

290 million students out of school as global virus battle intensifies

March 5 2020, by Dmitry Zaks, With Laurent Thomet In Beijing



Countries hit by the COVID-19 outbreak have begun closing schools to slow down the spread of the virus, although Taiwan reopened campuses at the end of February

Almost 300 million students worldwide faced weeks at home with Italy and India the latest to shut schools over the deadly new coronavirus, as

the IMF urged an all-out global offensive against the epidemic.

More than 95,000 people have been infected and over 3,200 have died worldwide from the virus, which by Thursday had reached more than 80 countries and territories.

The US state of California declared an emergency following its first coronavirus fatality—raising the US death toll to 11—and a cruise ship was kept offshore after passengers and crew members developed symptoms.

Switzerland reported its first death from the outbreak on Thursday, while Bosnia and South Africa confirmed their first cases and Greece's cases surged after 21 travellers recently returned from a bus trip to Israel and Egypt tested positive for the virus.

Most deaths and infections are in China, where the virus first emerged late last year, prompting the country to quarantine entire cities, temporarily shut factories and close schools indefinitely.

But it has quickly spread beyond China's borders.

Several countries have implemented extraordinary measures, with UNESCO saying on Wednesday that school closures in more than a dozen countries have affected 290.5 million children.

I will survive: but for how long?

Studies looking at how long coronaviruses can last outside of their hosts

To understand the virus that causes COVID-19 researchers* looked at **previous studies** on coronaviruses to see how long they last on **different surfaces outside the body of a living host**

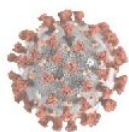
*Scientists from the Greifswald University Hospital and Ruhr-Universität Bochum, both in Germany



Generally, coronaviruses tested lasted **1 - 9 days** on inanimate surfaces such as metal, rubber or plastic

The good news is that **they can mostly be inactivated within about a minute** with agents containing

- Hydrogen peroxide
- Ethanol
- or
- Sodium hypochlorite (found in bleach)



Test results *selected*

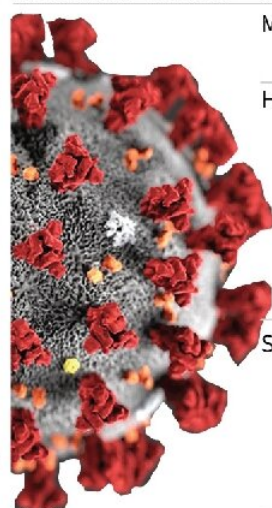


Image of SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 released by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Virus	Material	Temp	time	Up to
MERS ¹	Steel	20°C		2 days
		30°C		1 day
HCov ²	Steel	21°C		5 days
				8 hrs
	Aluminium		8 hrs	
	Plastic		6 days	
	Silicon rubber		5 days	
SARS ³	Metal	RT*		5 days
		Wood		4 days
		Paper		5 days
		Plastic		4 days

- 1 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
 - 2 Human coronavirus (other than the COVID-19 virus)
 - 3 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Strain P9)
- *Room temperature, usually about 20-22°C

Source: Journalofhospitalinfection.com/medicalnewstoday.com

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Graphic showing the findings of studies that look at how long different types of coronaviruses can last in tact outside of the hosts they rely on

India, the world's second most populous country, later announced it was closing all primary schools in the capital New Delhi until the end of March to prevent the virus from spreading.

The orders came as an India-EU summit scheduled for March 13 was also postponed.

While temporary school closures during crises are not new, UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay said "the global scale and speed of the current educational disruption is unparalleled and, if prolonged, could threaten

the right to education".

Italy on Wednesday ordered schools and universities shut until March 15, ramping up its response as national fatalities rose to 107.

South Korea—second to China in terms of infections with cases jumping past 6,000 on Thursday—has postponed the start of the next term until March 23.

In Japan, nearly all schools are closed after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for classes to be cancelled until early April.

Schools have also shut in Iran, where 107 people have died from the disease—alongside Italy, the deadliest outbreak outside China.



In Japan nearly all schools are closed through March and spring break

Economic threat

Infections are now rising faster abroad than they are in China, where 31 more deaths and 139 new cases were reported Thursday. China's toll now stands at 3,012, with over 80,000 infections.

AFP reporters saw a handful of people trickling back into Wuhan, the quarantined city at the centre of the epidemic, at the train station this week.

Beijing is now concerned about importing cases, with 20 infections brought from abroad so far—prompting several cities to require people arriving from hard-hit countries to self-quarantine.

Japan announced on Thursday that a state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping this spring had been postponed because containing the epidemic was "the biggest challenge" for the two countries.

China, the world's second largest economy, has been badly hit by the outbreak, which has also rumbled global stock markets, with Europe's major exchanges sinking again Thursday.



People arrive at a pre-triage medical tent in front of Cremona hospital in Italy, where the virus death toll has risen above 100

The IMF said it was making \$50 billion in aid available for low-income and emerging-market countries to fight the epidemic, which it sees as a "serious threat" that would slow global growth to below last year's 2.9 percent.

"At a time of uncertainty... it is better to do more than to do not enough," IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said.

In the United States, lawmakers reached a deal to provide more than \$8 billion to fight the outbreak.

No kissing

Thousands of people were stranded on the Grand Princess off the California coast Wednesday as officials delayed its return to carry out tests on people on board.

A 71-year-old man who had been aboard the same ship during its previous voyage to Mexico died after contracting COVID-19.

The vessel belongs to Princess Cruises, the same company which operated a coronavirus-stricken ship held off Japan last month on which more than 700 people on board tested positive, with six dying from the disease.



Near empty shelves on the toilet paper aisle in a supermarket in London after stockpiling by consumers

The US and other governments have taken extraordinary measures to contain the outbreak.

Japan will quarantine all arrivals from China and South Korea for two weeks, while the United Arab Emirates warned its citizens to "avoid travelling".

Saudi Arabia has suspended the year-round Islamic "umrah" pilgrimage, an unprecedented move that raises fresh uncertainty over the annual hajj.

New measures in Italy—where 11 towns with 50,000 have been under quarantine—include a month-long nationwide ban on fan attendance at sports events, and advising people to avoid greetings like kissing on the cheek or shaking hands.

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