At the end of 2019 the World Health Organization (WHO) in China was informed about a pneumonia with an unknown cause that was spreading in the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, China. WHO continued to track the cases of this unknown virus and on 21 January 2020, WHO representatives visited the city of Wuhan. After this visit the Chinese Government released test kits to other countries that would allow them to test for the novel coronavirus. These measures were taken in order to see whether or not the virus was spreading globally. The Chinese government simultaneously released protocols for other countries should the virus spread and leave the boarders of China. In order to contain the spread of the virus a strict lock down was imposed on the city of Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak.

Although several measures were taken by the Chinese government to try and contain the virus,

the virus managed to start spreading itself across the world. This is seen in the gif as initially China was the only country with high reported confirmed cases however countries slowly started to report cases of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). As China’s infection rate rose rapidly, confirmed cases of COVID-19 in countries outside China started to rise, at an alarming rate. At first several countries only confirmed a few cases however due to the nature of the virus, it started to spread exponentially. The gif shows the shade of countries in European region initially darkening faster than most countries around the world as Italy and Spain experienced drastic increases in confirmed cases. The rest of the world started imposing laws to prevent the spread of the virus. The promotion of social distancing helped reduce the rate at which the virus was spreading however without full compliance the virus spread from one person to another and evidently across the world as the map in the gif starts to fill out with different shades of yellows and reds as time progresses.

Initially the United States did not see the virus as a threat to their country, despite the fact that the country was one of the first countries, outside China, to report confirmed cases of COVID-19 within her boarders. Although confirmed cases were on the rise, business continued as usual. Donald Trump eventually came to the realisation of the severity of the virus, as the virus started to infect the American population rapidly as seen by the fast-paced change in the United States colour tone in the gif. Although Trump promoted social distancing, his efforts were too little, too late. While China successfully contained the spread of the virus within her boarders the spread of the virus continued to exponentially grow in the United States and other countries. The rate at which the virus has spread has resulted in the United States having the highest shade of red on the map, indicating the highest count of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the world.

As the virus spread like wildfire through Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Oceania, the majority of the African continent remained untouched (evidenced by grey shaded regions across the continent). As the most vulnerable continent in the world the need to keep COVID-19 out of Africa was a top priority. However, the spread of the virus was inevitable and COVID-19 soon made its way into every country on the African continent. African governments responded with stringent laws directed towards containing the spread of virus within the continent. In turn the continent has not followed in the footsteps of America, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. On the map the continent has remained on the lighter shade of the yellow-red colour palette indicating a slow growth of confirmed cases. The majority of the confirmed cases in Africa are in South Africa. The South African president has understood the severity of the virus and has taken drastic measure to try and contain it. The country went into a 5-week lockdown, where all non-essential businesses were closed, and citizens were required to stay at home. The lockdown saw extremely favorable results with respect to a decrease in the growth rate of confirmed cases in the country. As a whole the African continent has been able to remain on the lighter side of the colour palette, showing some evidence of containment, while the rest of the world has gradually progressed to the darker side of this tonal colour palette.

Without a vaccine in sight the virus will continue to spread and claim the lives of many. Governments around the world are tasked with a difficult challenge of ensuring the safety of their citizens while simultaneously keeping their economies open. A complete lockdown would help to contain the virus and flatten the curve however, this is not a feasible solution in the long run. With millions of people losing their jobs across the world governments need to be aware of the knock-on effects COVID-19 is having and not only focus on those infected with the virus.