

Current pandemic context

Confirmed COVID-19 cases are over 22.5 million worldwide. Despite a resurgence in many countries, the daily number of new cases reported globally seems to have stabilized somewhat. A closer look at the pandemic suggests that proportionally more younger people are testing positive than in early months. Many countries (particularly in the western Pacific region) are experiencing new outbreaks and have had to re-institute additional public-health measures to slow the spread.

Potential issues for consideration

To inform panelists' deliberations about potential long-term and emergent issues that need to be prioritized, the COVID-END team has prepared the following bulleted summary of issues identified through available documents (e.g., academic journals and magazines), websites (e.g., international organizations and traditional media), and social media (e.g., Twitter), which are organized using the four parts of the [COVID-END taxonomy of decisions](#) related to COVID-19:

1) Public-health measures

- Preventing the resurgence of other infectious diseases (such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis) during the COVID-19 pandemic and understanding and addressing the interplay between them*
- Highlighting the challenges related to creating an effective vaccine for culturally and ethnically diverse citizens across the world through representative recruitment for vaccine trials, as well as predicting and planning for ways to ensure vaccine availability and use in groups that may be both at higher risk for COVID-19 and facing a lower likelihood of benefitting from a vaccine*

2) Clinical management of COVID-19 and pandemic-related conditions

- Antibody levels are increasingly discussed as both a way to test for COVID-19 after initial symptoms have passed, and to potentially keep some level of temporary immunity; treatments and vaccines using monoclonal antibodies are also now getting a lot of attention, but the cost of these is expected to be far higher than other, more traditional methods*
- With the benefit of time since initial presentations globally, long-COVID is now being studied and is of increasing concern for its far-reaching human and societal impacts; the significant morbidity caused by COVID-19 is something that is not well tracked*

3) Health-system arrangements

- Using the disruption to health systems, as well as the weaknesses that have been exposed, to make improvements to governance, financial and delivery arrangements and encourage shifts toward universality and changes to insurance coverage, adjust payment models, strengthen ability to address systemic inequities in access, and re-negotiate cross-level relationships for public health*
- Learning lessons on public procurement from the initial wave of the pandemic to establish better relationships with suppliers, make better use of technology, ensure transparency, and look beyond traditional networks, as well as preparing for a robust supply chain related to vaccine-procurement and -delivery systems*

4) Economic and social responses

a) *Cross-sectoral, education, and broader human services*

- *Recognizing the multitude of challenges faced by youth that have been caused by the pandemic and promoting youth service to contribute to the healing of their communities, aid with pandemic resilience, and combat the precariousness of youth mental health, employment, and housing*
- *Ensuring access to essential services and protections for women, as their sexual and reproductive healthcare has been severely affected and gender-based violence has accelerated during confinement, as well as finding new approaches to service delivery and outreach to ensure vital protections are maintained*

b) *Social policy*

- *Documenting the swift and significant reductions in public transit use that have occurred and, rather than reducing future investments, 'doubling down' on safety and funding measures to reduce the disproportionate burden placed on the most vulnerable who rely on public transit and considering responsive re-design approaches (such as the one being implemented in Israel)*
- *Recognizing the risk the pandemic has placed on global food security by disrupting food availability, access, utilization, and stability, as well as developing policies to ensure supply of and access to food and ensuring high-income countries and international organizations support LMICs, including in their collection of data and investments in infrastructure to support data use (e.g., an agricultural evidence clearing house)*

c) *Economic policy*

- *Considering government-supported mechanisms to boost wealth (e.g., in the form of wealth bonds to babies and small children that are accessible when they are adults) or government-supplied housing for young people as an important cushion against risk and to help equalize opportunity to recover from the pandemic*
- *Investing in a more inclusive post-pandemic workforce by providing people with disabilities, criminal records, and other barriers to participation with individualized support and bridges to the workforce*

d) *Environmental and energy policy*

- *Re-thinking and re-working disaster preparedness and response plans to incorporate COVID-19 considerations, particularly for communities facing, or at risk of, natural or man-made disasters*

The team has also prepared a more detailed appendix containing lists of hyperlinked descriptors of the issues addressed in identified documents, websites, and social media.

In future briefs, the team will also note where the identified issue has been addressed by an existing evidence synthesis in COVID-END's soon-to-be released inventory of 'best evidence syntheses' or whether there is a gap that may need to be addressed if panelists prioritize the issue. We anticipated that this would be ready for this panel meeting but we have not yet cleared the backlog of potential candidate syntheses.

Appendix

1) Public-health measures

Theme	<i>Interplay between COVID-19 and other infectious diseases</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>General</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 can stop fuelling a resurgence of AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis through test coordination, refinement of models, public campaigns, and increased funding. Link (journal – Nature) • COVID-19 pandemic response and diversion of resources to it poses threats to HIV prevention, testing and treatment, with the potential to reverse gains made on HIV epidemic in South Africa and globally. Link (website – The Conversation)

Theme	<i>Diversity-related challenges with vaccine development & administration</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Vaccinations</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 clinical trials are failing to enroll diverse populations, despite awareness efforts Link (website – STAT) • Individuals from a variety of cultural and ethnic minority groups have had low influenza vaccination coverage and have also been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 Link (journal – JAMA)

2) Clinical management of COVID-19 and pandemic-related conditions

Theme	<i>Drugs for COVID-19</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Monoclonal antibodies (not a current category)</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment with tocilizumab has lower ventilation and death rates for severe COVID-19 pneumonia in small Italian study. Link (journal - The Lancet) • IgG antibody levels persist in recovered COVID-19 patients longer than originally believed, for about three months. Link (blog - Science) • For multiple physiological reasons, women not only have better outcomes with COVID-19 but may be more naturally immune to it as well. Link (journal – Cell)

Theme	<i>Treatment of COVID-19 sequelae</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Long-COVID</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is now a management guideline for long COVID, the first advice on management of the medium-term impact of COVID-19 in primary care settings. Link (journal – BMJ) • Long COVID is predicted to create hundreds of thousands of chronically ill patients in the US, impacting the medical, payment and insurance, treatment, and social systems. Link (magazine – the Atlantic)

3) Health-system arrangements

Theme	<i>COVID-19 as catalyst for health system reform and shifts toward universality</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Financial arrangements – financing health services</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>COVID-19 presents an opportunity to introduce universal pharmacare in Canada. Link (magazine – Toronto Life)</i> • <i>Pandemic offers opportunities for US health system reform, including changes to insurance coverage, shifts in payment models, ability to address systemic inequities in access and renegotiating the federal-state relationship for public health. Link (journal – NEJM)</i>

Theme	<i>Supply chain and procurement challenges</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Infrastructure planning and resource allocation; purchasing products and services</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>During the first wave of the pandemic, PPE procurement caused significant strain in England and requires a rethinking as the pandemic persists. Link (journal - BMJ)</i> • <i>Governments need to learn lessons on public procurement from the initial wave of the pandemic to establish better relationships with suppliers, make better use of technology, ensure transparency, and look beyond traditional networks. Link(magazine - The Economist Intelligence Unit & UNOPS)</i> • <i>Public investment is urgently needed to develop resilient vaccine supply chains capable of rapidly scaling up vaccine production and delivery. Link (website - Bloomberg Opinion)</i>

4) Economic and social responses

a) Cross-sectoral, education, and broader human services

Theme	<i>Promoting youth service to combat the pandemic and the multitude of challenges youth face</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Children and youth services; Community and social services-supports for community resilience; Education-skill re-development programs</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An ambitious strategy for youth engagement, empowering youth to contribute to the healing of their communities, can aid with pandemic resilience and combat the precariousness of youth mental health, employment, and housing. Link (website - The Intercept)</i>

Theme	<i>Ensuring access to essential services and protections for women</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Culture and gender-domestic and gender-based violence reduction</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sexual and reproductive healthcare has been severely impacted during the pandemic, infringing upon women's rights, and gender-based violence has accelerated during confinement; new approaches for service delivery and outreach are needed to ensure vital protections are maintained. Link (journal - The Lancet)</i>

b) Social policy

Theme	<i>Public transit</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Transportation-Public transportation rules</i>

Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adequately funding public transit can reduce the disproportionate burden placed on the most vulnerable who rely on public transit and support public transit systems as they navigate the pandemic and needs for physical distancing. Link (The Walrus)</i> • <i>Though public transit has seen a nosedive in demand, new ideas for enhancing safety and smoothing out demand through the day through innovation and technology have potential to decrease crowding long-term. Link (blog – Oxford Business Group)</i> • <i>Use of technology has changed the Israeli mass transit system, including the use of Mobility as a Service technology platforms where users can share cars, bikes, taxis and more. Link (blog - World Economic Forum)</i>
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Theme	<i>Food supply chain security amidst the pandemic</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Food safety and security-agricultural processes, food supply security</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The pandemic places global food security at risk by disrupting food availability, access, utilization, and stability; policies are needed to ensure supply of and access to food and HICs and international organizations should support LMICs in this regard. Link (journal - Science)</i> • <i>Ensuring food security in Sub-Saharan Africa will require a scale-up in the collection and use of data, as well as an investment in an evidence clearing house for agriculture. Link (journal - Nature)</i>

c) Economic policy

Theme	<i>Government wealth programs</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Economic development and growth-economic resilience</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In light of major health and financial risks for low-income individuals, wealth boosts in the form of bonds or housing provided to young people can provide an important cushion against risk and help equalize opportunity. Link (website - Bloomberg Opinion)</i>

Theme	<i>Investing in a more inclusive post-pandemic workforce</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>Culture and gender-stigma reduction; Education-skill re-development programs; Employment-worker supports</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Providing people with disabilities, criminal records, and other barriers to participation in the workforce with individualized support and bridges to the workforce can deliver benefits to these individuals as well as society as a whole. Link (magazine - The American Conservative)</i>

d) Environmental and energy policy

Theme	<i>Disaster preparedness during the pandemic</i>
Taxonomy component	<i>No existing category</i>
Source(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communities facing, or at risk of, natural or man-made disasters need to incorporate COVID-19 considerations into their planning and response. Link (website - World Bank Blogs)</i>

Citation: Bullock HL, Sharma K, MacLean A, Al-Khateeb S, Lavis JN. Potential long-term and emergent issues that may need to be prioritized. Hamilton, Canada: COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making about COVID-19 (COVID-END); 21 August 2020.