



# Covid-19: New York City deaths pass 1000 as Trump tells Americans to distance for 30 days

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US President Donald Trump has told Americans to practise social distancing for another 30 days to mitigate the covid-19 pandemic and save lives.

But he did not call for nationwide social distancing rules, saying that states might have individual situations.<sup>1</sup> The US had 189 600 cases of covid-19 and 4000 deaths as of 10 am on 1 April, according to Johns Hopkins University.<sup>2</sup>

New York City, the hardest hit area, reported 41 771 cases with 1096 deaths and about 8500 people in hospital as of 31 March.<sup>3</sup> About half of patients in hospital are aged under 50. A hospital ship with 1000 beds docked on 31 March, and overflow hospitals to take patients with other conditions have been set up in a convention centre, in tents in Central Park, and in other city boroughs. Andrew Cuomo, governor of New York State, warned that the city was “a canary in a coal mine” and that the same situation could occur elsewhere in the nation. His brother, the broadcast journalist Chris Cuomo, has tested positive for the virus.

Trump said at last night’s press briefing [31 March] that the pandemic might peak in the next two weeks and that those weeks would be tough and painful. Even with social distancing, he said, some 100 000 to 240 000 Americans might die from covid-19, based on scientific models presented by Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus coordinator. Trump emphasised that social distancing could “flatten the curve” of the infection’s rise and reduce the number of deaths.

The scientific information apparently persuaded the president to change his previous policy of quickly reopening the US economy and getting people back to work.

About 264 million people—three quarters of all Americans—are under social distancing rules to stay home from work, avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, and stay six feet (2 m) apart. Only 32 of the 50 states, plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico,

have issued orders for non-essential workers to stay at home. Some metropolitan areas in states without such orders have issued their own self-isolation orders, including Birmingham, Alabama; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Houston and Dallas, Texas, according to *Business Insider*.<sup>4</sup>

The president has repeatedly assured the nation that appeals from cities and states for personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators were being met. Mayors and governors have disagreed. Trump has tended to delegate much management of the pandemic to individual states, leading to them competing for scarce supplies.

Ned Lamont, governor of Connecticut, said in a *CMN* interview yesterday [31 March] that the state had a desperate shortage of ventilators and PPE. His state had 975 ventilators, had ordered 1500, and had received 50. “This is crazy. The federal government ought to do this,” Lamont said.

Andrew Cuomo said yesterday [31 March] that he had bought 17 000 ventilators from China and found himself competing with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other states, thus driving up prices.<sup>5</sup>

At his press conference, President Trump said that people who could not find masks might use scarves.

- 1 The White House. The president’s coronavirus guidelines for America. 30 days to slow the spread [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf)
- 2 Coronavirus covid-19 global cases by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University. <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>
- 3 NYC Health. Covid-19: data. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>
- 4 Secon H, Woodward A. More than three-quarters of all Americans have been ordered to stay at home. This map shows which cities and states are under lockdown. *Business Insider* 2020 Apr 1 <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-map-stay-at-home-orders-lockdowns-2020-3>.
- 5 Hogan B. Cuomo blames ventilator shortage on competition with FEMA, states. *New York Post* 2020 March 31. <https://nypost.com/2020/03/31/cuomo-blames-ventilator-shortage-on-competition-with-fema-states/>

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