**The legacy of the pandemic: 11 ways it will change the way we live**

Few aspects of life are untouched by coronavirus and resulting global lockdowns. From an emerging “quarantine state of mind” to a new era of frugality to expanding how we vote, here’s what next.

Covid-19 has moved like wildfire — at first seemingly far away, then unnervingly close — as it has ripped across the world in a few months, leaving tens of thousands dead, economies flattened, and the futures of hundreds of millions of people in limbo.

As many of us shelter in place with no end in sight, it’s only human for us to imagine how life will resume, even if the unfamiliar and unpredictable behavior of the virus has made it difficult to know with any certainty.

The longer the global effort to stymie the pandemic through lockdown continues, however, the less likely we’ll reemerge into a world we recognize. Already, some things are clear: [**Health care, stretched to horrifying extremes in afflicted cities, must change**](https://apple.news/ANSEMVBmOSyebReqWKe9HQQ), and it will. The world’s Instagram-fueled [**love affair with travel will cool**](https://apple.news/AldKPP6LYT5WO09iy3uZ5EQ). Many will keep stashes of personal protective equipment at the ready; many more will lose faith in governments to assist us, much less protect us.

To begin to envision the legacy of this Covid-19, Vox asked experts in fields ranging from behavioral sciences to economics; restaurateurs; and big thinkers on democracy and public health to predict what’s next. These, they say, are 11 ways the pandemic will transform our societies.

**A “quarantine state of mind” will reign for weeks, if not months**

For many, the doldrums of quarantine are now giving way to post-isolation fantasies, as people pledge to spend more time with family and friends, or finally book that bucket-list trip. But even the smallest and sweetest of goals — getting a haircut, giving a hug, or grabbing a drink — could feel like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro when we’re free.

“We’re going to have to work through this quarantine state of mind even when the physical quarantine has lifted,” says Sheva Rajaee, founder of the Center for Anxiety and OCD in Irvine, California.

The coronavirus has made intimacy feel treacherous, because the disease can sometimes move from person to person through the most mundane activities, like talking, kissing, even [**singing**](https://apple.news/AsFEqlQZPSJGS3D14I0J6fg). That it can be transmitted asymptomatically has forced us to envision everyone as a potential threat. “We are training people to see the world as a dangerous place. This invisible enemy could be anywhere,” says David Spiegel, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University. Interacting with your barber or bartender won’t be easy if you view them as potential carriers. “There will be a lot of damage to be undone as people try and rebuild some semblance of a normal life,” Spiegel says, adding that “avoidance makes phobias worse.” Exposure will be an important part of recovery.

The temporary solution to the coronavirus — self-quarantine, and potentially months of it — not only delays this process, but also has psychological repercussions of its own. The true extent of the problem is not yet clear, and there are few analogues. But in Wuhan, China, where the virus originated, “some people there now refuse to leave their homes and have developed agoraphobia,” psychiatrist Steven Taylor [**told the Atlantic**](https://psychiatry.ubc.ca/person/steven-taylor/). FOMO has morphed into FOGO, or the fear of going out. Some people’s reticence to reengage with society may resolve on its own, Rajee says, but “for many, this is the beginning of a lifetime of management.”

—*Eleanor Cummins*

*Cummins reports on the intersection of science and popular culture; she previously wrote about* [*social-distancing scofflaws*](https://apple.news/A3OMPLr1sRrO6JC-JsCcnlQ) *for the Highlight.*

**The mask will become a wardrobe staple**

In the United States, masks are more readily associated with crime than public health. We’re a nation of mask skeptics: Several states have [**enacted anti-mask laws throughout history**](https://apple.news/AWoqvKhSXQqK1JCh2gHr2UA) as a means of quelling protest and stifling dissent. But the immediacy of the pandemic — the horror stories of [**bodies stacked up in refrigerated trucks**](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/nyregion/coronavirus-new-york-bodies.html), the overwhelmed hospitals, and the atmosphere of fear and paranoia created in its wake — will force Westerners to reconsider old stigmas associated with masks for the sake of public health.

The mask aversion is compounded by the longstanding epidemic of police violence against people of color, some of whom understandably [**fear the consequences**](https://twitter.com/Aaron%5FTheThomas/status/1246493711032356866) of purchasing essential goods while cloaked in a prophylactic bandana. Even now, it’s easy for a mask to evoke dastardly connotations or be mistaken for a disguise.

“Wearing a mask may be even stranger to us than wearing a Speedo at the beach,” says Brandon Brown, an epidemiologist and associate professor at UC Riverside. “It’s just not the norm [in the US], so there is judgment, but there is nothing wrong with it.”

In China and other nations, masks are now part of everyday life, [**Abrar Chughtai**](https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/dr-abrar-ahmad-chughtai), an epidemiologist and researcher at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, says via email. “Asian countries have faced such epidemics and pandemics more in the past,” he says, including SARS outbreak of 2002-2004, which still looms large in the public imagination in China and Hong Kong.

These nations have long understood face coverings as a public health resource and a tool for cultivating national unity. It’s routine, for example, to see people donning masks on the streets of Beijing, Seoul, or Taipei as they take to the streets or socialize with friends, because someone with a cough will likely be hesitant to put their neighbors in jeopardy.

“It does seem that in general, thinking of and protecting others is more of a norm in some countries other than our own,” Brown says.

But public sentiment on the issue of masks is evolving. Just as the US [**mobilizes to provide front-line workers with personal protective equipment amid mass shortages**](https://apple.news/AuvWkADnxQkGxcUyv9B9auQ), brands are also swooping in to meet a surge in demand for masks that gel with modern consumer tastes. Cloth masks designed and marketed by [**Los Angeles Apparel and Christian Siriano**](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/style/coronavirus-masks-dov-charney-christian-siriano.html) are reflections of this broader shift in the cultural climate. Mega-influencers like Kim Kardashian and Bella Hadid have also endorsed them with [**pandemic-era selfies**](https://apple.news/AVGPqrnCeSKuI4d7V8eKCPw), lending masks a stamp of pop-culture-approved normalcy.

[**Though the science behind the effectiveness of masks is far from exact**](https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2764367/effectiveness-surgical-cotton-masks-blocking-sars-cov-2-controlled-comparison), living through the pandemic will undeniably alter Western attitudes about them, as well as government policy. And as the memory of Covid-19 becomes permanently enmeshed with the national psyche, masks are likely to become a fixture of our post-pandemic world.

*—Sam Blum*

*Blum is a writer and journalist based in New York.*

**Child care will finally be recognized as essential work, too**

It was one of the earliest and most visible effects of the coronavirus pandemic: First one, then several, then all 50 states shuttered schools. Many day care centers closed, too, and in the span of a few weeks in March and April, tens of millions of American parents, most of whom ordinarily work outside the home, suddenly became full-time child care workers.

For the relatively fortunate, that has meant trying to work from home while simultaneously caring for children without help from family members and caretakers they might ordinarily lean on — and without the ability to entertain kids with trips or play dates.

For others, it has meant making a wrenching decision between taking care of family and getting a paycheck (the federal stimulus bill includes paid leave for some parents, [**but not all**](https://apple.news/ARZL768o2TeaIG6Eo3GJboQ)).

Either way, for many people around the country, parents and non-parents alike, the sheer work of taking care of children all day suddenly has become extremely obvious.

In the past, that work has often been invisible. Many parents “feel the need to hide or minimize the evidence of their children at the office,” economist [**Emily Oster has written**](https://apple.news/A00uLm9CfTa6K8f3FrwbOAA), because they fear being sidelined. Meanwhile, about [**80 percent of private sector employees**](https://apple.news/AcuOiOL_9TdmhwO1DtMfzjQ) — and [**93 percent of low-wage workers**](https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/12/2018%5Fpfmliscriticalfor%5F0.pdf) — have zero paid parental leave.

America’s undervaluation of the work of child care is also evidenced in its treatment of child care workers, who make an average of $10.82 an hour and often lack health insurance and other benefits. Many are on some form of public assistance and live paycheck-to-paycheck even in the best of times. As child care provider Miren Algorri [**told**](https://apple.news/APFIvwe31QvKRIvPQHSSyjw) Vox, “We’re overworked, we’re underpaid, and we don’t even exist.”

But now the work of child care suddenly isn’t as invisible. Kids have started popping up in Zoom meetings. Parents who once might have been able to practice what [**Oster has called**](https://apple.news/A00uLm9CfTa6K8f3FrwbOAA) “secret parenting” have had to ask for flexibility, and some employers (though by no means all) have begun to grant it.

Cities have set up [**emergency child care centers**](https://apple.news/AeCBb6wJAMvCXB2LQm86GbQ), with officials understanding, perhaps for the first time, that nurses and bus drivers can’t go to work if there’s no one to care for their children. Even the federal government has [**set aside $3.5 billion**](https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020/03/2020%5F3.5billionchildcarecoronaviruspackage.pdf) for child care in its relief package for American workers.

For the first time in a long time, Americans have been forced to acknowledge that taking care of kids is difficult, necessary work.

As Algorri put it, “We are the workforce behind the workforce.”

*—Anna North*

*North covers gender issues, reproductive rights and more for* Vox.

**America will become a nation of savers**

The effect of the coronavirus pandemic on our sense of economic confidence will have everything to do with how long we are stuck inside, how long we are out of work, and what safety nets fail us in the interim. Even if stay-at-home orders are mostly “over” by this summer, how many of us would risk our lives to frequent restaurants or go shopping? The virus, whenever it’s over, will affect our every financial, demographic, and lifestyle decision, from borrowing money to having children to living in crowded cities.

The US consumer confidence index has already dropped 30 percent since [**February**](https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/consumer-confidence). Millions of newly unemployed workers and small businesses already can’t or aren’t paying their rent or mortgage.

And it’s all happening as about [**30 percent**](https://www.bankrate.com/banking/savings/financial-security-june-2019/) of Americans have zero emergency savings, and only one-fifth have savings sufficient to last six months. No surprise — our country has been [**overspending for decades**](https://apple.news/AANteu66KQ6Oq-azYtsCDFw). Our national saving rate has declined dramatically since the 1950s and ’60s. If and when people emerge from their homes, they’ll be cowed, not confident, economic actors.

Fewer Americans will start businesses, and those they start will be safely online; surviving businesses will hire and borrow less. People may prepay their mortgages instead of maxing out their 401(k)s or playing the market. Many people start saving, not for a rainy day but for a years-long deluge.

Just as families during the Great Depression relied on [**kitchen gardens and community “thrift gardens”**](https://www.history.com/news/life-for-the-average-family-during-the-great-depression) to grow food rather than buy it, we’ll return to growing our own food to the extent we have space or can move somewhere that does. Entertainment and social events will move to [**potlucks, board games, and other living room entertainment**](https://www.history.com/news/life-for-the-average-family-during-the-great-depression) instead of movies or restaurants, just as it did during that period.

For those with the means, the first trip won’t be to Gucci, if it’s there. It may be to Kansas to buy a small home with ample land for planting and posting Keep Out signs.

*—Laurence Kotlikoff*

*Kotlikoff is a professor of economics at Boston University and a personal finance consultant.*

**The US will test-run more just policing and incarceration**

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, incarcerated Americans — the 2.3 million people often housed in overcrowded facilities, many people of color, many with undermanaged chronic health problems — have emerged as one of the nation’s most vulnerable populations. [**Outbreaks have ripped through**](https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/03/28/us/28reuters-health-coronavirus-usa-inmates-insight.htm) prisons and jails including New York’s Rikers Island, Illinois facilities including Chicago’s Cook County Jail and the [**Stateville Correctional Center**](https://www.chicagoreporter.com/stateville-prison-outbreak-signals-covid-19-threat-to-inmates-surrounding-hospital-systems/), the [**Parnall Correctional Facility**](https://apple.news/AL60m88WsOY-oh2ulENJHvw) in Jackson, Michigan, and many others across the nation — a scenario that was unnervingly [**predictable**](https://apple.news/AbBaPS4CrQy64T52KdpNoJw).

In response, some local governments are suspending jail time for technical violations, and reducing arrests for low-level offenses such as prostitution or minor drug crimes; the federal government [**is also identifying at-risk prisoners**](https://apple.news/AGvK_o9C1SgGM7MRJ6z3Bqg) who could serve the rest of their sentences at home. Some older and otherwise vulnerable prisoners, pretrial detainees, and people serving misdemeanor sentences have already been released. For many, this is a permanent early release. For others, they are free until they have to return for trial.

These aren’t reforms. They’re emergency tactics. But they could serve as a transformative moment, a glimpse at whether efforts to reduce the number of imprisoned should be permanent. We could end “[**broken windows**](https://apple.news/AI1Jo7N1BT1y9FS0V5DrDvw)” policing for minor street-level drug and quality-of-life offenses, which lead to too many low-level arrests. We could end cash bail, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty and incarceration. We could stop issuing unimaginably long prison sentences that keep the incarceration rate high. We could start releasing older prisoners by granting them parole.

This pandemic has illuminated a broader view of the inequities in the US, and can serve as more than an opportunity to test and observe more just policing and incarceration policies. It could lead to permanent reform of our criminal justice system.

—*Sylvia A. Harvey*

*Harvey is a journalist and the author of* [**The Shadow System: Mass Incarceration and the American Family**](https://www.amazon.com/Shadow-System-Incarceration-American-Family/dp/1568588801).

**We’ll realize that the American economic system is fundamentally broken**

The US has tied health insurance to employment and then shuttered broad swaths of the economy to respond to a health crisis, during which [**millions of workers have been laid off**](https://apple.news/AZ6-hLljwQa-M964x0SBCEQ), leaving them [**without health coverage**](https://apple.news/AfBGnq7lAQMyFSwPyu3TPsQ). Our social safety net is in disrepair and [**overwhelmed when people need it most**](https://apple.news/Apq6eGsXOTwOS8jk11ygAkw). Many of our essential workers [**are making the minimum wage**](https://apple.news/Ap5a0si9PTKqSEaOftJ8DQg). People of color are [**dying of the coronavirus at disproportionate rates**](https://apple.news/AzfNz2dfbQiaymHUm-SBABw).

The economic and social framework of America was already tenuous, and the pandemic has broken it.

“We built an economy that is a very fine-tuned race car that can go very fast, and might occasionally win a few races,” says Roosevelt Institute president Felicia Wong, “but once it breaks down, it’s very difficult to fix, and there really is no underlying resilience.”

Wong believes we’re at a “crucial choice point,” in which we either repair the system with a Band-Aid that still leaves us fragile or move toward a government with more guardrails for the economy and a bigger role in setting the direction of our health, social insurance, and economic systems.

Many Americans have long believed in a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps ideology — the “American dream,” that if you work hard enough, you can make it. It’s a country where the “us” is the people who made it, and the “them” — often with a racial element — are people who are viewed as lazy and inept. But rugged individualism and the free market can’t fix many of our current problems, and, in fact, have rendered the country increasingly vulnerable and fragile for years. Amid the current devastation, will we begin to imagine the role of the federal government in our society and our economy as [**one that takes a more hands-on, proactive approach**](https://apple.news/ASZNqnbaTSPC04sjog2QuEA)? There’s a chance — though we will need leaders to drive us there, many of whom are being radicalized right now.

After moments of crises, the US government and its people historically have tended to want to go back to the way things were before, and it’s unclear that this time will be different, warns Jamila Michener, an assistant professor of government at Cornell University. But we also can’t unsee what we’ve seen. “The proximate problem is the virus,” Michener says, “but the deeper problem is the structure of our social, political, and economic systems.”

Yet change isn’t always easy to perceive. The Occupy Wall Street movement, born out of the Great Recession, was broadly deemed a failure, [**but it has animated much of the leftist politics and policies of the past decade**](https://apple.news/AE3t2nmJsSkaKUeiQ1hYaqg). America is broken — but it *can* be fixed.

*—Emily Stewart*

*Stewart covers business and politics for* Vox.

**Voting will become easier — and turnout might go up**

The [**images of Wisconsin’s recent election**](https://apple.news/AdDCp2lpCQuCIAiOELgjA9g) — the first in-person election held during the height of the Covid-19 US outbreak — were dystopian. In Milwaukee, where the number of available polling places shrank from 180 to just five for a city of about 592,000 people, voters wearing surgical masks stood 6 feet apart in lines stretching around the block. One woman held up a large homemade sign emblazoned with the words “This is ridiculous.”

“Wisconsin is a messy dress rehearsal for what will happen in November if we don’t act,” ACLU voting rights campaign strategist Molly McGrath recently [**told Vox**](https://apple.news/A84FefG21SFGgoiGxZuHCWA).

The pandemic has temporarily upended US elections as some states push back their primaries to early June. But this time is giving lawmakers an opportunity to reimagine what our elections system could look like.

While electronic voting is still a faraway goal, given concerns about the possibility of hacking, ideas are already circulating for how states could get paper ballots into the hands of more voters and increase turnout. In the five states that already have universal vote-by-mail, studies have found [**voter turnout increases**](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-vote-mail.html) particularly among those less likely to vote in person. Exercising one’s constitutional right to vote could be as easy as checking a box, sealing an envelope, and putting it in the mail. (Even if it *is* a process that might [**slow down**](https://prospect.org/politics/preparing-for-a-slow-vote-count/) vote counting.)

In the Senate, [**the effort is being led by**](https://apple.news/AjktJ5CjrRR6xo0QzOyqNeg) Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), who [**introduced a bill**](https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2020/3/with-unprecedented-disruptions-expected-from-coronavirus-klobuchar-and-wyden-introduce-bill-to-ensure-americans-are-still-able-to-vote) in the wake of coronavirus that would expand both in-person early voting and no-excuse absentee vote by mail. It would require states to set up contingency plans in the event we are still social distancing by the November general election.

The bill would open up in-person polls 20 days before election day in each state to give people the opportunity to vote early, require all mail-in ballots submitted in the 21 days leading up to an election be counted, and make it so all voters can request an absentee ballot.

Similar processes are already in place in some other countries: In [**Switzerland**](https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-improve-american-presidential-election-2016-10%23in-australia-you-can-vote-at-any-polling-place-in-your-home-state-or-territory-7), for example, all voters receive mail-in ballots that they can submit up to three weeks before the election, and in New Zealand, advance voting polls are [**set up 12 days**](https://elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/for-candidates/how-candidates-can-encourage-voting-participation/) before election day.

There’s increased agreement among Democratic and Republican governors and secretaries of states that something must be done to coronavirus-proof their elections. New Hampshire’s Republican Gov. Chris Sununu recently announced that the state could expand absentee voting if the virus persists into the fall, a measure he has previously opposed, and Republican officials in other states may do the same.

But getting all states ready will take time and a lot of federal money. And President Donald Trump and some congressional Republicans are balking at expanding vote-by-mail access, even though there’s no evidence it favors Democrats, and [**some Republican states have long used it**](https://apple.news/Ai0hRRsMYR3WvR3z58W4Q6g).

The pandemic, and Wisconsin’s election in the midst of it, could be a watershed moment to make the case for vote-by-mail reform.

*—Ella Nilsen*

*Nilsen covers Congress and Democrats for* Vox.

**Restaurants will close — and what’s left could be vanilla**

[**Hoyo’s Kitchen**](http://hoyoskitchen.com/) isn’t as busy as it used to be. The family-owned Somali restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, had to close its buffet brick-and-mortar location; only its stall in the city’s [**North Market**](https://northmarket.com/merchant/hoyos-kitchen/) remains open. Mohammad Hassan, who owns the restaurant with his brother and their mother, says he’s seen a dispiriting 50 percent drop in customers since the pandemic began, but says, “I take solace in the fact that it’s not only us.”

Hassan’s story resembles that of many immigrant restaurateurs who have long enriched America’s dining ecosystem. The pandemic has laid bare the restaurant industry’s creaky foundations. Media coverage has [**focused**](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/27/magazine/david-chang-restaurants-covid19.html) on celebrity chefs with name recognition and lofty net worths, obscuring restaurants like Hassan’s that are disproportionately vulnerable to extinction.

Predictions late last month [**suggested**](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/dining/local-restaurants-coronavirus.html) that 75 percent of independent restaurants won’t weather the pandemic, which has forced closures of untold thousands of eating and drinking establishments nationwide. Many independent restaurateurs [**doubt**](https://apple.news/AIz2864esTJ2SvvItRyeJ9A) that the CARES Act’s Paycheck Protection Program will provide sufficient loan coverage for their restaurants. Capital may flow more easily toward larger businesses, further marginalizing restaurants without investors or large social media followings: Danny Meyer’s Shake Shack, with more than 200 locations, for example, attracted widespread criticism when it applied for and [**received**](https://apple.news/AwlRfpmeqREiZqoDHeoxh3g) a small-business relief loan. (The company later announced that it would [**return the money**](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/shake-shack-returning-its-ppp-loan-heres-why-danny-meyer/).)

This means the pandemic could wipe out eateries that showcase immigrant fare. Some owners fear facing prejudices that their cuisines aren’t profitable enough to save because they aren’t continental European. Others haven’t applied for relief funds like the one [**offered**](https://www.jamesbeard.org/relief-fund-faqs) by the James Beard Foundation — [**suspended**](https://www.jamesbeard.org/relief-fund-application) within hours of launching after a logjam of responses — due to language barriers and lack of access to public relations firms that could help them navigate labyrinthine application processes. Hassan himself is reluctant to apply for these funds without fully understanding the fine print, fearing any misstep may leave his struggling business “liable to pay things back.”

But without such restaurants, a class of talented chefs (without material privileges to start) would be jobless and unable to display their talents. Diners would have to settle for a sterile culinary monoculture where [**corporate chains**](https://apple.news/Avin6YOZ7N4Sw6lNF4nopfg) dot the country.

Toni Elkhouri of [**Cedar’s Cafe**](http://www.cedarscafe.com/) in Melbourne, Florida, applied but hasn’t heard back from the Beard fund. She’s not holding her breath. Elkhouri and her mother, Marlene, have pivoted to curbside delivery and preselling their Mediterranean meals for holidays, helping them level an initial 83 percent loss in business. “Otherwise we will die on the vine,” she said. “No one will come and save us.”

*—Mayukh Sen*

*Sen is is a James Beard Award-winning writer and teaches food journalism at New York University.*

**Free money might someday be bound for your bank account**

Universal basic income (UBI) is the idea that the government should give every citizen a regular infusion of free money, no strings attached. It’s moved from the fringes into the mainstream over the past few years, with [**several countries around the world running pilot programs**](https://apple.news/ABC7g-emhRdOziypTCRUweg) to test it.

Now, the coronavirus and its economic ripple effects are bolstering the view that such payments are necessary — during the pandemic, and even after it.

[**Spain has announced**](https://apple.news/AfG_LPVGLQLu84Gb5ggIupw) it will roll out a basic income “as soon as possible” to help its citizens cope. Crucially, Deputy Prime Minister Nadia Calvino said the government aims to make this something that “stays forever, that becomes a structural instrument, a permanent instrument.” In the UK, more than 170 members of Parliament have also urged the government to give citizens a UBI during the pandemic, though so far their calls have been rejected.

Scott Santens, a prominent UBI advocate, said he believes the pandemic will make a UBI in the US more likely as well.

“Through no fault of their own, people are finding themselves in need of money,” he told Vox. “This profound feeling of insecurity may be quite new to people who felt they had job security, and they may gain an appreciation for permanent economic security through an income floor that would always be there, just in case.”

Political figures such as Democratic Rep. [**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and former presidential candidate Andrew Yang**](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/13/andrew-yang-aoc-free-ubi-cash-can-help-during-coronavirus-pandemic.html) also say the US should follow suit.

“People who may even have symptoms are going to work in public places because they don’t feel they have a choice,” [**Yang told CNBC**](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/13/andrew-yang-aoc-free-ubi-cash-can-help-during-coronavirus-pandemic.html). “A Universal Basic Income would enable these waitresses and parking attendants and [ride-hail] drivers to stay home.”

Although some Americans are getting a one-time $1,200 coronavirus stimulus payment, those are [**not a true UBI**](https://apple.news/ATNEw7a6EMx2Uy_KXEKEx0Q); they’re an emergency stopgap measure rather than a permanent program. UBI gives people income stability so they can do long-term planning, which in turn can make them [**happier and healthier**](https://apple.news/AwStWngRwSuS5gTUOQcBg-g).

Many people are now encountering the inadequacy of the American safety net for the first time. They’re finding it deeply frustrating to have to make [**dozens or even hundreds of attempts to file benefits claims**](https://apple.news/A5PjXWWwHS0SrPCuM7Urwxg) while unemployment offices are overwhelmed by demand. It could be simpler and more humanizing for money to simply show up in their bank accounts.

“As people get more frustrated with bureaucracy and conditions,” Santens said, “I think they will start thinking differently about a system that operates differently, one built on trust and dignity instead of distrust and degradation.”

*—Sigal Samuel*

*Samuel is a writer for* Vox’s Future Perfect.

**Say goodbye to handshakes, and casual hugs and kisses**

The shock of Covid-19 has already caused people to rethink norms as simple as shaking hand. As we try better to protect ourselves and our loved ones during this — and future — pandemics, we will create new taboos around personal hygiene and behaviors.

Terms such as personal protective equipment (PPE) have already entered common parlance, a phenomenon that could be extended to personal protective behaviors (call it PPB): actions such as never coughing or sneezing into the open air or onto one’s hands, and avoiding touching one’s eyes, nose, or mouth. People will wash their hands and avoid touching public objects much more, and greetings that do not involve hand-to-hand contact will be popular.

Historically, certain behaviors become taboo for what on the surface are religious or cultural reasons, but probably originate from an understanding of their health risks. Cultures that don’t eat pork, for example, likely stopped because in warm climates the meat often carried dangerous parasites such as trichinella worms. Now, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the top US expert on the virus, has supported the idea that we should [**never shake hands again**](https://apple.news/AY_M2e020Qqql-WjTe4vBzA), and seeing people in films hugging, shaking hands, and kissing is already causing a frisson.

In the post Covid-19 world, the strengthening of taboos is inevitable. A cross-cultural shift will leave people less keen to engage in physical ways to show politeness or affection.

*—Susan Michie and Robert West*

*Michie and West are professors of health psychology at University College London.*

**Religions will embrace their online future**

Recently, just off Interstate 40 in a western part of North Carolina, a clergy member and 10 funeral guests stood several feet apart from one another around a casket as it was lowered. As the cars drove by, the mourners dispersed, heading back to their own places of isolation, unable to hug each other as the intimate, albeit distant service concluded.

When history looks back on this moment, one thing will be clear for religious and spiritual leaders: Gathering together matters most. Though many will bemoan the [**livestreaming efforts**](https://apple.news/AL7hcUJfJSUy22E7GjVbTrg), the lack of in-person worship, or the fruition of online giving — in the midst of the worst of the pandemic, and after, many religious leaders will claim virtual community-building as a means of survival and growth.

Many pastors are grappling with the complexity of encouraging older church members to use online services and giving; urban and suburban churches that minister to homeless populations are struggling to find those members if they don’t have a physical address. Some might say these issues have always been there. While that may be true, the isolation and distancing — and the desire for spiritual guidance right now — makes these realities all the more complex.

As one pastor of a United Methodist Church in Los Angeles said, “The pandemic crystallizes our mission. We have to focus on what’s most essential for our respective communities.” It also provides a clearer vision of a leaner but kinder church — one capable of bending toward change. The recognition of love and truth-telling in a community setting should have been the mission of the church a long time ago, and for some clergy and congregations, it has been. But the takeaway is clear: People are in need of community, and though they can’t gather like they wish, they still wish to gather.

Perhaps soon those mourners in North Carolina can give their loved one the send-off they deserved. Until the moments of gathering return, communities of faith will continue forward into the unfolding future creatively — but only if they accept and embrace the possibility the innovation of this moment holds.

*—Rev. Rob Lee*

*Lee is* a *pastor of Unifour Church, a diverse community of faith in North Carolina.*

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