



Can 66 COVID-19 Reports Make a Difference?

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The COVID-19 pandemic has already changed our world. And it is still underway, expected to continue over several years—or longer. Despite some 165 vaccines currently in accelerated development or in early trials, a quick tech fix is unlikely, especially for all nations.

Some countries have been cautiously re-opening after lockdown, but still finding hotspots. Other countries are facing a sharp upswing in infections, e.g. Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Pakistan, and especially India. In the US, new infections were at a plateau of 40,000 new cases and about 1000 deaths per day in mid-September, nearly twice the number of deaths per week as the total deaths from the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001. Both the US and Europe are now bracing for a new wave of Fall infections.

Public health experts have already issued several dozen brief reports on how local, state, and national governments can best deal with the crisis. Economists, political scientists, and journalists are thinking about the profound impact on security and sustainability of communities, schools and colleges, hospitals, industries (food, airlines, travel), small business (notably restaurants), state and local governments, and international relations. Many individuals are distressed not only by hospitalization and loss of loved ones, but by unemployment, uncertainty, hunger, and quarantined confinement. US scientists now have “a pervasive sense of sadness and exhaustion” (*New York Times*, 30 July, p1). The *Times* announced that in the US “Virus Wipes Out 5 Years of Economic Growth” (31 July, p1), and that Latin America has been “plunged... into the deepest recession in its history” (30 July, A11).

SSG Report on COVID Reports. *The Security & Sustainability Guide* is compiling a listing of online COVID-relevant reports, as well as other new evidence-based reports by scientists and other experts on all aspects of security and sustainability. See <https://securesustain.org/covid-19-reports/> for the Oct 10 version that briefly annotates 66 reports, while providing links to the original documents and longer “Read More” annotation for many. More 2020 reports have yet to be identified, and more will be issued, notably by the newly formed *Lancet COVID-19 Commission*. Most of the 66 reports were published by US-based organizations, although many of them may offer useful guidance for many countries. Readers of this essay are encouraged to provide information on relevant and noteworthy reports from other countries.

All COVID reports are free online, and are generally brief and clearly written. Publishers include several UN agencies, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the University of Minnesota (CIDRAP), the Columbia University

Earth Institute (NCDP), the Harvard Global Health Institute, etc. (see Organization Index, attached).

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General Topics. The SSG “report on reports” begins with four daily data updates on cases and deaths in countries and US states. This is followed by seven items providing scenarios on the course of the virus and impacts on the world and business, including three scenarios on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. WAAS Fellow Jerome Glenn *et al.* have prepared three extensive US COVID scenarios to Jan 2022 (Oct 2020, 145p) for the American Red Cross (www.millennium-project.org/covid-19). General overviews include a March statement by 43 UN organizations on responding to COVID impacts, an April COVID strategy update from WHO, and 13 reports on the difficult task of reopening societies from lockdown, including a notable 190-page “Roadmap to Recovery” by some 100 scholars from eight Australian universities.

Specialized Topics. Items include crisis leadership for the pandemic, effective crisis communication, strategic testing, a tailored approach to contact tracing, a strategic plan for COVID research, a framework for early vaccine allocation and distribution, the increasing depth and breadth of hunger due to COVID, how pandemics increase inequalities for women and girls, the impact of COVID on US workers (up to a third of jobs may be vulnerable), the economic impact in Sub-Saharan Africa, the EC’s proposed major recovery plan for Europe, the C40 Mayors’ agenda for a green recovery, a letter to G-20 leaders from 350 medical organizations and >4500 health professionals urging a “healthy recovery” and a healthier society, and a “global women’s appeal” on International Women’s Day urging “Human Security for Public Health, Peace, and Sustainable Development.”

Pre-COVID-19 Warnings. Many reports, briefings, and novels previous to the COVID pandemic have warned of the potential security threat of pandemics. Three still-relevant reports conclude SSG’s initial mapping. The Oct 2019 *Global Health Security Index* provided 195 country profiles across six categories and 34 indicators, concluding that “national health security is fundamentally weak about the world” and that “no country is fully prepared.” A 2018 report from Harvard describes how to prevent the next pandemic by global monitoring of disease outbreak preparedness. And a 2006 report warns that serious disease outbreaks are becoming more common due to population growth and globalization, with environmental and climate change acting as a “risk multiplier.”

What Impact of These Reports? And now the question in the title of this essay: have online reports such as these, by epidemiologists and other experts, made a significant difference in taming or eliminating the COVID monster? And viewed together, can 66 reports on various COVID topics be of much help? The answer is probably very little.

Some of these reports, and others like them, have already found their way to appropriate decision-makers and made a difference in policy. Secondly, some state and national leaders have already made up their minds, and no amount of reasoned argument will change their desire to prematurely lift lockdown, avoid optimal testing and contact tracing, and allow gatherings of unmasked people. Thirdly, some decision-makers may welcome the COVID reports, but do not know about them, which raises questions about whether these reports are adequately publicized. Still, if this SSG report results in just one of the 66 items making a difference in just one country or city, it will at least have been a modest success!

More broadly, this survey allows a view of the global context of COVID, and may encourage greater cooperation in the hope that “stronger together” can be realized to some degree.

What Can We Learn? The most obvious takeaway from this initial report is that there are many COVID reports—a blessing in that there is much readily available information to choose from, but a burden in searching for the most appropriate but often competing reports.

Less obvious are three tensions that must be recognized:

1. between optimism and pessimism (hopes for vaccines and therapeutics vs. fears that are far worse may be ahead);
2. between lockdown vs. re-opening schools and businesses;
3. between returning to “normal” vs. “the new normal” (which has several definitions that have yet to be sorted out).

COVID-19 Reports: Organization Index

(asterisks before item number indicate priority picks)

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COVID-19 Reports: HIGHLIGHTS

5. Forecasting COVID-19's Course (Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 20, 14p). Three scenarios of world impact ranging from best to worst case.

9. Sustainable Development Outlook 2020 (UN Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, July 2020, 56p). Three scenarios to attain the SDGs after COVID-19: pessimistic, optimistic, and 2019 benchmark.

- 12. How COVID-19 is Changing the World** (UN Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities, May 2020, 87p). A “snapshot” of economic and social statistics from 36 organizations.
- 13. Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity** (UN Sustainable Development Group, March 2020, 24p). A joint effort of 43 UN organizations responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- 14. The Lancet COVID-19 Commission** (Jeffrey D. Sachs and five others, *The Lancet*, 9 July 2019). Seeks to speed up global, equitable, and lasting solutions worldwide, with several forthcoming reports.
- 17. COVID-19 Strategy Update** (World Health Organization, April 14, 23p). Insights on the current situation, with national and international strategies for speed, scale, and equity.
- 24. Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19** (Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, April 17, 23p). A framework to assess risks of likely transmission and non-essential business.
- 26. Where and When to Lift a Lockdown** (Indian Institute for Human Settlements, April 8, 10p). Lists 40 essentials for India’s health systems, basic services, food, etc. and 10 priority activities.
- 27. COVID-19 Roadmap to Recovery** (Group of Eight Australia, April 2020, 190p). A report by >100 researchers from Australia’s eight universities, exploring two basic options.
- 32. COVID-19 Back to School** (National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Columbia Univ, August 2020, 5p). Simply presented best practices as of summer 2020 to reopen schools.
- 35. Crisis Leadership for a Pandemic: COVID-19** (National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Columbia Univ., May 2020, 2p). A concise overview of principles learned from 9/11: Connect with a truthful message, Collaborate governments, and Create a web of multiple leaders.
- 36. Effective COVID-19 Crisis Communication** (CIDRAP Viewpoint Part 2, Univ of Minnesota, May 6, 11p). Principles too often ignored: don’t over-reassure, proclaim uncertainty, admit mistakes.
- 37. COVID-19 Surveillance: A National Framework** (CIDRAP Viewpoint Part 5, Univ of Minnesota, July 9, 14p). Ongoing and systematic collection/analysis of data is key to public health.
- 46. COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Distribution** (Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, August 19, 41p). An ethics framework for decisions on risk, equity, economic impact, and logistics.
- 57. Recovery Plan for Europe** (European Commission, July 21, 7p). A major plan to help repair COVID’s economic and social damage, laying foundations for a more modern and sustainable Europe.

59. C40 Cities Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery (Global Mayors' Task Force, July 15, 43p). Large-city mayors seek "a new normal," a strong rebound, and the Global Green New Deal.

60. A World in Disorder (Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, Sept 2020, 51p). Second annual report on Lessons Learned and five Urgent Actions on leadership, global health security, sustained investment, etc.

64. Global Health Security Index (Johns Hopkins Health Security Center, *et al.*, Oct 2019, 316p). Offers 195 country profiles, ranking them across six categories and 34 indicators; all countries are seen as poorly prepared.

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