Coronavirus and Climate Change

8, 9, 10, 11, 12
The two crises are more connected than you might think...
How are coronavirus and climate change related?

Coronavirus and climate change are related in several ways:

1. Both are caused by human interaction with the natural world
2. Both have the potential to cause high mortality rates across the world and large-scale suffering
3. Some responses to curb coronavirus would also be beneficial in responding to climate change
4. Government responses to coronavirus and climate change have been drastically different
How has the response to coronavirus and climate change been different?

The response to coronavirus by governments has been swift, dramatic and expensive. Governments have quickly moved to limit business and the movement of people. Many governments have also spent vast amounts of money to supplement some of the financial effects of coronavirus. Researchers have pointed out that, in contrast, responses to climate change have been far slower, have focused on affordability and on not changing the status quo or the norm.
Why have governments responded differently to coronavirus?

Researchers suggest that the government response to coronavirus has been different because:

1. Coronavirus feels more like a mortal threat because the link between the disease and death is more obvious than the link between climate change and death
2. The timescale - Coronavirus spreads rapidly, whereas climate change happens on a slower scale
3. Clear strategies - WHO released clear strategies to cope with coronavirus, whereas there are a myriad of possible strategies for coronavirus
Although the responses have been different, many have pointed out that the two threats could be responded to in similar ways. For example, to help with both we should:

- Act quickly - take decisive action in responding to the crisis
- Prioritise local connections and accept a ‘new normal’ - individuals should consider ways to reduce their consumption and focus on local connections
- Spend on the right things - some experts are suggesting that government stimulus packages should be directed towards investments in green energy

Which responses to coronavirus would also be beneficial in responding to climate change?
Has coronavirus impacted climate change?

The response to coronavirus has unintentionally resulted in benefits for climate change. They include:

1. Falling emissions and energy use in countries such as China and Italy
2. The hits to the airline industry has seen a reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions
3. The ability for governments to respond quickly and decisively to a crisis has been demonstrated
Experts are concerned about potential negative impact of coronavirus on climate change responses. Concerns include:

1. That governments may use financial hardship (due to the virus) as an excuse to abandon their commitments to emission reductions
2. The global recession may remove the low carbon transition from key priorities
3. International climate negotiations have been delayed
Where does this information come from?


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