

Living and learning during a pandemic

How did it start?

The COVID -19 pandemic is also known as the coronavirus pandemic. The virus broke out in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Attempts to contain it there failed, causing the virus to spread across the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared an international public health emergency on January 30, 2020, and a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

COVID -19 symptoms range from undetectable to fatal, but fever, dry cough, and fatigue are most common. Severe illness is more likely in older patients and those with certain underlying medical conditions. Infected individuals are usually contagious for ten days and can spread the virus even if they do not develop symptoms. Mutations have produced many variants with varying degrees of infectivity and contagiousness. COVID -19 vaccines have been approved and widely available in several countries since December 2020.

Global situation

404.910.528 confirmed cases of COVID -19, including 5.783.776 deaths, have been reported worldwide to WHO as of February 11, 2022. These data make the coronavirus pandemic one of the deadliest in history.

Global Situation

404.910.528

confirmed cases

5.783.776

deaths

Source: World Health Organization
Data may be incomplete for the current day or week.

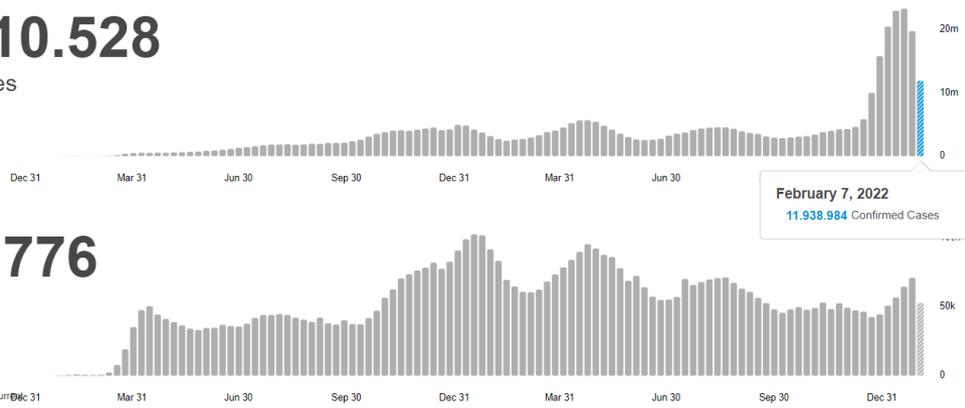


Figure 1: Global situation with Covid - confirmed cases and deaths.

Source: <https://covid19.who.int/>

Pandemic in Croatia

The first confirmed case of coronavirus in Croatia occurred on 25 February 2020, and because many people commute daily between Istria and Italy, the Government of the Republic of Croatia decided on March 13, 2020, to close kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and on 16 March universities, to prevent the spread of COVID -19.

26 January 2022, was the peak of a coronavirus pandemic. There were 11812 confirmed cases of COVID -19. As of 11 February, our country has 998,463 cases and 14,281 deaths.

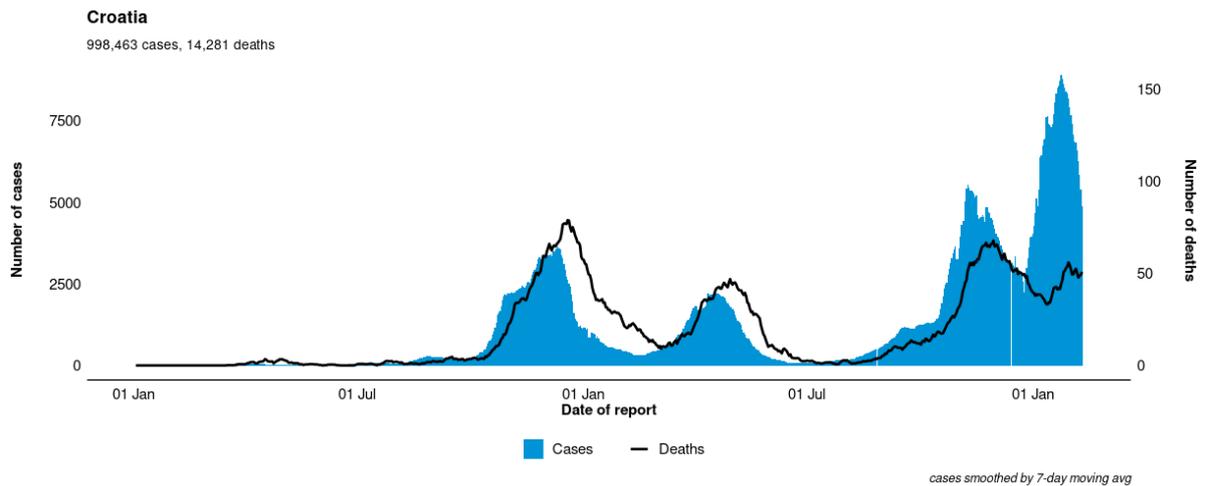


Figure 2: Daily number of cases (smoothed with the 7-day moving average) and number of deaths from the beginning of the pandemic to 11 February 2022.

Source: <https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/>

How do we live and learn during a pandemic?

The COVID -19 forced schools around the world to close. Globally, over 1.2 billion children are not in the classroom. As a result, education has changed dramatically. Across the country, students are struggling to focus and retain information in distance learning, and many feel they are learning less than in years past. We all know the downsides of online education: problems concentrating on the screen for long periods, technological issues like internet connectivity, and many parents worrying about their children's health when they spend so many hours in front of a screen.

Although distance education has many disadvantages, there are also many advantages. First of all, it provides teachers with an efficient way to deliver lessons to students. They can use various resources such as videos, PDFs, and podcasts as part of their lesson plans. Also, students can participate in lessons from any location and through a learning management system. With so many options and resources, lessons can be personalized in many ways.

We surveyed students (181 respondents) and parents (242 respondents) about online instruction and the situation in general. The survey was conducted in April and May 2021, after a year of teaching mostly online.

The most frequently mentioned difficulties with this type of teaching were technical problems and understanding the teaching material. Parents were concerned about monitoring progress and the consequences this would have on children's development and education. Students agreed with the problems already mentioned and added that they were overwhelmed with assignments and exams. However, many positive aspects of online education were also mentioned, such as the effort, accessibility and understanding on behalf of teachers, development of students' digital skills and independence, convenience, timesaving, less concern about possible infections, etc. Parents and students themselves noticed changes in behaviour. They stated they were less likely to be sad, anxious, angry, and helpless, but more likely to be tired, tense or nervous.

When the school first closed, we were in grade 8 and we were sad because we could not see our friends, hang out, or enjoy ourselves. But the main problem was that our school did not have a great platform for online classes at that time, so we lost a whole lot in terms of learning. And then we had to take a big step when we got into high school. The teachers put pressure on us because we did not have enough knowledge from elementary school. We just arrived and online classes started again, a new program, new teachers, and online exams. Everything was new for us, a new school, new people, new ways of teaching and learning methods. Starting high school is a big step for anyone, but at the time of the Coronavirus, it was even harder. Teachers thought it was hard to talk to us in front of the screens, and they thought we did not listen to them. We

strongly believe that students who want to learn will do so during both "live" and online lectures, and those who do not want to, will not. We believe that our teachers should have been more understanding. Also, we were all concerned about the health of our families. We were afraid of losing our loved ones. Our grandparents are still in danger because they are a vulnerable group being over sixty years old.

It would be best if everyone got vaccinated and stayed home so the infection would not spread. After two years, we have concluded that vaccination and recovery from the virus no longer help because the virus has mutated so much that we do not know the rules of its game. In conclusion, we hope that the virus will withdraw as soon as possible and that everything will get back to normal.

Sources:

<https://covid19.who.int/> (11.2.2022)

<https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/> (11.2.2022)

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