

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

[Jamie Ducharme](#)

What Protests Can Teach Us About COVID-19

Protests across the country following the police killing of George Floyd sparked long-overdue conversations about racial justice. But a subtext of fear ran beneath those discussions: What if, by doing this important work, protesters were inadvertently spreading disease and worsening the coronavirus pandemic?

At least so far, it seems those fears haven't come to pass. Many cities that saw major protests, including New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, have not yet seen related spikes in COVID-19 cases, TIME's Tara Law reports. And in areas that specifically set out to test protesters for the virus, like Seattle, Minnesota and Massachusetts, demonstrators have not tested positive at significantly higher rates than the general population. It will take some time for data to fully reflect how protests influenced viral spread, but the early evidence is encouraging.

That's not only good news for public health—it also offers a valuable lesson about how COVID-19 spreads and, just as importantly, how it doesn't.

Experts have said for months that [socializing](#) is probably safest outdoors, especially while wearing a mask and maintaining physical distance. The protests seem to be evidence of that concept. Reports across the country suggested most protesters wore masks and maintained as much distance as possible, which seems to have helped keep disease transmission rates down. Meanwhile, law enforcement officials—who were widely [criticized](#) for failing to wear masks during protests—have tested positive for COVID-19 in cities such as Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, Law reports. Furthermore, experts told Law that in states where the disease is surging right now, spikes seem to be related to the consequences of reopening and returning to indoor environments like bars and restaurants, not protesting.

To be clear, no part of the country is out of the woods yet. With the virus still circulating, the safest amount of in-person interaction is none. But if you decide to take the risk, early insights from the protests may be a valuable guide. “If you're going to gather, being further apart is better than being stuck close together, being masked is better than being unmasked, and being outside is better than being inside,” University of Washington epidemiologist Janet Baseman told Law.

[Read more here.](#)

TODAY'S CORONAVIRUS OUTLOOK

The Global Situation

More than 10.3 million people around the world had been sickened by COVID-19 as of 4 AM eastern time this morning, and more than 505,500 people had died.

Here is every country with over 200,000 confirmed cases:

World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [had strong words yesterday](#) for countries that claim not to have the infrastructure necessary to carry out COVID-19 contact tracing, which can help identify people who are at risk of transmitting the virus. “If contact tracing helps you to win the fight, you do it,” Tedros said. “If any country is saying contact tracing is difficult, it is a lame excuse.”

The European Union [today announced](#) that travelers from more than a dozen countries will be allowed to resume European tourism as of tomorrow—but the U.S. is not one of them, as disease transmission rates in the country remain too high.

The back and forth over hydroxychloroquine continues. Many trials studying the anti-malarial drug, which some experts hoped could treat COVID-19, have been paused due to safety and efficacy concerns. But today, [British regulators allowed researchers](#) to restart a hydroxychloroquine trial.

The Situation in the U.S.

Nearly 2.6 million people in the U.S. had been infected with COVID-19 as of 4 AM eastern time this morning, and more than 126,000 had died.

On June 28, there were 41,556 new cases and 337 new deaths confirmed in the U.S.

More and more states are backtracking on their reopening plans due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, for example, [announced yesterday](#) that bars, gyms, movie theaters and water parks will be closed statewide for at least 30 days. States like Arizona, which is now experiencing one of the country’s worst outbreaks, are serving as cautionary tales for areas in better shape. New York, which has largely gotten its outbreak under control after being the country’s coronavirus epicenter all spring, may delay the return of indoor dining to avoid a resurgence. Governor Andrew Cuomo [is expected](#) to announce a decision on that tomorrow.

Leaders in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut have broadened new traveler quarantine rules meant to reduce the threat of new outbreaks sparked by people entering their states from hard-hit areas. [Travelers from 16 states](#), mostly in the South and West, are now directed to quarantine for two weeks upon arrival in the Tri-State area.

In the middle of a raging debate over the ethics and efficacy of masks, [Goldman Sachs offered](#) another compelling reason to wear them. In addition to slashing rates of infection, the banking and financial services firm

argues a national mask mandate could spare the country from a 5% drop in gross domestic product by preventing additional lockdowns.

Republican Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee [also joined the mask conversation](#) today, arguing that “the stakes are too high” for mask-wearing to become a political issue. However, research shows that’s already happening; Democrats are [more likely](#) to favor mandatory mask-wearing indoors, for instance.

In a [somewhat surprising statement](#), the American Academy of Pediatrics said schools should aim to have kids back in the classroom (with safety precautions) this fall, even with the continued threat of COVID-19. “The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020,” the AAP wrote, citing social isolation, food insecurity and abuse.

All numbers unless otherwise specified are from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, and are accurate as of June 30, 4 AM eastern time. To see larger, interactive versions of these maps and charts, [click here](#).

WHAT ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Coronavirus Plus Influenza Could Make for a Devastating Fall and Winter

U.S. public health officials are already anticipating a brutal fall and winter. Dr. Robert Redfield, the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said during a TIME 100 Talks yesterday that simultaneous spread of COVID-19 and the flu could mean even higher rates of hospitalization and death. [Read more here.](#)

Why Are We Still Fighting About Masks?

Masks are a cheap, accessible and easy way to reduce the risk of spreading and catching COVID-19. So why are they so controversial? [Read more here.](#)

The Gift Donald Trump Is Handing to Joe Biden

Even in the middle of a historic pandemic, President Donald Trump is trying to chip away at the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. TIME’s Abigail Abrams and Charlotte Alter explain why that could be a very good thing for Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden. [Read more here.](#)

What Makes a Super Spreader?

Why do some people infect dozens of others with coronavirus, while some sick individuals spread the disease to no one at all? Science writer Carl Zimmer digs into that question for the *New York Times*. [Read more here.](#)

The Lucky Fans Who Get to Watch Baseball Live

When Major League Baseball gets started again, it will be without spectators in the stands. But the *Wall Street Journal* found a few lucky fans with a unique vantage point: their own apartments, which overlook stadiums. [Read more here.](#)

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Today's newsletter was written by Jamie Ducharme and edited by Alex Fitzpatrick.
