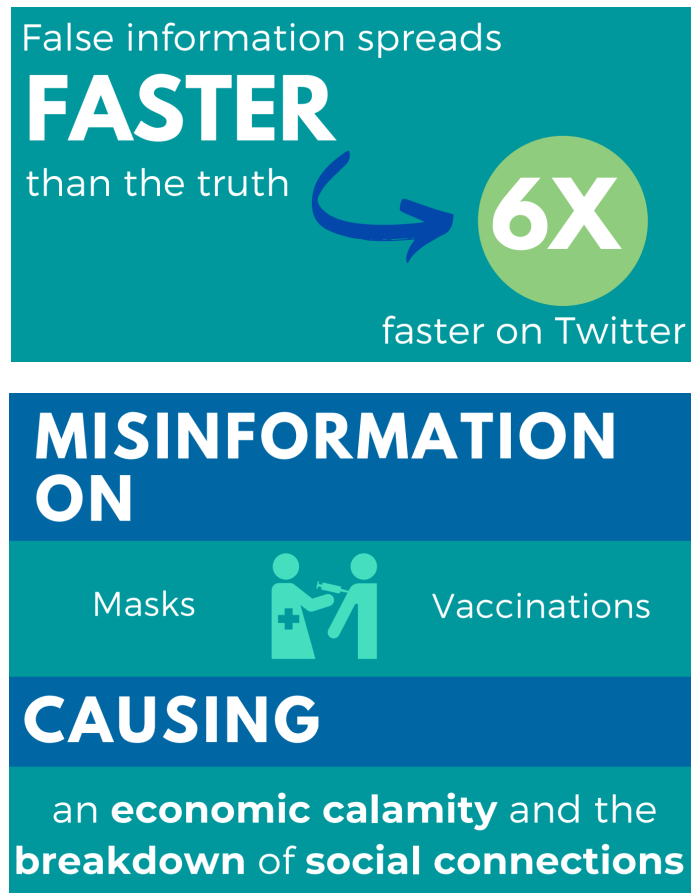
In response to the serious allegations by those present at this town hall, Dr. Sam Fahmy, a chief medical officer at Boca Raton Regional Hospital, stated that masks are scientifically proven to prevent infections and transmissions between a person who is sick and another (person)<sup>115</sup>. Although Dr. Fahmy’s words are grounded in fact, the public backlash is evidence of the influence of social media. These theories and false beliefs are consequences of the “mixed messages” coming from governments and the abundance of misinformation spread by social media and social media outlets, says Dan Romer, a COVID-19 researcher.

Many studies into social media algorithms have proven false information to spread many times faster than the truth. Fake news reportedly travels six times faster on Twitter; Facebook is even faster.<sup>6</sup> Many factors lead to the creation and acceptance of misinformation theories such as shifting and conflicting public health recommendations, the line between politics and science blurring, economic calamity, and the breakdown of social connections. These factors may lead to some individuals feeling depressed or overly hopeful (about the virus).

<sup>113</sup> Bergman, Cory - Stampher, Jilian. “Verified.” *Verified*. <https://content.shareverified.com/en/>.

<sup>114</sup> Author Unknown. “Verified.” *Verified*. <https://content.shareverified.com/en/>.

<sup>115</sup> Fahmy, Sam. “Angry Residents Erupt at Meeting Over New Mask Rule.” *CNN Politics*. <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/06/24/mask-mandate-florida-anger-erupts-coronavirus-vpx.cnn>



Another popular topic surrounding, not only the Coronavirus but many other diseases, is vaccination. Anti-vaccination beliefs originate from the earlier days of vaccine creation. In 1796, Edward Jenner showed that he could protect a child from smallpox by infecting him with a small dose of cowpox, a similar but less deadly disease of the same time period. His discovery, however, was quickly met with opposition due to the seemingly harsh methods by which the problem was solved- this being infecting the individual with another disease. The use of current anti-vaccination propaganda still keeps to this as its core idea<sup>116</sup>. Overall, these theories tend to ignore the serious threats posed by the disease.

The Wellcome Trust, a British research charity, published a statistical analysis based on a sample size of 140,000 people in over 140 countries in 2019. The survey asked three simple questions about vaccination involving the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines, specifically in the context of children. Based on the information, 92% of respondents believed that vaccines were important and only 7% of respondents believed that vaccines were not safe or may cause side-effects potentially worse than the benefits. While this may seem like a small number, when compared to the world population, over 1.1 billion

<sup>116</sup> Author Unknown. "Verified." *Verified*. <https://content.shareverified.com/en/>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

people are unsure of the safety of vaccines. In contrast, only 5% of respondents disagreed with the statement “Vaccines are ineffective” meaning that some believed vaccines to be effective but not necessary<sup>117</sup>.

While false information in social media is a global issue, there are many ways in which an individual can influence change within their communities. By being aware of the possible threat of misinformation, an individual can then educate those close to them by using accurate information and highlighting the false information communities might be circulating.

Verified, a United Nations based organization, has provided multiple ways to check a websites’ reliability:

- First understand the goals and motives of the publisher, which can be seen on the “about” page of the site.
- Next check to see if the article cited sources, and if so, check them to make sure they are reliable. Also, check the date, as recent articles will be more trustworthy due to the fact they may have more information about the topic.
- Then check for poor grammar and spelling mistakes, as this a major red flag of an unreliable website.
- Finally, a reputable website will often put care into the aesthetic side of the site. Bad formatting, or ads blocking the page, often mean the site is not reliable<sup>118</sup>.

It is important to understand and combat false information, whether it be (mis) or (dis) information, on an individual level. This will then allow one to educate those around them and eventually spread these scientific proofs on a larger scale. Thus it is important to pause and #TAKECAREBEFOREYOUSHAARE, as is stated by Verified.

**#TAKECAREBEFOREYOUSHAARE**

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<sup>117</sup> Ritchie, Hannah - Vanderslott, Samantha. “How Many People Support Vaccination Around the World.” *OurWorldInData*. <https://ourworldindata.org/support-for-vaccination>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.

<sup>118</sup> Verified. “Verified.” *Verified*. <https://content.shareverified.com/en/>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

# IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN ON CLIMATE CHANGE

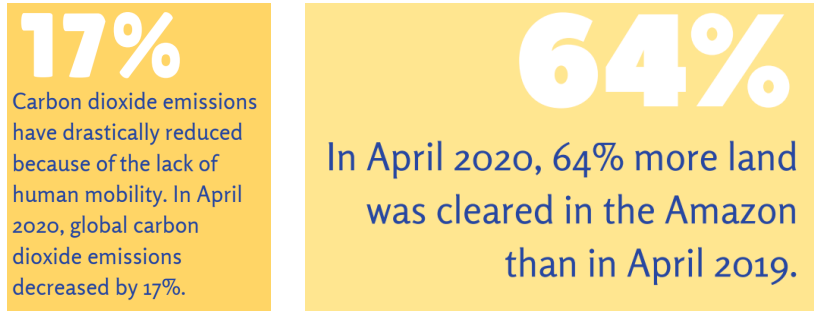
Nina Briefel

In the early spring of 2020, when daily life abruptly came to a halt for several months due to COVID-19, researchers began to notice significant changes related to the climate. Climate change is the most threatening crisis to our planet and is becoming more drastic every year. This year, however, the climate crisis has been overshadowed by COVID-19 because the main topic on most people's mind has been the virus. Nevertheless, scientists and citizens alike have observed both positive and negative impacts of the pandemic on the climate.



While carbon dioxide emissions have been drastically reduced due to the lack of human mobility (in April 2020, global carbon dioxide emissions decreased by 17%), areas such as the Amazon rainforest are left unguarded. Illegal loggers have been taking advantage of this lack of human activity by accelerating the destruction of large amounts of the Amazon rainforest. In April 2020, 64% more land was cleared in the Amazon than in April 2019. To put that into perspective, 2019 was the biggest year for deforestation in a decade due to weak government regulations. In addition, Jair Bolsonaro, the President of Brazil, supports policies of land exploitation and deforestation. He prioritizes supporting big businesses and land exploitations over environmental protection which, in turn, directly leads to illegal loggers functioning without sanctions from the government.<sup>119</sup> This large amount of lumber cut down is extremely harmful for animals and humans, not only in Brazil, but all over the world. The Amazon is our largest source of oxygen, and due to COVID-19, it is being destroyed at an even faster rate than ever before.

<sup>119</sup> Gardiner, Beth. "Why COVID-19 Will End Up Harming the Environment" *National Geographic*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/#close>.



As of the end of June 2020, studies showed that the carbon dioxide levels were only 5% lower than in June 2019.<sup>120</sup> The reason why the carbon levels were higher than expected is because restrictions were lifted around mid-May and citizens slowly started returning to normal life. Planes started flying more regularly, companies returned to consuming energy, and the roads became more congested- all factors that negatively impact global emissions. However, it is vital to note that emissions did drop significantly when restrictions for public gatherings were in effect, showing that it is possible to reduce emissions if the use of planes, ships, cars, and fuel is limited.

The strict lockdown has provided improved air quality worldwide, especially in China, India, Italy, and Spain. According to Marshall Burke from the Department of Earth System Science at Stanford University, just two months of reduced air pollution has saved the lives of 4,000 children under the age of 5 and 73,000 adults over the age of 70 in China. NASA's satellite images have shown that the pollution in China had dropped by 25% in four weeks of the country's lockdown.<sup>121</sup> In addition, photographs taken in New Delhi, India, one of the most polluted cities in the world, showed astonishing changes. Prior to COVID-19 and the lockdown, the air in New Delhi was constantly hazy, foggy, and grey. However, after a few months of strict lockdown, the sky was blue and the air was clearer. This was due to the significant reduction in the use of cars- one of the main polluters in New Delhi.<sup>122</sup> Worldwide, one of the biggest reasons for improved air quality is due to the reduced use of transportation such as planes, cars, and boats. These methods of transportation release large amounts of carbon dioxide into the air, and during the lockdown, these transportations were minimized.

Furthermore, because of the travel ban that was implemented in many countries, the lockdown had caused many planned business and leisure trips to be cancelled. Due to the reduction of plane and ship exhaust, not only has air quality improved, but so has water quality. For example, in Venice, Italy, the canals cleared up tremendously during the months where life was most stagnant. This allowed for the

<sup>120</sup> Gardiner, Beth. "Why COVID-19 Will End Up Harming the Environment" *National Geographic*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/#close>. Accessed 10 January. 2021

<sup>121</sup> Pareja Jauregui, Jason. "What is the effect of COVID-19 on Climate Change?" *One Young World*, <https://www.oneyoungworld.com/blog/what-effect-covid-19-climate-change>.

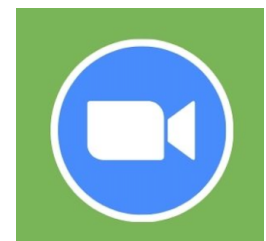
<sup>122</sup> Shrangi, Vatsala. "Air pollution dipped by 79% during lockdown in Delhi, on rise again" *Hindustan Times*, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/air-pollution-dipped-by-79-during-lockdown-in-delhi-on-rise-again/story/iYzv36wFsqgnxQ7EdRWsJ.html>.

sediment in the canals to settle and clear. Residents in Venice even noticed fish starting to appear in the cleaner waters, something they had not seen in many years.<sup>123</sup> In addition, the water quality around Krabi Island in Thailand has noticeably improved due to decreased tourism. Local divers have recorded an incredible increase of the fish population and a swift recovery of coral reefs. Prior to COVID-19, the recorded number of tourists that traveled to Thailand last season was around 40 million. Now, there is little to none, allowing the oceans to become cleaner, sea life to prosper, and the general wellbeing of the ecosystem there to improve.<sup>124</sup>



Although COVID-19 has been extremely hard on people all over the world, it has helped foreshadow what can be done in the coming years to help combat the climate crisis. This decade needs to be committed to pushing more innovative ideas to address climate change. People are discovering creative and innovative ways to produce and use sustainable items. For example, many restaurants have altered their menus and changed them into QR barcodes on the table. The guests scan the barcode with a phone and the menu pops up electronically. This helps the restaurants monitor and contain contamination of the virus because they are not directly handing out menus. This practice also eliminates hundreds of physical menus, most of which are usually made of paper or laminated plastic. The introduction of outdoor dining has been one of the success stories of COVID-19 with New York City announcing that outdoor dining will now become a permanent feature of city life.<sup>125</sup>

Companies have increased their use of remote technology such as video conferencing through Zoom and other IT platforms. As a result, they have realized they no longer need to send their staff across the world to participate in meetings and conferences. This may be a lasting impact of COVID-19, because in the future, there will be less of a need to travel for conferences by plane. The use of remote technology is here to stay.



<sup>123</sup> "Coronavirus: Venice canals clearer after lockdown." *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-51943104>.

<sup>124</sup> "Das Meer Lebt Wieder: Thailands Natur Erholt Sich Von Tourismus." *SRF*. [https://www.srf.ch/news/international/keine-touristen-wegen-corona-das-meer-lebt-wieder-thailands-natur-erholt-sich-von-tourismus?wt\\_mc\\_o=srf.share.app.srf-app.sms](https://www.srf.ch/news/international/keine-touristen-wegen-corona-das-meer-lebt-wieder-thailands-natur-erholt-sich-von-tourismus?wt_mc_o=srf.share.app.srf-app.sms).

<sup>125</sup> McEvoy, Jemima. "NYC Opens Outdoor Shopping After Success Of Outdoor Dining." *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/10/28/nyc-opens-outdoor-shopping-program-after-success-of-outdoor-dining/?sh=2f267c9c6f4>.

Transportation has also been a huge topic of discussion as cities begin to reopen. The use of bicycles has significantly increased, including electric bikes, because people are reluctant to go on crowded subways or buses. Cities are making tremendous efforts to make the roads more bicycle-safe, with more dedicated bicycle lanes and increased use of bike rentals such as Citi Bikes in New York City. The electric bike industry has done very well during COVID-19 because many people are investing in an E-Bike as a safer option to travel to work.<sup>126</sup>

In conclusion, as countries begin to distribute vaccines and begin recovering from the virus, these advances need to become a pathway to creating a more sustainable economy that provides jobs based on using renewable energy such as solar and wind power. Cities will also have to rethink how people get around by investing in greener solutions. Lockdown in the spring of 2020 has shown that cleaning the air and the water is possible. Tourism is a huge factor, and monitoring and reinventing tourism to make it more sustainable will be crucial to keep this momentum going. COVID-19 has created tremendous suffering and extensive damage worldwide. However, citizens can take this opportunity to transform their lifestyles and introduce healthier and greener options into their daily lives. The time may be ripe for us all to make significant changes to the way we live our lives. We need to protect the environment before it is too late.

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<sup>126</sup> Hu, Winnie. "A Surge in Biking to Avoid Crowded Trains in NYC." *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/nyregion/coronavirus-nyc-bike-commute.html> .



## AFTERWORD

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COVID-19, aside from having turned our past year on its head, will undoubtedly impact our future as well. Lives and events all around the world have been changed, and this conference is no different. COVID has pushed us into the technological era like never before, and instead of sitting in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations, we are gathering over zoom to conduct this conference. In order to inform and expand your outlooks upon an issue that is now at the core of all our lives, the UNIS-UN Executive Committee invited experts to address the ever-relevant issues and questions that have defined our year enduring the effects of COVID-19; From those surrounding the development of health guidelines and vaccines, to the viable solutions and rehabilitation attempts needed for the crises that extend the pandemic.

The goal of this Working Paper and this year's conference is to inform individuals on the immediate and lasting impacts of COVID-19 globally in respect to the economy, politics, environment, and social life. The hope is that after processing this knowledge, you can form your own opinions and inquire solutions for these ongoing issues.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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### **Writers**

Temisola Akinwande  
 Sydney Berna  
 Nina Briefel  
 Benjamin Gazze  
 Daniel Hohl  
 Millicent Honor  
 Maya Mukherjee  
 Nina Rohde  
 Mikayla Pyke-Sharpe  
 Advait Sunil  
 Xuan Lan Tran  
 Olivia Tyndale

### **Designers**

Lola Martin-Consuegra  
 Zeran Fei  
 Yusuke Kamimura  
 Henry Kim  
 Aphrodite Kuepper  
 Anisha Kurukulasuriya  
 Elektra Licharz  
 Raymond Liu  
 Joseph Puglisi  
 Maddy Smith  
 Xuan Lan Tran  
 Julie Wang  
 Sijia Zhong

### **Editing Committee**

Inès Matoto  
 Max Michael  
 Lara Popovic

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## UNIS-UN CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Eva Lifsec + Jack Hochman

Anna Bianco  
Claudia Campi  
Antoine Casado  
Sarah Chaves  
Vansh Chhibbar  
Niki Corona

Xudong He  
Inès Matoto  
Max Michael  
Josie Murmann  
Shaibya Neupane  
Lara Popovic

Maddy Smith  
Shayla Smith  
Kristian Suh  
Carlos Tavares  
Felipe Tavares  
Jasmijn Teunissen

**Faculty Advisors:** Zakaria Baha, Michelle Fredj-Bertrand, and Alcy Leyva

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Zakaria Baha: *Director of Student Activities*  
 Michelle Fredj-Bertrand: *Director of School Events*  
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 Alcy Leyva: *English Teacher*  
 Carlos Mojica: *Director of IT*  
 Paco Barba Morán: *Director of Modern Languages*  
 Brandon Olfir: *Information Technology Systems Assistant*  
 Ed Peppe: *Director of Buildings and Grounds*  
 Burcu Polatbora: *Administrative Assistant of Student Activities*  
 Vera Tatel: *Alumni Associate*  
 Kenya Washington: *Vice Principal of the Tutorial House*

FLIK Dining Services  
 UN Webcast: Andreas Damianou  
 UN Web TV: Valerie Justin  
 United Nations Federal Credit Union  
 UNIS Business Office  
 UNIS Maintenance Staff  
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 UNIS Modern Language Department  
 UNIS Parent Association  
 UNIS Security Staff  
 UNIS Students  
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