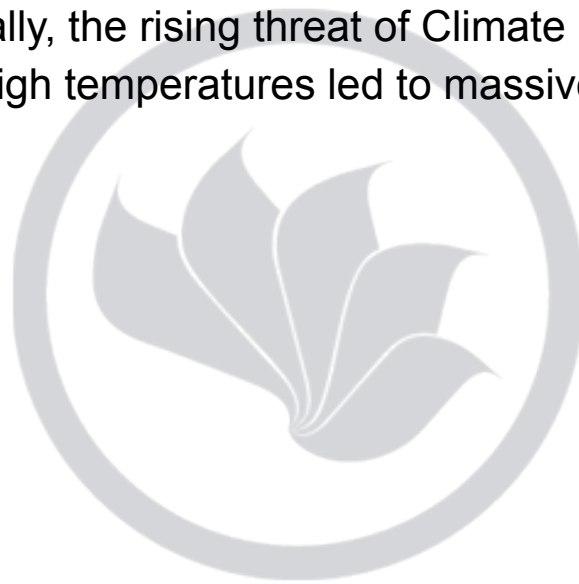


The Summer of Distrust

The summer of 2020 was the Summer of Distrust. It exposed global distrust within social circles and between people and their governments. The distrust was a result of three main challenges. First, a global Covid-19 pandemic that led most people in the world to socially distance themselves from most of their social circles. Second, the killing by police of an American citizen, George Floyd sparked a wave of protests in the US and around the world. Finally, the rising threat of Climate Change became crucial as extremely high temperatures led to massive wildfires in California.



Distrust During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By the end of the summer of 2020 the world had lost almost one million faces, futures and souls due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The virus emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan Province, China, potentially from wildlife sold at a wet market in Wuhan.² This was the first recorded case of COVID-19 caused by the novel coronavirus (or SARS-CoV-2). Within eight months tens of millions of people around the world had suffered from COVID-19. The authorities placed restrictions on people in attempt to prevent the spread. These included closing schools and many businesses, restricting travel, imposing curfews, and issuing shelter-in-place orders. Many aspects of life were put on hold as people were urged not to interact physically with one another. Fortunately there were many efficient online platforms to replace in-person interaction. Work, education, socializing, weddings, celebrations, funerals, and many other aspects of life moved online. People engaged with others through screens since they could not trust whether others were taking the required social distancing precautions. Many scientists and authorities strongly recommended and even mandated wearing masks when going out of one's home. However an alarming number of people particularly in the United States distrusted the scientific advice. They refused to wear masks and as a result rapidly increased the number of infections and fatalities. Scientists worked urgently to develop a vaccine.

By The New York Times Updated August 30, 2020, 12:23 A.M. E.T.

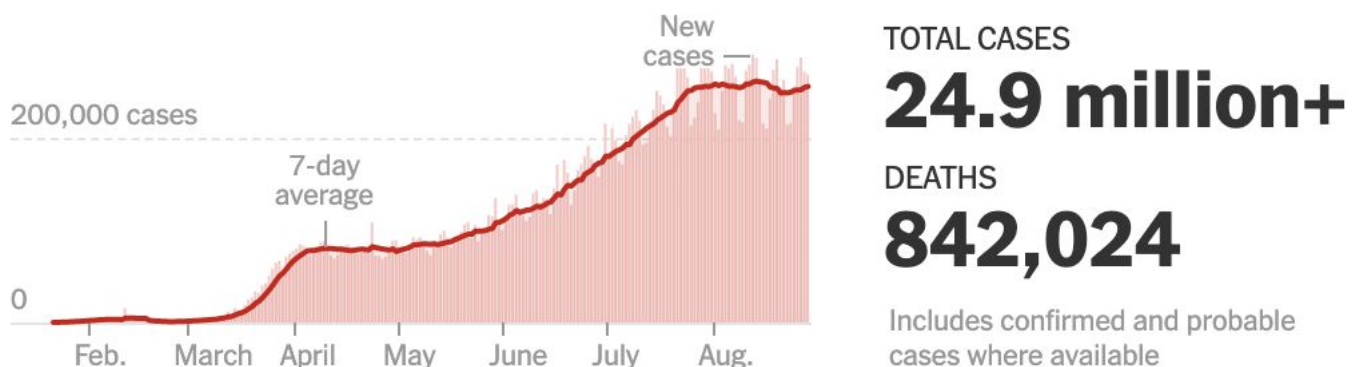


Chart showing the number of COVID-19 cases. (Source: New York Times)

Distrust Due to Racial Inequality

Racial inequality had continued for hundreds of years. Many people rejected the belief that we are all equal and should enjoy the same respect, opportunities and rights, although we may look different. Over more than a century black people including children were brutally and wrongfully killed by police violence in the United States. Briana Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Aura Rosser, Stephon Clark, Tamir Rice and George Floyd were just a few of these victims.³ In many cases the responsible policemen were not punished for their behaviour. After the murder of George Floyd many people globally began protesting police brutality. In the United States alone, half a million people went out to the streets to call for justice in almost 550 different protests. This “Black Lives Matter” (BLM) movement was thought to be the largest movement in the history of the United States.⁴ At the heart of this was the deep distrust between parts of the population and the police. The extent of the public response raised hopes that police brutality and racial inequality would finally be addressed in the United States.



Photograph taken on June 13, 2020 from a Black Lives Matter protest against racial inequality and police brutality. (Source: CNN.com)

Distrust Regarding Climate Change

August 2020 was the hottest day ever recorded on Earth, with a shockingly high temperature of 130F.⁵ This temperature was recorded in Death Valley in California, and was the direct result of climate change.⁶ In the early 21st Century there were many extreme weather conditions such as heat waves, floods, hurricanes, tropical storms, tornadoes and wildfires, causing damage worth billions of dollars.⁷ Every year in the United States alone millions of acres burned down due to wildfires.⁸ People consumed unsustainable amounts of Earth's natural resources and polluted the air and water. The United States was historically responsible for more CO₂ emissions than any other country.⁹ Yet the country contained millions of climate change deniers who continued to distrust scientists' well-researched claims that climate change was caused by humans. A new plan called the Green New Deal was developed to enable the United States to stop using fossil fuels and to create more environmentally-friendly jobs.¹⁰

The Black Lives Matter movement protests increased the spread of COVID-19. Climate change disasters such as wildfires made evacuated people congregate, which also increased COVID-19. All three events during the summer shared the common theme of distrust between people. It also started the tipping point to spark climate action, police reform, social equity policies, better pay for healthcare workers, and it helped people notice what is truly important to them in life throughout the late 2020's.



Photograph of a fireman battling the harsh fires in southern California during the summer of 2020. (Source: WashingtonPost.com)

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