

Twitter's saddest weeks ever

Researchers aiming to quantify global happiness on social media have called [the period starting on 26 May “the saddest two weeks” on Twitter](#). Since 2008, a pair of applied mathematicians have been gauging the positivity and negativity of randomly sampled tweets. Their happiness index had been gradually recovering from the bleak beginnings of the coronavirus pandemic, but dropped sharply following the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota late last month. The lowest point, in May, was far below the previous record, hit after a mass shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2017. But sadness can galvanize people into action. “It’s one thing to tell the world ‘this is the saddest week’,” says social scientist Desmond Patton. “But also in the saddest week, you have thousands and thousands of people who are now activated and moving towards equality and social justice.”

[Nature](#) | 3 min read

Sharpiegate panel condemns NOAA head

The head of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [violated the agency’s ethics code last year when he backed up US President Donald Trump’s claims](#) that a hurricane could hit Alabama, finds a NOAA panel. The panel concluded that acting administrator Neil Jacobs “engaged in the misconduct intentionally, knowingly, or in reckless disregard” of the agency’s scientific-integrity policy by censoring its office in Birmingham, Alabama, which had tweeted that the state would not see a major impact from Hurricane Dorian. The controversy was dubbed ‘sharpiegate’ after Trump showed a NOAA map that had been altered with a black marker during a press conference last September.

[New York Times](#) | 3 min read



The steroid dexamethasone was given to thousands of people critically ill with the coronavirus in a randomized, controlled trial. ((Dr P. Marazzi/SPL))

Dexamethasone shown to save lives

A cheap and widely available steroid called dexamethasone is [the first drug to be shown to reduce deaths among people seriously ill with COVID-19](#). Researchers working with the Randomized Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy (RECOVERY) trial, which is assessing the capacity of six medications to treat the disease, announced the findings in a press release. The results have not yet been peer reviewed.

The study enrolled 2,100 participants who received dexamethasone and tracked how they fared in comparison with about 4,300 people who received standard care. For people on ventilators, it reduced deaths by about one-third. For patients needing oxygen, it cut the risk of death by one-fifth. The drug seems to reduce the damage from a hyperactive immune reaction called cytokine storm.

[Nature](#) | 5 min read

Scientists close in on fatality rate

One of the most crucial questions about an emerging infectious disease such as the new coronavirus is how deadly it is — the infection fatality rate (IFR). This is the proportion of infected people who will die as a result, including those who don't get tested or show symptoms. Now, numerous studies — using a range of methods — [estimate that 0.5-1% of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 will die](#). There are many caveats: the IFR is particularly hard to pin down for COVID-19 because there are many infected people who don't show symptoms, and many countries are struggling to count all their virus-related deaths.

[Nature](#) | 7 min read

We were warned

A [ranking of the world's health-care systems](#), drawn up before the pandemic by iconoclastic health researcher Ezekiel Emanuel, “presciently marks the United States among the worst in class”, writes reviewer Eric Topol. Emanuel dug deep into 22 dimensions on topics including health-insurance coverage, financing, payment, delivery, pharmacy prices and workforce. Nowhere is crowned outright winner, but four strong contenders — Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Taiwan — have so far been among the most successful in managing COVID-19.

[Nature](#) | 6 min read

Coronapod: The Surgisphere scandal

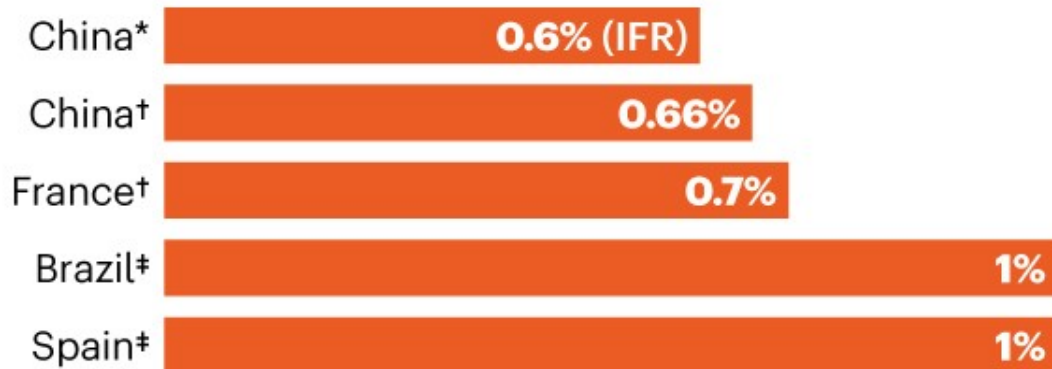
A [questionable data set from a mysterious company](#) has forced high-profile retractions and thrown doubt on drug trials and public-health policies. The *Nature* news team explores the fallout for research and for public trust.

[Nature Coronapod podcast](#) | 33 min listen

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HOW DEADLY IS SARS-COV-2?

The infection fatality rate (IFR) is the proportion of people with COVID-19 who will die from the disease. Estimates are for specific regions, and can vary depending on demographics, health-care access and study methodology.



*Estimate based on natural experiment.

†Estimate based on modelling.

‡Estimate based on prevalence data.

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NOTABLE QUOTABLE

“I eat, breathe, sleep science.”

In 2018, biologist [Lynika Strozier](#) told the *Chicago Reader* about her passion for science. On Wednesday, the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, where she worked, announced that [Strozier had died owing to complications from COVID-19](#), aged 35. Strozier, who had a [disadvantaged childhood and a learning disability](#), established an enviable scientific career. Her family and colleagues plan to [establish a scholarship fund](#) for aspiring scientists in her honour.

Features & opinion

Study animals are often STRANGE

Are your turtles tired, your spiders jaded or your fish oddly bold? Ten years to the day after the call to widen the pool of human participants in psychology studies beyond those from WEIRD

societies (that's Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic), animal-behaviour researchers Michael Webster and Christian Rutz write that “mounting evidence suggests that there could be similar sampling problems in research on animals”. They propose [a framework with a fitting acronym — STRANGE](#) — that researchers can use to design studies, and to declare and discuss potential biases.

[Nature](#) | 10 min read

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“It’s a startling result. It will clearly have a massive global impact.”

Intensive-care physician Kenneth Baillie, who serves on the steering committee of the RECOVERY coronavirus-drug trial, responds to results suggesting that dexamethasone reduces deaths among seriously ill people with COVID-19. ([Nature](#) | [x min read](#))

Astronomy Picture of the Day — that’s APOD to fans — celebrates [25 years of stunning space photography](#) today. This delightful [oral history of the site from 2015](#) tells the story of its birth and explains why it still looks basically like it did in 1995.

Flora Graham, senior editor, Nature Briefing

With contributions by David Cyranoski and Davide Castelvecchi

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