

# The Effects of COVID-19 and How to Prepare for the Future

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The disease caused by the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, is the most significant example of globalization. It has changed the world and permeated all aspects of life. It has also made people more aware that their lives are tied to those of others around the world, from economic well-being to health and hygiene. All other aspects of life are suspended.

COVID-19's harm to global health and economics now trumps all other problems. The media hardly reports on the dire situations in Syria, Yemen, and other conflict hot spots. Challenges such as migration do not make the front pages.

The world has a new dichotomy, which some call a trade-off. The balance between bolstering health and the economy has changed the discussion between freedom and security, although they are also closely related. Promoting health is a priority, but the economy is suffering on a massive scale, making it more difficult to make appropriate policy decisions. However, the safety and health of people should not disrupt their freedom. They need to know that certain precautions are only temporary.

Even when this pandemic is brought under control, the control will likely be disparate, changing from country to country. This unevenness could further complicate national economies because those that have contained the virus will hesitate to open their borders—China's COVID-19 response being an excellent example. Therefore, the financial suffering of millions could continue.

## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

*Much about COVID-19 remains unknown.* What is known about COVID-19 is that it spreads more quickly and expansively than other similar diseases. No consensus has been reached on recommendations for containment. Despite World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, each country has taken its own independent measures. National responses include implementing quarantines, closing borders, preventing international transportation, and delaying or cancelling sport and cultural events, among others. Yet these policies failed to prevent the number of cases and deaths from increasing.

*Global solidarity is lacking.* Countries, states, cities, and even small communities have locked down. Each nation is on its own. Cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity have melted away in the face of local concerns. The world has witnessed a breakdown of support within the European Union and even among the states of the United States. Most emerging and developing countries have been left to fend for themselves.

*National and international responses have been inadequate.* The pandemic has demonstrated that national and international preventive measures as well as cooperation are wanting. Previously, when a

crisis struck, the United States and other Western countries took the lead in finding a way out. No semblance of such action is evident now. International institutions and national governments have failed colossally. The absence of global leadership in the face of a worldwide pandemic is difficult to fathom. International and regional organizations and forums such as the Group of Seven, Group of Twenty, or the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have all failed to rise to the challenge.

International guidance lacked because many national governments either minimized or outright rejected the crisis. Even when the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, denial about the real threat continued in several of the world's most powerful countries. Many leaders thought they could prevail over the virus given their geography, and experts struggled to convince them otherwise. Even when cases and deaths piled up, many governments were still reluctant to believe the severity and contagiousness of the virus. Ignorance is not bliss; it is dangerous.

*Transparency has been absent.* Because facts are being suppressed, wild assertions and outright false and misleading news are spreading in some countries, causing panic and making preventive measures ineffective. Disagreements on how to contain and treat the virus have only increased confusion in preventing further spread. Disinformation campaigns on social media further exploit the situation and increase disorientation.

*Economic uncertainty is growing.* The aviation sector was the first to be damaged by the pandemic, and after it, tourism, sports, and cultural events. Closed borders hindered commerce. A chain reaction resulted in a downward spiral in almost all economic categories. Unemployment rose everywhere. Economic recovery will require an increased state role to redress suffering. International financial institutions will be essential to funding these efforts.

*Racism and xenophobia are on the rise.* As the virus spread from China, racist and xenophobic attitudes toward people of Asian descent and appearance have been prevalent in other countries. Many have been ostracized after being accused as the originators of the pandemic.

*Working and studying remotely could become a staple in everyone's lives.* Physical workplaces could shrink and, as a result, savings could develop. However, employees' rights have to be protected in these new circumstances. This crisis is pushing the digital economy into the forefront, which produces its own challenges.

*The world needs leaders and trust in science.* Every global crisis can produce great leaders who are honest and unafraid to tell the truth. This is exactly what the world needs when expertise has been sidelined by disinformation on social media. If convergence in national preventive policies today increases, it is because of the hard truths the pandemic has wrought. Science is making a comeback. Climate change mitigation is a silver lining. As lockdowns spread worldwide, travel is restricted and industries are shutting down or adapting to new consumption behaviors, reducing human harm to the environment.

## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

COVID-19 is wreaking havoc across the globe, and this outbreak is the shape of things to come. Other natural or manmade disasters will occur in the future and have local, regional, and global repercussions.

Assuming a goal of [health for everyone](#), steps need to be taken to increase cooperation between national and international health agencies. The following measures should be taken to help resolve the current pandemic.

*Governments should implement substantial targeted financial market measures.* National governments need to shift their economies to war footing. National and international leaders should concentrate on providing the necessary tools for health workers. New budgets should be immediately drawn up to support the industries that have economically suffered the most, particularly small and medium-sized industries, which are the most vulnerable. The liberal world economy could need to make way for more interventionist policies.

*Countries need to start preparing without delay for the next disaster.* Steps should be considered for mitigating climate change and other possible disasters as well as for global health issues, particularly on how to explain the reasoning for these measures to the public. The world's future will depend on how nations cooperate globally, synchronize efforts, and maximize potential.

*Governments and international institutions should emphasize disaster education programs.* To prevent panic or complacency, education should start at an early age to inform how to respond and act during disasters. Society should be kept abreast of preparations and ready to deal with any calamity. Proper education in hygiene and personal behavior as well as common sense will be crucial for humanity's survival. Knowledge should be respected.

*Governments should be transparent and take responsibility for their actions.* Once the pandemic is under control, a general assessment and self-criticism on what took place will be needed. China has a responsibility to fully explain the virus's origin and why measures were delayed. It has made efforts to provide data and assistance to several countries, but if it wants to restore its global image, it should be completely transparent. Two contagious diseases have now emerged from China in less than two decades. It needs to change its habits and enforce more stringent hygiene measures.

Global and national health authorities need to act responsibly and transparently and demonstrate that they are on top of matters to establish trust. COVID-19 cases and deaths should not be hidden. Relying on experts would make measures taken more credible. Medical suppliers and social media users also need to act responsibly to prevent widespread abuse of the vulnerable in this crisis.

*The United Nations and WHO should reestablish guidelines on how to approach future disasters.* After the pandemic subsides, the different experiences of each country need to be consolidated and evaluated to form a comprehensive set of lessons learned. Institutions such as the United Nations and WHO should help in this approach to future disasters, whether natural or manmade.

The UN General Assembly should organize a special session on how to manage global disasters and should establish a process with future surveillance and monitoring policies to take swift, coordinated action on any future pandemic. International financial institutions should prepare emergency economic packages to support countries that have suffered the most. Political differences need to be overcome, especially those between the biggest economies.

Changes in everyone's lives, permanent or not, will depend on how long the crisis lasts. Solidarity, transparency, and international collaboration are the most essential elements to overcoming adversities. Relying on science is absolutely necessary. National and global leaders need to heed warnings from experts. A new era is just beginning and the sooner the world is ready for the next disaster, the quicker it will be able to overcome it. Otherwise, the next crisis will rearrange everyone's lives just as COVID-19 is doing now.