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Protest coverage dwarfs coronavirus

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Coverage of George Floyd's death and the ensuing protests this weekend completely dwarfed coverage of the coronavirus, even as the death toll from the pandemic ticked beyond 100,000 in the U.S.

Why it matters: For months, Americans struggled to understand the severity of the pandemic, as hospitals needed to stay closed to outside visitors, let alone journalists with cameras. Now, the opposite is unfolding, with stark images and videos going viral around the protests sweeping the country.

By the numbers: Across the board, coverage of the protests and demand for that content is skyrocketing, overtaking news about the pandemic.

- **On television,** wall-to-wall coverage of the protests has dominated the airwaves. On Sunday, around 2.5% of the combined airtime of CNN, MSNBC and Fox News mentioned the coronavirus, or related words (COVID-19, pandemic, etc.), while around 25% of the airtime mentioned the Floyd protests or related words (Black Lives Matter, demonstrations, etc.), according to data from the Internet Archive Television News Archive.
- **On social media,** interest in the fallout from the Floyd killing took off as protests raged at the end of last week and surpassed the coronavirus on Thursday, according to data from NewsWhip. By Saturday, there were 14 times as many interactions on stories about the protests.

Wednesday evening and continued to outrank it through the weekend, according to data from Google Trends. "Minneapolis" overtook "coronavirus" on Thursday night — the second evening when protests turned violent.

- **Online**, articles about "police brutality" were 6.8 times more in demand than articles about "coronavirus," averaging 3,800 views per article, according to data from web analytics company Parse.ly.

The big picture: The media has the ability to shape the outcomes of both crises, depending on the way that it covers them.

- The extensive visual coverage of the protests has reinforced the intensity of the wider #BlackLivesMatter movement, even if only a small percentage of Americans comparatively were actually involved in the demonstrations.
- Meanwhile, the lack of visuals around the coronavirus, in addition to loosened stay-at-home restrictions, has made it easier for networks and the public to move on, even though many places in the country are experiencing an [uptick](#) in cases and/or deaths.

Be smart: Ideally, the media should have no problem paying attention to both issues, but pressure to keep viewers glued to their screens will make it difficult to avoid the unique visual opportunity that the protests present.

accounts of grief- and rage-inducing stories. Most news outlets have had to rely on charts and coverage press conferences with health and government officials to explain the severity of the pandemic.

One constant across both issues is that the press itself was intimately impacted.

- During the coronavirus, dozens of outlets faced [layoffs or closures](#) due mostly to the collapse of the ad market. Newsrooms and broadcasters also needed to reconfigure for remote work.
- During the protests, journalists [faced](#) record levels of police and protest brutality.

The bottom line: The coronavirus has been the biggest story over the last few months in part because it's largely been the only story. In the span of a week, that changed as our health and economic pain shifted to social and systemic pain.





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Kyle Daly
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Illustration: Aïda Amer/Axios

President Trump's call to treat antifa supporters like terrorists could be a green light for high-tech surveillance of dissidents.

Why it matters: It's unlikely the Trump administration can designate antifa as a terrorist group in any legally meaningful way, but the declaration gives law enforcement tacit approval to use a plethora of tech tools to monitor protesters and left-leaning activists.

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David Nather
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The biggest crisis since 1968

Illustration: Aïda Amer/Axios. Photo: Bettmann/Contributor

The year 1968 has been on a lot of people's minds lately — another year of protests, violence and upheaval that seemed to be tearing the nation apart.

Yes, but: This crisis also has moments we've never seen before — and some historians and experts say the differences suggest that 2020 doesn't compare well at all.

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Dion Rabouin
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SoftBank to launch \$100M fund backing companies led by people of color

Illustration: Aïda Amer/Axios

employees early Wednesday that the firm will create a \$100 million fund that "will only invest in companies led by founders and entrepreneurs of color."

Why it matters: The Opportunity Growth Fund is one of the first to put significant capital behind companies' statements of empathy and outrage in response to protests over systemic racism in the U.S. typified by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other African Americans by police.

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