

US coronavirus deaths now 600, almost 50,000 confirmed cases: tracker

March 24 2020



This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow)—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19—isolated from a patient, emerging from the surface of cells (blue/pink) cultured in the lab. Credit: NIAID-RML

Six hundred people have died from the new coronavirus in the United

States, while the number of confirmed cases now stands at 49,768, a tracker maintained by Johns Hopkins University showed Tuesday.

The US has the third-highest number of confirmed cases globally, behind China and Italy. The death rate based on reported cases is now 1.2 percent—but the actual number believed to be infected is far higher, which would bring the rate down.

Social distancing and quarantine measures have been instituted across much of the United States, bringing the world's biggest economy to an abrupt halt.

President Donald Trump insisted Tuesday that he wants the US lockdown relaxed by mid-April, warning that keeping the measures in place could "destroy" the country.

But many public health experts have warned that lifting the measures too soon could lead to a surge in cases and hospitals being overwhelmed, amid a dire shortage of ventilators and protective gear for health care workers.

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Citation: US coronavirus deaths now 600, almost 50,000 confirmed cases: tracker (2020, March 24) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-coronavirus-deaths-cases-tracker.html>

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