



Coronavirus (COVID-19): These 4 Charts Show How Important Social Distancing Is

Description

[*A version of this article was originally published on Fool.com.au, written by Ryan Newman*](#)

We're all about investing here at The Motley Fool. But, like everyone else, we're also enduring the vast effects of the [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#) crisis. The purpose of this article is to help you to understand the situation better, as well as how *you* can make a meaningful difference.

Which Way Will Canada Go?

As long-term investors, we're used to the idea of allowing compounding to work in our favour. Unfortunately, the exponential spread of COVID-19 is well and truly working against us.

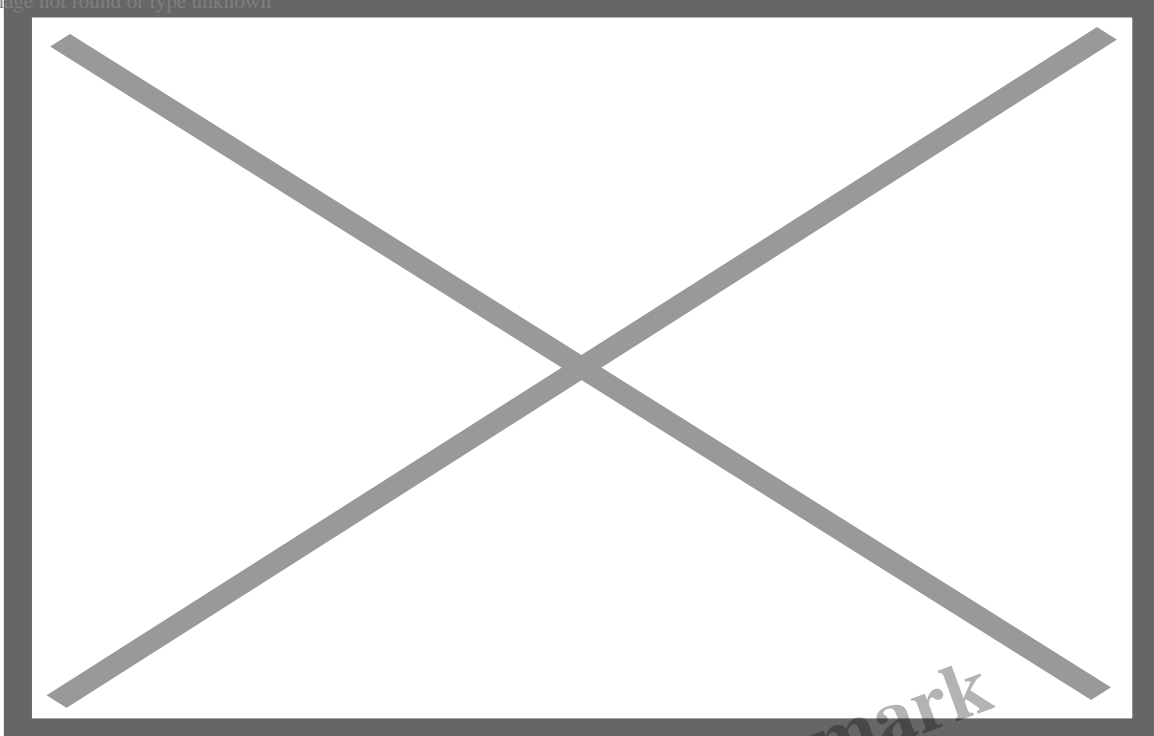
The chart below shows the number of days since seven individual countries recorded their 100th case. One hundred cases mightn't sound like a big deal, but the chart makes it clear that it does not take long for that to become a full-blown problem.

Indeed, Italy only reported its 100th case on 23 February. As of 22 March 2020 it had more than 53,000. That's a compounded *daily* growth rate of >23%; at the current rate of growth you would expect the number of cases to double within the next 6 days.

For context, it's been 13 days since Canada recorded its 100th case. As of 23 March, it had 2,091 cases...

This is why **social distancing is key**. That, along with extensive tracking of cases, has allowed other nations such as South Korea to reduce that compounding effect, thus helping to ease the caseload for its health system. That, in turn, is likely to have played a big role in reducing its fatality rate (as at yesterday, the fatality rate was 10.3% for Italy versus 1.2% in South Korea).

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Data Source: Worldometers

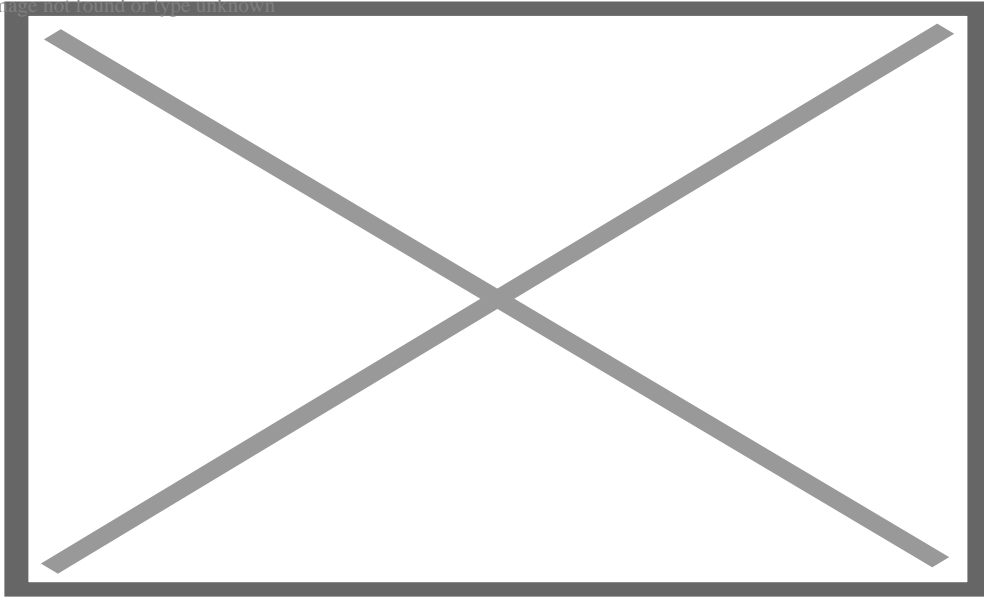
South Korea has so far managed to 'flatten the curve', something which Italy clearly has not managed. It is vital that Canada citizens do their part to ensure we do not follow in Italy's footsteps.

Still Don't Think Social Distancing Works?

Early on, COVID-19 was thought to have a reproduction rate — measured by "R0" (pronounced R-naught) of approximately 2.6x, meaning that the average infected person infects 2.6 others. However, that is based on China's experience, and we know that China implemented a number of draconian measures to limit the spread. Hence, a more realistic R0 could well be higher than 3.

With more than 2,000 Brits already infected with the coronavirus, it's scary to imagine what that our caseload would look like 30 days from now if we did not implement measures to stop that from happening.

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Source: TheSpinOff.co.nz

The visual above also demonstrates the importance of breaking that cycle through social distancing. Regardless of whether you believe you are in the high-risk category, by putting yourself in a position where you may catch the virus exacerbates the spread through our society.

There's also an article that's been doing the rounds which contains visual simulations that expertly demonstrate how distancing can help to 'flatten the curve':

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/corona-simulator/>

But I'm Not In The High Risk Category?

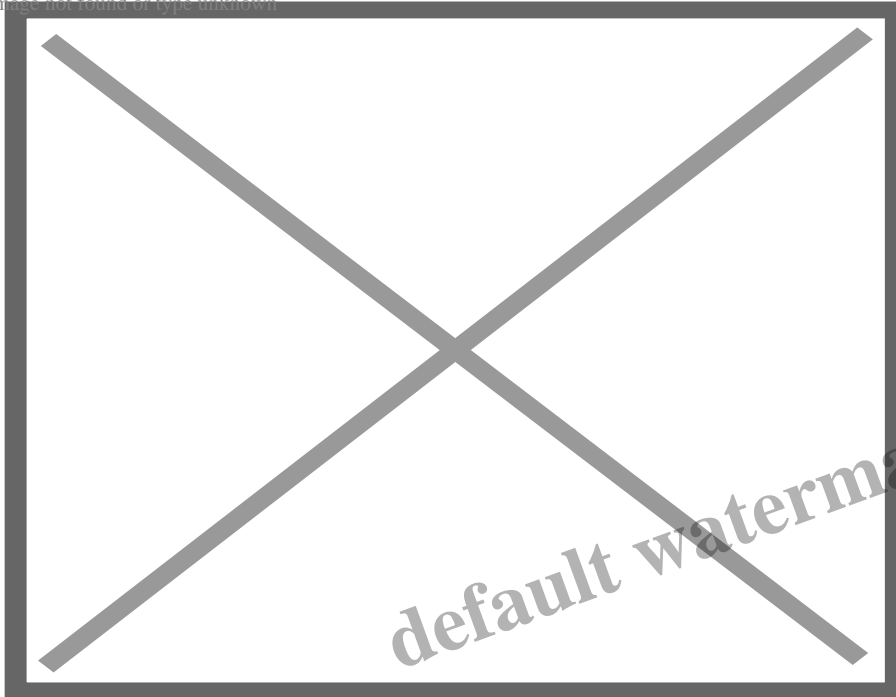
First of all, COVID-19 is not a disease that only impacts the elderly and the immunosuppressed. Yes, the data so far shows that if you're young you are less likely to die from COVID-19.

But that doesn't mean young people are immune, nor does it mean that a younger individual won't need a regular or intensive-care hospital bed. And if all the beds are taken, the level of care the nurses and doctors can provide diminishes.

Secondly, it is *vital* that you consider the people you may pass this disease on to. The grim reality is, should you pass this disease on to your grandparents — or even your parents — they will likely be in a higher risk category than you are. You may also be passing it on to someone at a higher risk, such as someone undergoing chemotherapy for cancer or even someone who has the common cold!

Perhaps one reason why South Korea has managed to get a better handle on the situation in that country (relative to Italy) is that they tested more younger individuals, many of whom showed positive test results. That, in turn, forced those individuals into isolation, limiting their ability to infect others. On the other hand, Italy appears to have tested more older patients who were showing symptoms — it's likely there are others in the country who are spreading the virus unknowingly.

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Source: Medium/Andreas Backhaus

The message is clear: **Stay home wherever possible.** The government has this morning implemented strict measures that will hopefully drive society towards this goal.

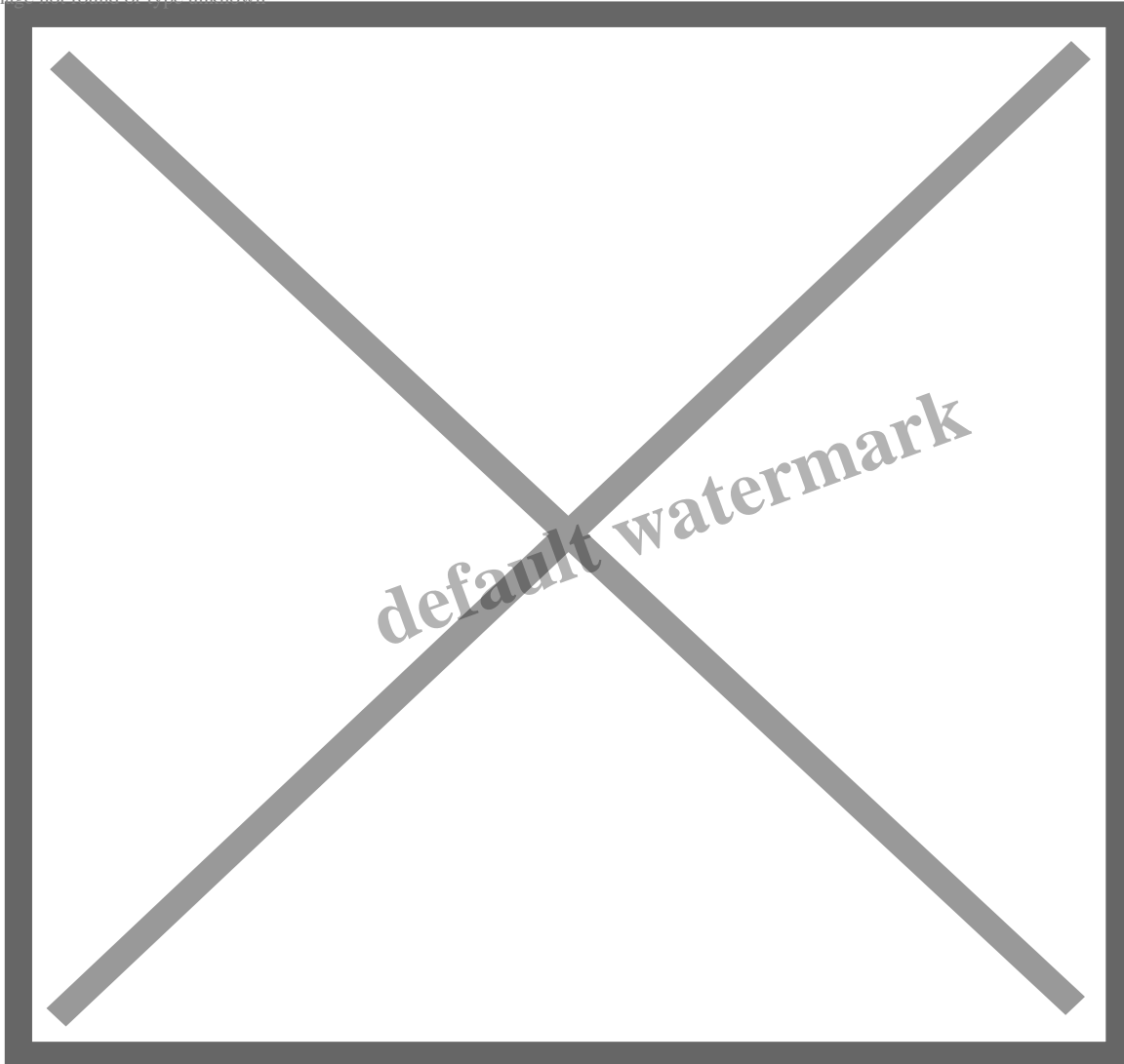
Wash Your Hands

“At the molecular level, soap breaks things apart. At the level of society, it helps hold everything together.” — [The New York Times](#)

We touch our faces all the time, without even realising it. While it's important to try to avoid this during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's also vital that we wash our hands regularly.

Why? Because when you wash your hands with soap and water, the soap molecules wedge themselves into certain microbes and virus cells. In doing so, they act as a 'crossbar', according to Prof. Pall Thordarson, acting head of chemistry at the University of New South Wales, as cited by The New York Times, literally breaking open the virus cell and deeming it useless. In other words, the virus' entire process is disrupted.

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Source: The New York Times

My wife initially laughed at me when I asked her if she'd like me to 'show her how to wash her hands properly', but a 'quick rinse with soap' is sure to leave plenty of microbes or virus cells on your hands. If you're washing your hands regularly, you might as well make sure you're doing it [properly](#)!

Foolish Bottom Line

I'm not an epidemiologist, virologist, doctor, nor a mathematician. I by no means claim to be an expert. As a research analyst, however, I have been following the Coronavirus situation since the early days, and am taking precautions to protect myself and my family.

What's more, I am still finding that many individuals are failing to recognise the severity of this situation from a health perspective. Hopefully, these charts help readers to understand and do their part to stop the spread. As the information shows, every reader that this leaves an impression on is one less person who is likely to spread the disease.

One more thing: 2020 is shaping to be one of, if not *the* most difficult years of our lives. But the important thing to remember is that ***this too shall pass***. It will take a concerted effort from each of us, but the more we adhere to the guidelines — the social distancing, the regular handwashing, and staying at home where possible — the sooner this will pass, and the sooner we can get back to our normal lives.

Stay safe, stay home, and wash those hands!

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