

Most Americans still more worried about COVID-19 spread than the economy

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As the number of U.S. coronavirus cases neared 1.8 million on Monday,

a new poll shows that a majority of Americans still think it's more important to control the virus' spread than to restart the economy.

While nearly 6 in 10 Americans say the pandemic has taken a heavy economic toll on their communities, a majority of a divided country still believes that containing COVID-19 infections is paramount, a new *Washington Post-ABC News* poll shows.

Overall, 57 percent of all Americans and 81 percent of Democrats say trying to control the spread of the coronavirus is most important right now. But only 27 percent of Republicans agree, while 66 percent of them say restarting the economy is more critical. Nearly 6 in 10 independents say their priority is trying to control the virus's spread, the survey found.

And nearly 7 in 10 Americans say they are worried about the possibility of a second wave of coronavirus infections in the fall, the poll showed.

Even as Americans continue to worry about the spread of COVID-19, protests erupted in cities nationwide over the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. Those protests could become new "super-spreader" events for coronavirus, public health experts worry.

While the spread of coronavirus has slowed in some of the hardest-hit areas of America, other parts of the country were seeing worrying spikes in cases last week.

New York City, once the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States, is about to ease restrictions after 10 weeks under lockdown, the *Post* reported.

But even as the New York area began to emerge from strict social distancing measures, other states were seeing jumps in COVID-19 cases,

the *New York Times* reported.

Wisconsin saw its highest single-day increase in both cases and deaths just two weeks after the state's highest court overturned a stay-at-home order; Alabama, Arkansas, California and North Carolina are seeing some of their highest case numbers and death tallies yet; and metropolitan areas like Fayetteville, Ark.; Yuma, Ariz.; and Roanoke and Charlottesville, Va., may soon see new highs in cases and deaths.

As the U.S. coronavirus death toll passed 104,000 on Monday, jobless numbers released last week show the number of unemployed has now passed 40 million.

Concerns about hydroxychloroquine continue

Meanwhile, safety concerns over a [malaria drug](#) that President Donald Trump has touted as a coronavirus treatment prompted the World Health Organization to remove the medication from a global trial of potential COVID-19 therapies last week.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the international health agency's director-general, said that the WHO decided to take a "pause" in testing hydroxychloroquine after a study published recently in *The Lancet* medical journal found people who took the drug were more likely to die, the *Times* reported. Several other studies have found the medication has no benefit and could possibly harm COVID-19 patients.

Regardless, Trump has finished taking a two-week course of the malaria drug to guard against COVID-19 infection after two White House staffers tested positive for the coronavirus.

And on Sunday, the White House announced it has sent 2 million doses of hydroxychloroquine to Brazil to battle the spread of coronavirus in

that country. Not only that, the two countries are embarking on a joint research effort to study whether the drug is safe and effective for the prevention and early treatment of COVID-19, the Trump administration said.

Disappointing drug trials

Hopes for another drug being tested against coronavirus infection have dimmed, after a major, new study found the drug on its own won't be enough to significantly curb cases and deaths.

The study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that, "given high mortality [of patients] despite the use of remdesivir, it is clear that treatment with an antiviral drug alone is not likely to be sufficient."

The remdesivir study involved 1,063 COVID-19 patients and was led by Dr. John Beigel and Dr. Clifford Lane at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The researchers found that the drug, delivered by infusion, did help ease the illness: Patients who got the antiviral recovered after an average of 11 days versus 15 days for those who hadn't received it.

Patients who were so sick they required supplemental oxygen, but did not need a ventilator to breathe, appeared to benefit most from remdesivir.

But the difference in the overall death rate—7.1% of patients on the drug vs. 11.9% of those who didn't get it—did not reach statistical significance, the researchers added.

The study does suggest that early treatment works best. "Our findings highlight the need to identify COVID-19 cases and start antiviral

treatment before the pulmonary disease progresses to require mechanical ventilation," the researchers said.

Early evidence had suggested that remdesivir might help fight coronavirus illness, so the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave it "emergency use authorization."

Already, combinations of remdesivir and other drugs are being tried, to see if dual-drug treatments might boost outcomes even more. For example, one federally funded clinical trial is combining remdesivir with a potent anti-inflammatory drug called baricitinib, while a trial from biotech firm CytoDyn is pairing it with an antiviral called leronlimab.

Vaccine efforts continue

Meanwhile, the search for an effective vaccine goes on. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said May 22 it would provide up to \$1.2 billion to the drug company AstraZeneca to develop a potential coronavirus vaccine from Oxford University, in England.

The fourth, and largest, vaccine research agreement funds a clinical trial of the potential vaccine in the United States this summer with about 30,000 volunteers, the *Times* reported.

The goal? To make at least 300 million doses that could be available as early as October, the HHS said in a statement.

However, many experts have said that the earliest an effective, mass-produced vaccine would be available won't be until sometime next year, and billions of doses would be needed worldwide.

Pharmaceutical giant Merck has also jumped into the fight against the coronavirus, announcing two separate efforts to develop a vaccine and a

partnership to develop a promising antiviral [drug](#) that can be taken as a pill, the *Times* reported.

The United States has already agreed to provide up to \$483 million to the biotech company Moderna and \$500 million to Johnson & Johnson for their vaccine efforts. It is also providing \$30 million to a virus vaccine effort led by the French company Sanofi, the *Times* reported.

According to a *Times* tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Monday are: New York with more than 375,500; New Jersey with over 160,000; Illinois with over 120,500; California with more than 113,000, and Massachusetts with nearly 97,000.

Nations grapple with pandemic

In Asia, where the coronavirus first struck, several countries are finally returning to a new normal.

In China, 16 new coronavirus cases were reported on Sunday the country's highest daily spike in almost three weeks, *Newsweek* reported.

The National Health Commission (NHC) said all of the new infections were imported cases, with 11 in the Sichuan province. A further three cases were confirmed in Inner Mongolia, while two more were recorded in Guangdong province, *Newsweek* reported.

Meanwhile, South Korea reported its biggest jump in cases in more than 50 days last week, the *AP* reported.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 67 of the 79 new cases reported were from the Seoul metropolitan area, where about half of South Korea's 51 million people live. The government has shut public facilities such as parks, museums and state-run theaters in the

metropolitan area for the next two weeks, to stem any further spread of the virus.

Elsewhere, the situation remains challenging. On Monday, the United Kingdom's coronavirus death count neared 38,000, the second highest in the world, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Britain has now surpassed Italy, Spain and France for COVID-19 deaths in Europe. With Prime Minister Boris Johnson easing lockdown measures, schools across England will begin reopening Monday amid fierce debate over whether the move is premature, the *Post* reported.

Brazil is fast becoming the next hotspot in the [coronavirus](#) pandemic. By Monday, the South American country had reported over 29,000 deaths and nearly 515,000 confirmed infections, according to the Hopkins tally. Only the United States has more cases. Last week, Trump issued a ban on all foreign travelers from Brazil because of the burgeoning number of COVID-19 cases in that country, *CNN* reported.

Cases are also spiking wildly in Russia: As of Monday, that country reported the world's third-highest number of COVID-19 cases, at nearly 415,000, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 6 million on Monday, with over 372,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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