

# NEWS/ OPINIONS

## The Financial Outcome of the COVID-19 Crisis

BY HALLE MARTIN

In the last month, 17 million Americans have filed for unemployment, which brings the unemployment rate to 13 percent. That number is expected to grow, with some experts estimating an unemployment rate of 20 percent. The stock market crashed, seeing the largest drops in U.S. history and reaching a 20% decline. This is the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Americans continue to be laid off as businesses close their doors and cut their hours in an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus. So what does this mean for the future of our economy?

Currently, it's not looking good, but the COVID-19 recession might look a bit different compared to economic disasters of the past. Some expect the disease to weaken over the summer. Those infected and recovered are believed to be immune, and a vaccine should be on the way. This means that within a year's time, the economy may be able to recover rather quickly, unlike the decade-long Great Depression.

Some economists are expecting a relatively quick rebound once the virus is contained. The International Monetary Fund warns that the recession could extend into 2021 if global policymakers do not act fast. Currently, the IMF is expecting GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to shrink by 3% this year, causing a significantly worse recession than the financial crisis of 2008. However, they are predicting a 2021 rebound. GDP is not expected to reach initial projections but should make a comeback assuming we take action. Additionally, the IMF is expecting a 5.8% economic growth next year if the virus begins to slow in the second half of 2020.

When the pandemic is officially over, or more manageable, and restrictions are lifted, the plan is for most workers to return to their jobs and for businesses to reopen. After being cooped up for months, many are likely to return to their old habits and start spending again. With this current recession, we know what is causing it, and it is not a result of structural problems within our economy. These two factors set our current economic troubles apart from past recessions and can be considered a hopeful sign for a historically quick recovery.

We could also see a very different outcome. Some businesses have already begun to permanently close during the pandemic, especially those that were already financially struggling. More businesses will likely follow suit, and as other businesses reopen their doors, they may not be hiring on a full staff right away. Consumers may choose to be more frugal going forward and keep up with their recent lifestyle changes, as seen in past recessions. Once everything starts to open up again, it is expected that much of the public will continue to isolate themselves as a protective measure.

Developing countries will be hit the hardest, and many are already feeling the heat despite a lack of COVID-19 breakouts. It will be even harder for them to pay back their debts as interest rates increase on loans. Oil-rich countries are especially vulnerable right now as gas prices continue to dwindle.

It is tough to say what the outcome of the coronavirus-caused recession will be, but it largely depends on what happens in the next few months. If the virus slows, we will have a better chance of financial recovery, but if it continues longer than expected, how we rebound could look a lot different than what is currently being predicted.

The longer this virus rages on, the grimmer it looks for the state of our economy, adding to the importance of government's acting fast to slow the spread of COVID-19. The sooner we can get this virus contained, the sooner we can start to rebuild and regrow our finances.

As of April, COVID-19 cases and deaths are showing signs of stabilization, and the stock market is slowly rising. This may be a sign of optimism that could backfire with a second wave of outbreaks, or it could be a small step towards recovery. For now, it is in everyone's best interest to stay safe and handle their finances wisely.

## Staying Sane During Quarantine

BY HALLE MARTIN

It's week-who-knows-what of quarantine. Some of us are loving it, while others are struggling to keep their sanity. Maybe you've already lost it. Shelter-in-place looks at least a little bit different for each of us, and some are more equipped to handle it than others.

There are celebrities and motivational figures telling us to spend this time doing something we've always wanted to do but have never had the time: get fit, remodel your home, learn a new language, etc. That might be right up your alley, or it might be the last thing you want to hear. While we are all in this together, we are all affected differently, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the COVID-19 crisis.

If you are stuck at home, you might be sleeping well past noon or finding yourself saying "it's five o'clock somewhere," earlier and earlier into the day, and that's okay. There is no wrong or right way to cope. You don't have to be on top of everything or keeping it together right now. These circumstances are enough to push anybody over the edge, but I'd like to try to reel you back in just a little bit.

My best advice is to try and do one thing each day that makes you feel good about yourself. That doesn't have to be going for a five-mile run, but by all means, if that's what you want to do, more power to you. Take a shower, read a chapter out of a book, make something good to eat, or go for a walk around the block. It doesn't have to be something big, but it is easy to fall into a rut and turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms during this time.

If you're not sure where to start, here are some things I've been doing to keep a somewhat positive mindset.

If you're sheltering in place with others, I would recommend breaking out a board game at least once. This is a great way to be in the moment, get some human interaction, and hopefully have a little bit of fun. A lot of people are turning to video games right now, which is great, but give your eyes a break and let your gaming chair relieve a little tension too.

Try and get outside for a little bit of exercise. It is not natural for our bodies to be stuck inside like this, and I thank the heavens above for not releasing this storm upon us during the dead of winter. It could be negative twenty degrees outside and dark at 4 pm. Take advantage of the sunshine and warmer weather. You don't have to be out hopscotching every day, but try to get outside and move around at least once a week. A little fresh air and vitamin D can do wonders.

I don't know about everyone else, but one thing my grocery stores have not been lacking is fresh produce. Fresh fruits and vegetables are great for building your immune system, and that is something none of us should be taking for granted right now. Next time you make a grocery run (please don't go more than you need to) try to stock up on some fresh produce and make something good to eat. As I've been struggling to get through my last year of college, I've found myself turning to fast food for a quick way to refuel. Having time to be at home and actually make a meal has been one of the few positive silver linings for me during this very dark time.

My last bit of advice is to put down your phone. I got my weekly report this week and found out that my screen time had increased 66% for an average of FOUR HOURS A DAY. We are lucky to have smartphones in a time like this. They are a great way to connect with family, stay informed, and find entertainment, but they can also be a source for obsessive behavior and a lot of bad news. Whether you're looking for it or not, opening your phone right now exposes you to so much negativity. We should be keeping ourselves informed, now more than ever, but constantly being bombarded with nerve-racking headlines isn't going to help anyone.

The best thing we can do is try to stay positive and take care of ourselves, which may not be as easy as it sounds, but give it your best effort. If you find yourself going to a dark place, try to change your mindset by doing something good for your mind and your body. Make sure you are staying on top of your hygiene, eating something nutritious, getting exercise, and trying to have some fun. We don't have to come out of this being our best selves, but let's at least try to come out of it in one piece.