



**United Nations**

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**COVID-19  
RESPONSE**

**UN DESA WEBINAR SERIES**

# **Webinar: Strengthening Science and Technology and Addressing Inequalities in the COVID-19 era**

**WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 2020, 10 A.M.-12 P.M. EDT**



**United Nations**

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**UN DESA WEBINAR SERIES**



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## The session will start shortly.

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# Participant's Guidance

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# Agenda

<b>10:00 - 10:05</b>	<b>Welcome remarks by Ms. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano</b> , Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, UN DESA
<b>10:05 -10:10</b>	<b>Brief remarks by Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild-Drummond</b> , Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
<b>10:10 - 10:30</b>	<b>Science, Technology and COVID-19 Responses</b>  1) <i>“The COVID-19 pandemic: a wake-up call for better cooperation at the science-policy-society interface”</i> , <b>Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee</b> , Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UN DESA.  2) <i>“COVID-19: Embracing digital government during the pandemic and beyond”</i> , <b>Mr. Deniz Susar</b> , Governance and Public Administration Officer, Digital Government Branch, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA.
<b>10:30 - 11:00</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b>

# Agenda

<b>11:00 – 11:20</b>	<b>COVID-19 and Inequality</b>  <i>“Responses to the COVID-19 catastrophe could turn the tide on inequality”, <b>Ms. Marta Roig</b>, Chief, Emerging Trends and Issues in Development Section, Division for Inclusive Social Development, UN DESA and <b>Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee</b>, Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UN DESA.</i>
<b>11:20 – 11:50</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b>
<b>11:50 – 12:00</b>	<b>Closing Remarks</b>



## **Maria-Francesca Spatolisano**

**Assistant Secretary-General for Policy  
Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs**

- Ms. Spatolisano was appointed Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in UN DESA on 20 December 2018.
- Ms. Spatolisano has served as the EU Ambassador to the OECD and UNESCO, Monaco and Andorra.
- She was a member of the EU Delegation to the UN, serving as the Head of its Economic and Trade Section. Since 2017, she was responsible for International Organizations and Development Dialogue with other Donors in the Commission's Directorate General for Development Cooperation. In this capacity, she assured the EU presence and developed EU positions on development policy in a number of international fora including the United Nations, the World Bank and IMF, OECD, G-7 and the G-20, where she represented the EU in the G-20 Development Working Group.

**Fabrizio Hochschild-Drummond**

**Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations 75th Anniversary**

- Mr. Hochschild has served as Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General since 2017.
- He has served as Deputy Special Representative for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in 2016, UN Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of UNDP in Colombia [2013-2016], Director of the Field Personnel Division in the UN Department of Field Support, New York [2010-2012]; and as Chief of Field Operations and Technical Cooperation in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Geneva [2005-2009].
- He began his UN career in 1988 with UNHCR in Sudan and served in subsequent postings with UNHCR, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and in peacekeeping.



# COVID-19: Trust in science saves lives

Pandemic exposes need for science-based policies that build trust and fight misinformation

Find out more in UN DESA Policy Brief No. 62

[bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)

Photo: World Bank

Available at: [bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)

## The COVID-19 pandemic: a wake-up call for better cooperation at the science-policy-society interface

Science and technology are essential to humanity's collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the extent to which policymaking is shaped by scientific evidence and by technological possibilities varies across governments and societies, and can often be limited. At the same time, collaborations across science and technology communities have grown in response to the current crisis, holding promise for enhanced cooperation in the future as well.

How can we improve the way in which science and technology are harnessed to resolve global challenges such as the current pandemic? This policy brief presents a set of recommendations towards this end, drawing upon the emerging response to the pandemic as well as ongoing multi-stakeholder conversations in the context of the United Nations Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM). Each of these recommendations will be critical to recovery from the pandemic, as also strengthening the contributions of science towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### FIVE LESSONS FOR SCIENCE, POLICY AND SOCIETY

#### Strengthen national capacities for science-based decision making across all countries

Scientific assessments like the one presented in Figure 1 are guiding policies to respond to COVID-19 in countries across the world. Across countries, such assessments share many common features, but there is considerable variation in when actions are being initiated following detection of the first cases in each country, and what the responses look like (Hale et al. 2020).

Much of this reflects different country contexts, but it also underscores differences in science-policy advisory systems. Hence, there is a need to re-assess the functioning of these systems, where they exist; and to build them up where they are weak or non-existent.

In poorer countries, such as least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), longer term structural weaknesses at the science-policy interface have been documented. The TFM's work on sup-

#### Summary

This brief suggests five early lessons from the response to the pandemic that can strengthen how science and technology are harnessed, not just in this case but also for meeting other global challenges. These include strengthening national capacities for science-based decision making, enhancing public trust in science, sharing knowledge for more collaborative research, ensuring universal access to solutions, and acting with greater urgency on global scientific assessments.

Figure 1  
Number of hospitalisations, critical cases, and fatalities in the world until the end of the pandemic



Source: UN DESA, illustrating estimates reported in (Walker et al., 2020).  
 Note: Results in terms of cumulative numbers of hospitalisations, critical cases requiring ICU treatment, and fatalities until the end of the pandemic, for five epidemiological scenarios that explore increasingly stringent social distancing policy measures. (1) Unmitigated: a scenario in which no action is taken; (2) Social distancing whole population: measures to uniformly reduce the rate at which individuals contact one another (by around 45%), short of complete suppression; (3) Enhanced social distancing of the elderly as scenario (2) but with individuals aged 70 years or more reducing their social contact rates by 80%; (4) and (5) Suppression: assuming that wide-scale intensive social distancing (modelled as a 75% reduction in interpersonal contact rates) are taken with the aim to rapidly suppress transmission and minimize near-term cases and deaths, whenever 1.6 deaths or 0.2 deaths per 100,000 people per week are reached, respectively. Considerable scientific uncertainty remains about the contagiousness of the virus, measured as R0 for which the best guess estimate of 2 was used in the calculations, i.e., without policy interventions each infected individual further infects three individuals. Estimates for R0 range from 2.4 to 3.3, which gives a fatalities range for scenario (1) of 25 to 42 million, for scenario (2) of 20 to 25 million, and for scenario (3) of 12 to 22 million.

Authors: Richard A. Roehr, Wei Lu and Shantana Mukherjee of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in UN DESA. For further information, contact [undesaj@un.org](mailto:undesaj@un.org) or visit [www.un.org/development/desa/publications/](https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/)

April 2020

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs





## **Shantanu Mukherjee**

Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals

- Shantanu Mukherjee is a micro-economist with interests in poverty, health and sustainability. His team works on cross-sectoral SDG analysis, and ways to enhance the impact of science, technology and innovation on the SDGs. They provide the UN support for the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM).
- Prior to this, he helped write UNDP's Human Development Report and, before that, led its global MDG policy work.
- Shantanu began his career in India. He earned a PhD in Economics from Princeton University, and also holds advanced degrees in Public Policy and Physics.



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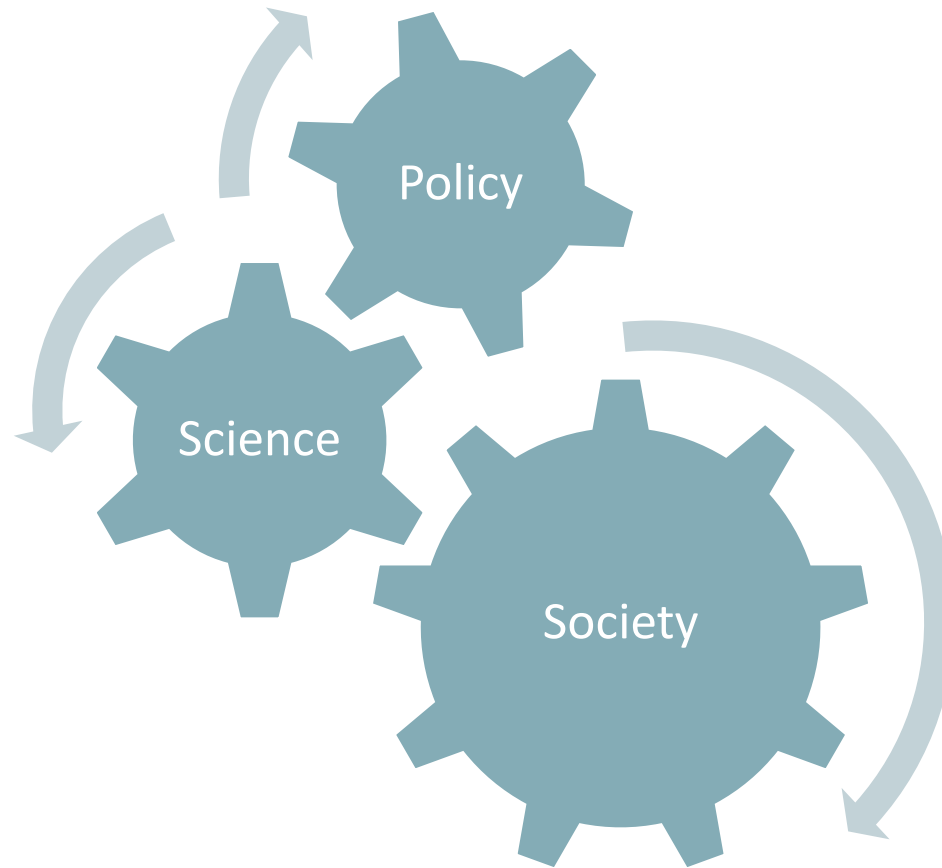
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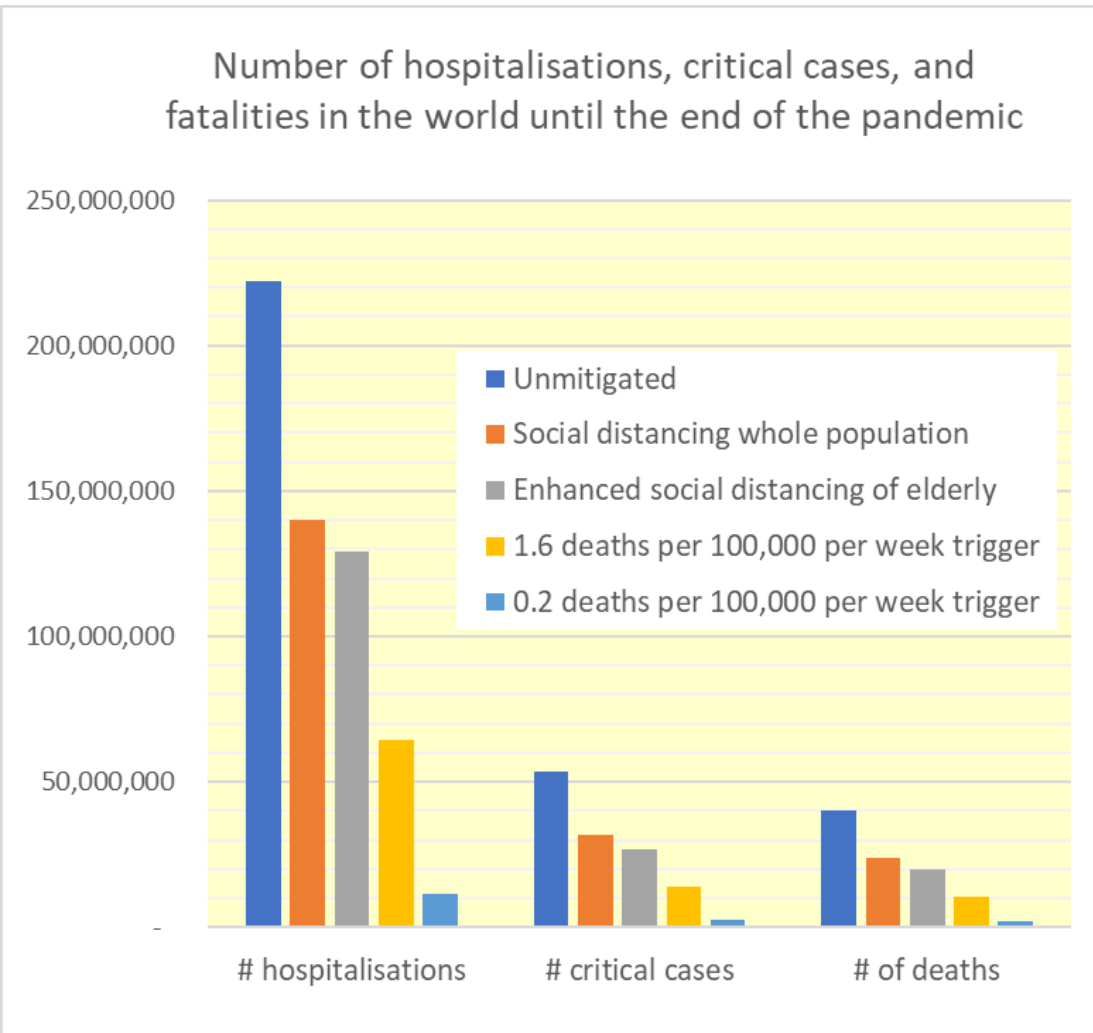
# Translating evidence to outcomes

Evidence/data  
information



Human well-  
being

# Five recommendations - I



## 1) Strengthen national capacities for science-based decision making in all countries

- Timely data for transparent, evidence-based decisions
- Multi-sectoral and inclusive assessments for mitigating trade-offs
- Institutional mechanisms and structures

## 2) Enhance public trust in science

- Clear and direct communications from scientists
- Actively refute disinformation
- Motivate longer term trust building

# Five recommendations - II

## 3) Share knowledge and data for collaborative research

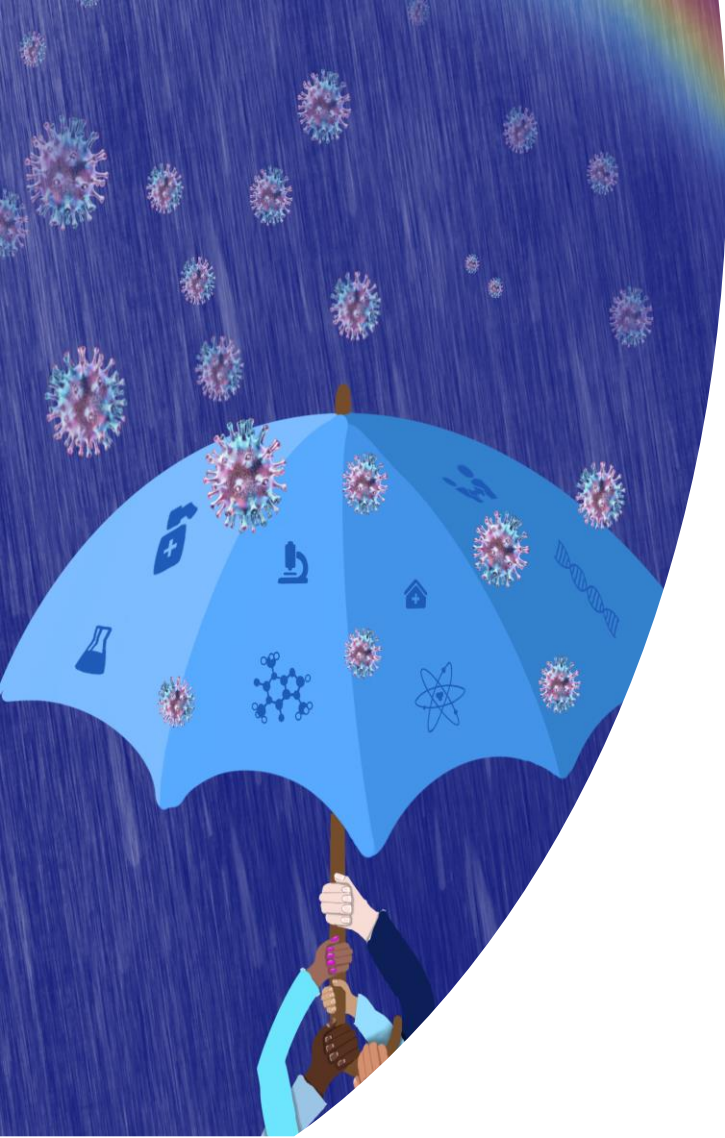
- Make research results and data widely available
- Promote inclusion of developing country researchers and networks
- Support shared norms and guidance for 'open science' beyond the pandemic

## 4) Ensure universal access to solutions

- Continue multi-stakeholder, multilateral collaborations on treatments/vaccines
- Establish mechanisms for universal access
- Facilitate sharing of innovations and technology-based solutions

## 5) Act with greater urgency on global scientific assessments

- Credible, independent mechanisms to present evidence and motivate action
- Support national capacities for implementation
- Reflect in global policy making and multi-stakeholder partnerships





POLICY BRIEF NO61

# Digital government in times of a pandemic

How COVID-19 teaches governments to embrace modern technologies for better public service

Find out more in UN DESA Policy Brief No. 61

[bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)

Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

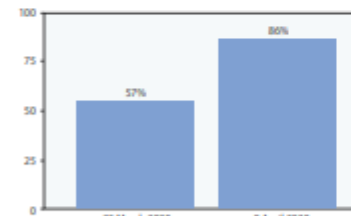
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## COVID-19: Embracing digital government during the pandemic and beyond

### SHARING INFORMATION

It is vital for governments to provide accurate, useful and up-to-date information to people, particularly during times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments started providing information on their national portals, mobile apps or through social media platforms. A review of the national portals of the 193 United Nations Member States showed that by 25 March 2020, 57 per cent (110 countries) have put in place some kind of information on COVID-19, while around 43 per cent (83 countries) did not provide any information; but a further analysis showed that by 8 April 2020, around 86 per cent (167 countries) have included information and guidance about COVID-19 in their portals (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Percentage of government portals with COVID-19 information



Source: UN DESA.

The most basic form of information found on some national portals is some media coverage informing people about the outbreak, travel restrictions, practical guidance on protection, and governmental response. A slightly more advanced way seems to be having a dedicated portal or section about the outbreak—usually with a custom domain name. Governments, as the first custodian of re-

### Summary

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a vital role in promoting the health and safety of people and in keeping economies and societies working during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Digital government technologies either through information sharing or online services have kept governments and people connected during the outbreak. Digital technologies have also enabled governments to make rapid policy decisions based on real-time data and analytics, to enhance the capacities of local authorities for better coordination and to deploy evidence-based services to those who need them most. The efforts in developing digital government strategies after the COVID-19 crisis should focus on improving data protection and digital inclusion policies as well as on strengthening the policy and technical capabilities of public institutions. Even though public-private partnerships are essential for implementing innovative technologies, government leadership, strong institutions and effective public policies are crucial to tailor digital solutions to countries' needs as well as prioritize security, equity and the protection of people's rights. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of technology, but also the pivotal role of an effective, inclusive and accountable government. This policy brief addresses how digital government has played a central role as a key tool of communication and collaboration between policymakers and society during the COVID-19 pandemic. Policymakers need to further embrace the future of digital government, even when the crisis is over.

lated data of COVID-19, have also started publishing statistics about the outbreak. These include total number of cases in a country, total fatalities, as well reporting of cases by jurisdictions. Reliable information from governments helps people make informed decisions about their daily routines, build public trust as well as enables public authorities to act decisively to flatten the curve.

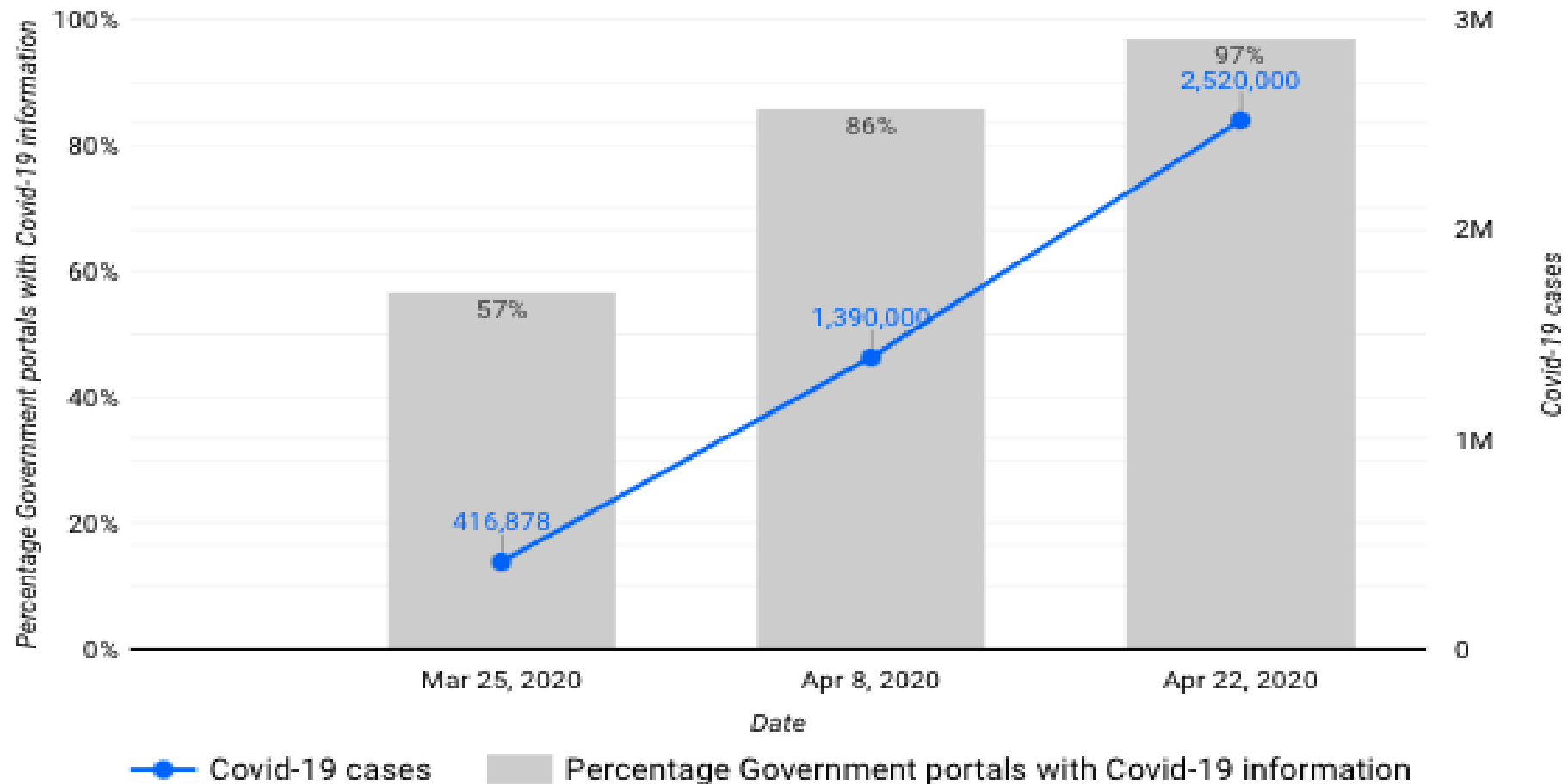
Author: Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government.  
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**Deniz Susar**

**Governance and Public Administration Officer, Digital Government Branch, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government**

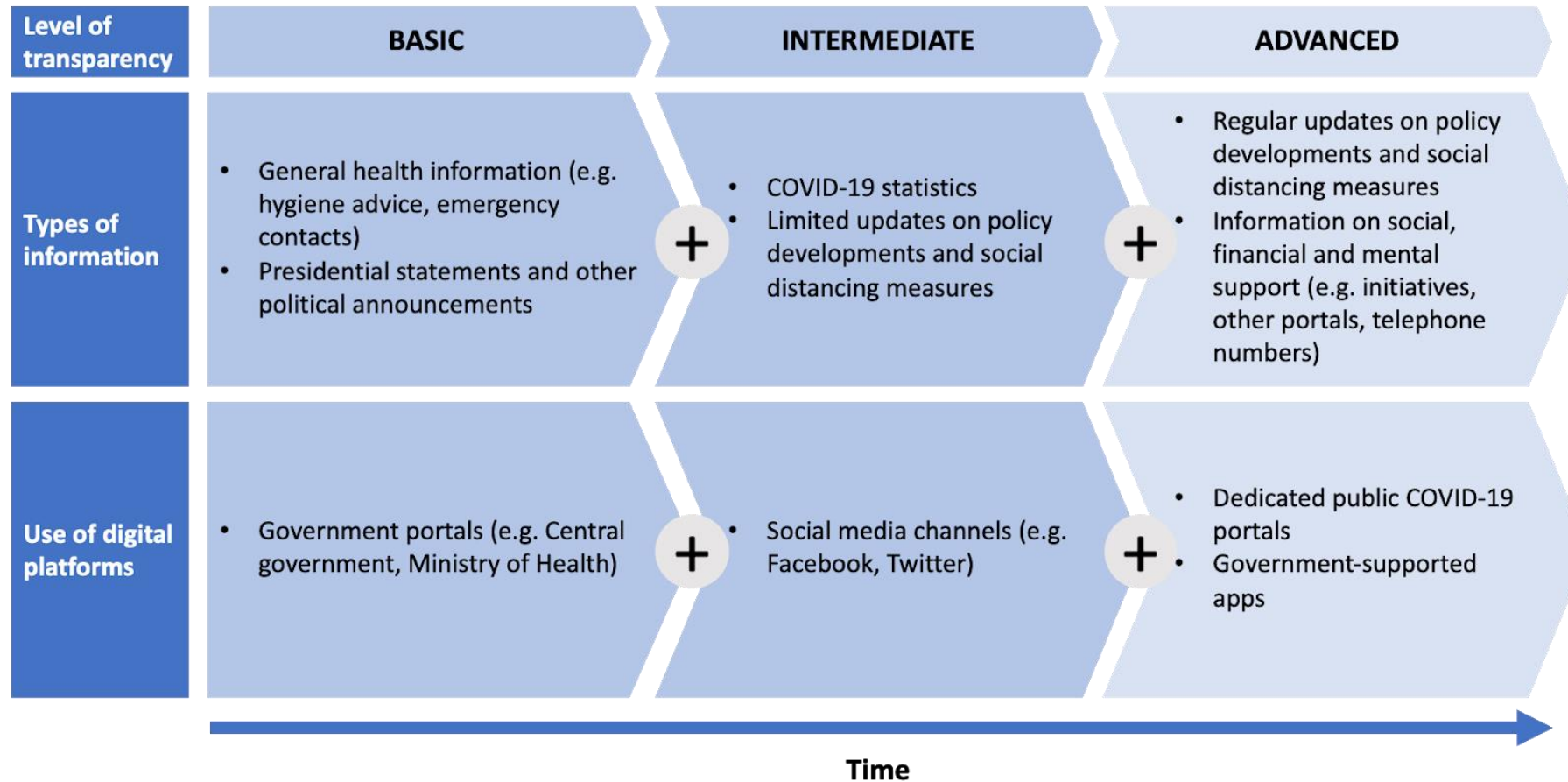
- Deniz Susar's main work areas include digital government and preparation of the biannual UNDESA flagship publication 'United Nations E-Government Survey'. As part of his current role, he also supports the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
- Deniz Susar's main research areas include e-government, open government, citizen engagement, internet governance, artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies and open government data.
- Deniz Susar holds a Master Degree on International Political Economy and Development from Fordham University, New York, United States and a Computer Engineering degree from the Bosphorus University of Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure I - Percentage of Government portals with Covid-19 information and world total confirmed Covid-19 cases





# Government portals during COVID-19







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# Call for E-Government COVID-19 Applications

## United Nations E-Government Survey Questionnaire on COVID-19

Digital Government Branch (DGB) of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) prepared this questionnaire to capture the emerging trends and provide timely analysis of digital responses of the UN Member States against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The responses will facilitate exchange of information and knowledge on e-government projects and assist the DGB in preparing a section in the upcoming edition of the United Nations e-Government Survey. Please note that the Addendum will not be able to feature all submitted initiatives but they will all be highlighted online.

More than one entry per country is allowed and encouraged. Deadline for submissions is NOW EXTENDED TO 3 MAY 2020 due to requests from some member states.

Submissions can be seen here: [https://bit.ly/EGOV\\_COVID19\\_APPS](https://bit.ly/EGOV_COVID19_APPS)

Thank you for your attention.

### Compendium of ICT Applications on Electronic Government

The Compendium of ICT Applications on Electronic Government is a unique collection of current ICT applications used by or in partnership with governments, governmental institutions and the private sector around the world to support administration and public service, while addressing governance challenges. The compendium also presents private sector ICT applications that are available in the marketplace.



Volume 3 focuses on m-technology software products and applications in the areas of citizen engagement that are being used in both developed and developing countries.



Volume 2 focuses on m-technology software products and applications in the areas of human security and business development that are used in both developed and developing countries.



Volume 1 focuses on m-technology software products and applications in the areas of health (m-health) and learning (m-learning) that are used in both developed and developing countries.

[https://bit.ly/EGOV\\_COVID19\\_SURVEY](https://bit.ly/EGOV_COVID19_SURVEY)



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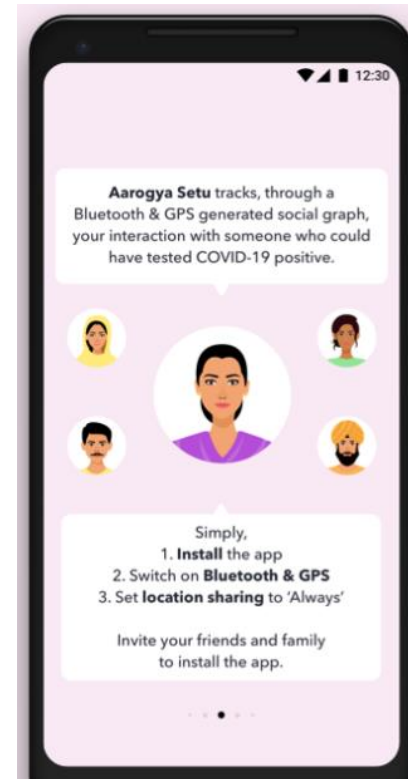
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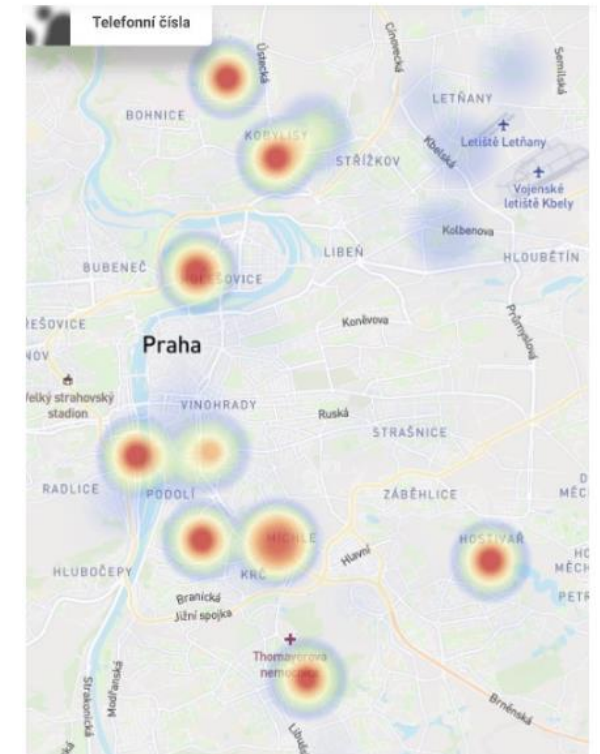
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## Some examples

- Blue-tooth based Contact Tracing Apps and their extensions (SMS notification, Danger Heat Maps)
- Use of AI Chatbots on the website for self-diagnosis and/or advice
- Online permit during curfews



covidhacks





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# Partnerships



Dataset

**COVID-19 Open Research Dataset Challenge (CORD-19)**  
An AI challenge with AI2, CZI, MSR, Georgetown, NIH & The White House

AI2 Allen Institute For AI and 8 collaborators • updated 4 days ago (Version 3)

Data Tasks (10) Kernels (32) Discussion (14) Activity Metadata Download (2 GB) [New Notebook](#)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**Virtual Labour Market**

Powered & Managed By

**BLOOVO**





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# New technologies



## SPOTON

*A smart thermal scanner for safe, easy and fast temperature screening*



### Powered by Artificial Intelligence

- ✓ Advanced AI face detection capability
- ✓ Detects up to 10 faces at once
- ✓  $\pm 0.3-0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  accuracy
- ✓ 2-meter detection range
- × Not affected by masks, hats and headdresses
- × Not affected by hot or cold items (e.g. drinks)



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## Some of the challenges

- Digital Divides
- Resource constraints
- Misinformation/fake information
- Privacy
- Surveillance
- Data protection
- User uptake / trust



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**HBR** Harvard Business Review

### How Digital Contact Tracing Slowed Covid-19 in East Asia

While mobile tracking of infectious disease has been available for at least a decade — Cambridge University's voluntary FluPhone app ...

3 weeks ago



**m** MobiHealthNews

### India mandates workers use COVID-19 tracing app, France ...

... COVID-19 tracing app, France rolls out tracing tool and other tracking ... digital contact tracing – or any private, technology-driven response to ...

9 hours ago



**T** MIT Technology Review

### Google and Apple ban location tracking in their contact tracing apps

Google and Apple ban location tracking in their contact tracing apps ... them —unique advantages in the move toward digital transformation.

6 hours ago



**AJ** Al Jazeera America

### COVID-19 tracking apps raise privacy concerns in Asia

Digital technologies have proven a popular tool for governments across Asia to monitor and contain the spread of the coronavirus. Medical ...

2 days ago



# Coronavirus tracking app to be rolled out in Australia only with privacy safeguards - minister

## Paul Fletcher says app could be 'very effective tool' if significant portion of public sign up



▲ There are privacy concerns over app that tracks the contacts of people who have Covid-19. Photograph: Barcroft Media via Getty Images

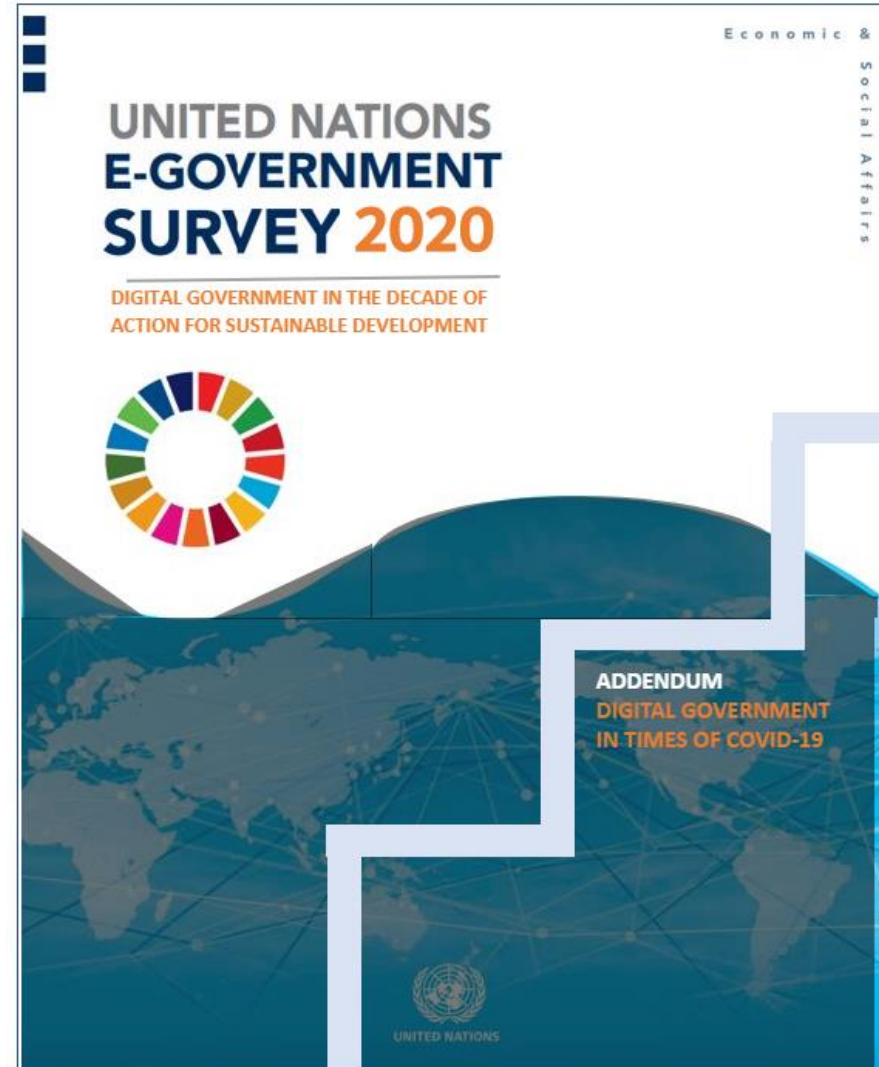


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# Conclusions and Recommendations

Time horizon	Policy action	Digital government response
Short-term	React	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use digital platforms for accurate and timely information-sharing</li> <li>• Lead two-way communication with people and foster e-participation</li> <li>• Protect people’s privacy and sensitive data and take into consideration unintended consequences of digital technologies</li> </ul>
Mid-term	Resolve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form effective multi-stakeholder partnerships on regional, national and local levels</li> <li>• Provide technology education for digital literacy, specifically targeted at public officials, children, women/girls and MSMEs</li> <li>• Offer financial and technical support to cities and local governments for the implementation of digital tools and technologies</li> <li>• Leverage lessons learned and policy ideas from the ongoing crisis</li> </ul>
Long-term	Reinvent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in innovative technologies and ICT infrastructure to increase resilience of the health economy and the public services delivery</li> <li>• Develop digital engagement tools for the most vulnerable groups in society</li> <li>• Revisit data protection and privacy legislation along with lessons learned</li> </ul>



## Questions and answers

- If on WebEx: Please, use the Q&A or chat boxes.
- If on Facebook Live: Add your question in the comments.
- Let us know who you are: name, organization and country.
- Please, indicate to which speaker your question is addressed.

**COVID-19: Are we all in this together?**  
 The pandemic hits the most vulnerable hardest, but it's a chance to turn the tide on inequalities  
 Find out more in UN DESA Policy Brief No. 65  
[bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)

Photo: UN Photo/Roger Lemoyne

**United Nations** | Department of Economic and Social Affairs | **COVID-19 RESPONSE** | **POLICY BRIEF NO 65**

**Responses to the COVID-19 catastrophe could turn the tide on inequality**

Even as all of humanity confronts COVID-19, it is becoming increasingly clear that pre-existing inequalities along various dimensions are differentiating its impact. At the same time, inequalities within and across countries also stand to widen because of the crisis. Such outcomes are not inevitable: past experience shows that sufficiently bold measures that put people at the centre of crisis response and recovery can lead to better, more equitable and resilient outcomes for all.

**LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS DETERMINE THE CHANCES OF INFECTION**  
 Interventions that reduce the chances of being infected, such as social distancing, are more difficult where population densities are high, as in major urban centers with packed transit systems, or for people living in small, crowded households, slums, migrant worker housing or refugee camps. Frequent handwashing is challenging for the 3 billion people without basic handwashing facilities at home (World Health Organization, 2020a). Poorer people, and those from marginalized groups are more likely to live in these conditions. In many developing countries, this can include much of the population.

Occupations requiring frequent human contact, and which must be carried out even during a pandemic-induced lockdown—for example, those providing services such as health care, public transit, and food and grocery supplies—are also associated with a higher risk of infection. Many (though not all) of these occupations are disproportionately carried out by poorer people. Smartphone location data show that people with lower incomes have remained more mobile under social distancing guidelines than those with higher incomes, who can more easily stay away from densely populated areas.

**VULNERABILITIES TO COVID-19 ARE UNEQUAL**  
 Knowledge about the biological pathways through which COVID-19 attacks the body is still evolving. However, the empirical data to date show that, once people are infected, outcomes tend to be more severe for older adults, men, and those with weaker immune systems or pre-existing health conditions such as obesity, diabetes and cardio-vascular disease.

Several of these pre-existing conditions tend to occur more frequently in disadvantaged groups, who may also be less likely to have access to quality health care, or more likely to live and work in conditions that increase the risk of infection. In the United States, for example, African-Americans—known to have higher rates of pre-existing health conditions and poverty—comprise 21.2 per cent of COVID-19 deaths and 28.9 per cent of known cases despite comprising only 13 per cent of the population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Indigenous peoples, often living in isolated communities that lack access to health care and with high rates of pre-existing conditions, are also particularly vulnerable—in Brazil during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, the death rate of indigenous peoples was 4.5 times higher than among the general population (Zavaleta, 2020).

**COPING STRATEGIES HAVE UNEQUAL IMPACTS**  
 Countries have adopted various forms of travel restrictions and social distancing to “flatten the curve”, but these in turn produce unequal impacts across groups. Those in low-wage jobs with limited savings or access to social protection are bearing the brunt of the economic

Authors: Astra Bonik, Shantanu Mukherjee (GGG) and Marta Rogo (GGG)  
 For further information, contact [undes@un.org](mailto:undes@un.org), or visit [www.un.org/development/desa/publications/](https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/)  
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Available at: [bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)

**Marta Roig**

Chief, Emerging Trends and Issues in Development  
Section, Division for Inclusive Social Development

- Marta Roig is the Chief of the Emerging Issues and Trends Section at the Division for Inclusive Social Policy in DESA.
- She coordinated the preparation of the World Social Report 2020 (The Challenge of Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World).
- She has over 20 years of experience in conducting policy research and analysis on inequality, employment, international migration and their linkages to development.



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# What we know - estimated impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on:

## Employment:

- **Decline equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs by mid-2020.**
- Own-account workers and small enterprises hardest hit.
- Informal workers: earnings' decline of 60 per cent in the first month of crisis.

## Poverty:



- Preliminary estimates: **50 to 450 million people** could fall into extreme poverty.



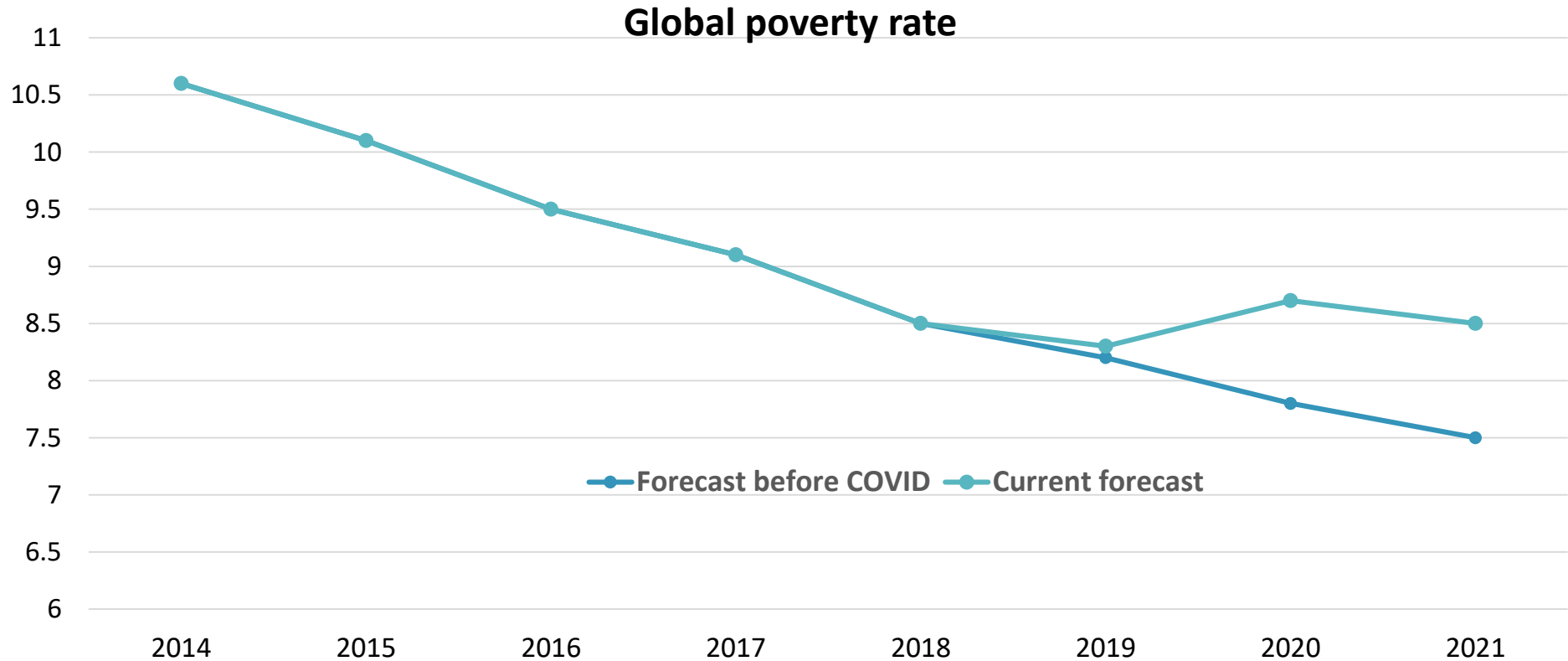
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# Impact of COVID-19: first increase in poverty since 1998





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# Inequalities within and among countries in

## 1. Exposure, 2. Vulnerability, 3. Ability to cope

### 1. Unequal exposure to COVID-19

#### Living conditions:

- \* Poverty and density (small, crowded dwellings; slums; homes, institutions, refugees)
- \* Frequent handwashing (3 billion people without access to handwashing facilities)
- \* Access to information (digital divide!)

#### Working conditions:

- \* "Essential tasks": disproportionate share of low-income workers



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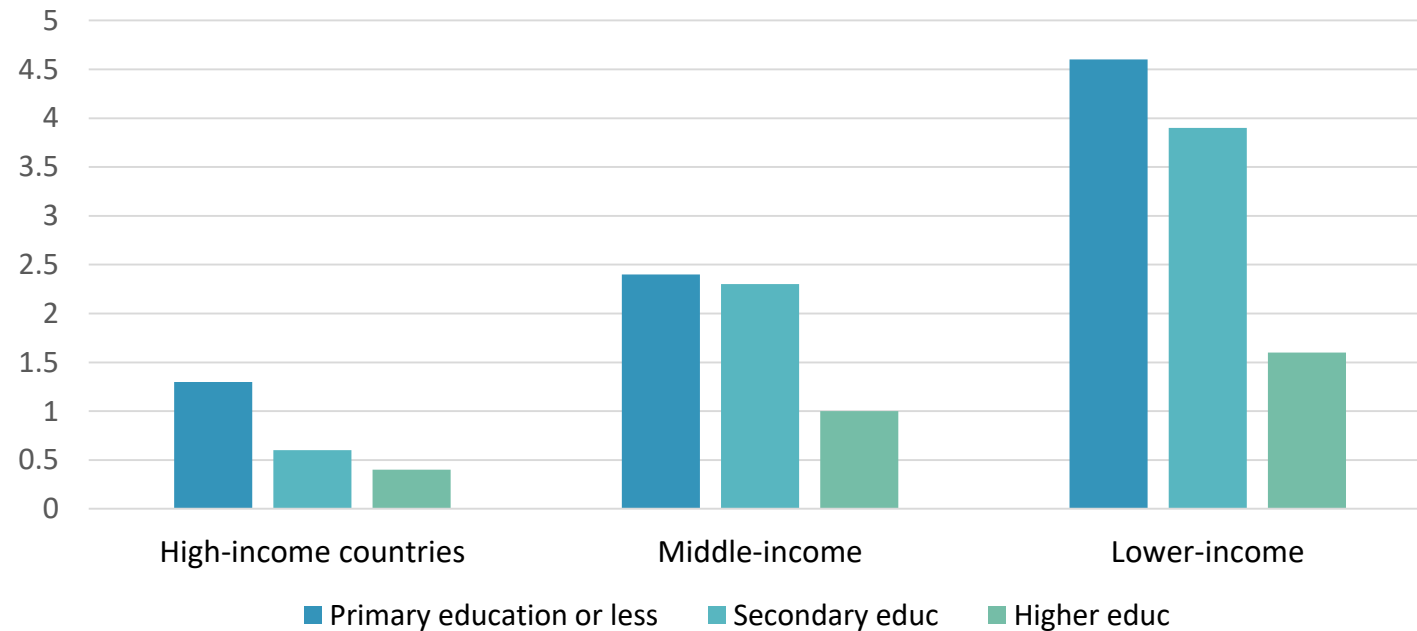


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## 2. Vulnerability: Once infected, the outcomes of COVID-19 differ

\* Unequal prevalence of pre-existing health conditions.

Cardiovascular mortality by educational level





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### **3. Unequal ability to cope with disease and policy measures to address it**

- \* Savings**

**(low-income workers less)**

- \* Access to social protection**

**(limited for workers in informal employment; barriers to access for people in poverty; migrants..).**

**Women are at disadvantage in several domains:**

- \*Disproportionate share of informal employment;**

- \* Health crisis, lockdown: Burden of care work; domestic violence.**





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## What's next

- **The COVID-19 health and economic crises will affect low-wage workers, especially those in informal employment, people living in poverty, members of ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, older persons and women disproportionately.**
- **As a result, the crises and their aftermath are likely to push poverty and inequality upwards. These impacts can last for years. But they are not inevitable.**
- **A deciding moment (“fork in the road”).**



## **Shantanu Mukherjee**

Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals

- Shantanu Mukherjee is a micro-economist with interests in poverty, health and sustainability. His team works on cross-sectoral SDG analysis, and ways to enhance the impact of science, technology and innovation on the SDGs. They provide the UN support for the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM).
- Prior to this, he helped write UNDP's Human Development Report and, before that, led its global MDG policy work.
- Shantanu began his career in India. He earned a PhD in Economics from Princeton University, and also holds advanced degrees in Public Policy and Physics.



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## Inequalities across countries are evolving



### **COVID-19 could reverse gains and widen gaps**

- Millions more in extreme poverty
- Hunger could almost double
- Millions of children out of school
- Slowdown in public health programmes

### **Toward convergence in wellbeing, 1990-2020**

- Millions moved out of poverty
- Rising school enrollment
- Declines in hunger
- Increased coverage of public health programmes



**Past crises indicate that big policy responses are possible**



# Turning the covid-19 crisis into a transformative moment for reducing inequality

**Expand systems for the universal provision of quality public services**

- Accelerate universal provision of quality services (health care, education, sanitation and social protection)
- Ensure that universal systems are accessible to all population groups - remove barriers
- Ready systems for a range of emergencies with surge response capacities
- Adopt policies to maintain sufficient fiscal space for consistent service delivery

**Identify and empower vulnerable groups**

- Ensure availability of adequately disaggregated data to identify inequalities
- Develop differentiated responses and strengthen communication
- Empower vulnerable groups through better access to information

# Turning the covid-19 crisis into a transformative moment for reducing inequality

## Invest in jobs and livelihoods

- Facilitate a safe return to service occupations (introduce necessary protocols, provide protective equipment and medical care)
- Create jobs in emerging, more resilient and sustainable economic sectors (health care, teaching, utilities, 'green' jobs)
- Prepare the workforce with the necessary skills

## Act through the multilateral system to reduce disparities across countries

- United Nations can strengthen coordination, engage stakeholders, foster partnerships, strengthen support
- Alleviate restrictions on cross-border flows
- Meet international development cooperation commitments, increase concessional finance



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## Questions and answers

- If on WebEx: Please, use the Q&A or chat boxes.
- If on Facebook Live: Add your question in the comments.
- Let us know who you are: name, organization and country.
- Please, indicate to which speaker your question is addressed.



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# Stay updated

- Check out our COVID-19 response portal: [bit.ly/UNDESACovid](https://bit.ly/UNDESACovid)
- Follow us on social media
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# Thank you