

Samantha Sitarz  
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### **Public Health Pandemics**

COVID-19 stands apart from the 1918 influenza pandemic and the early years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in important ways. COVID-19 spread around the world within months after first being reported in late 2019, driven by extensive global travel and interconnected economies.<sup>1,2</sup> By comparison, the 1918 pandemic spread more slowly, though it caused massive mortality, and HIV/AIDS developed over years with a distinct transmission pattern and long incubation. Another key difference is the speed of vaccine development. COVID-19 vaccines were available within one year, which was not possible in 1918 and has not been fully achieved for HIV/AIDS. Advances in epidemiology, laboratory science, and global surveillance enabled more rapid detection and response to COVID-19 compared to earlier pandemics.<sup>1</sup>

Community adherence to public health measures has strongly influenced outcomes across pandemics. For COVID-19, widespread interventions such as mask use, social distancing, lockdowns, and travel restrictions helped slow transmission, but their success depended on public compliance.<sup>1,2</sup> Trust in authorities, clear communication, and sustained willingness to follow guidance shaped the trajectory of the pandemic. Over time, pandemic fatigue, misinformation, and political divisions reduced adherence. In contrast, during the 1918 influenza, communication was slower and measures were inconsistent, while the early HIV/AIDS response was hindered by stigma and denial. These differences show how community behavior, shaped by context and social forces, determines the effectiveness of public health strategies.

## References

1. Zoppi L. How does the COVID-19 Pandemic Compare to Other Pandemics? News-Medical.net. Published October 7, 2020. Accessed September 6, 2025. <https://www.news-medical.net/health/How-does-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-Compare-to-Other-Pandemics.aspx>
2. Pitlik SD. COVID-19 Compared to Other Pandemic Diseases. *Rambam Maimonides Medical Journal*. 2020;11(3):e0027. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5041/rmmj.10418>