

# A History of Pandemics over the Ages and the Human Cost

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This is an interesting piece on a very current issue. As the authors note, the world has seen a long history of pandemics.

The authors note that they concentrate on pandemics (per the WHO definition) rather than epidemics - it would have been helpful to have more detail on the rationale behind this choice.

The authors present the historical facts of the pandemics (the Antonine Plague, the Plague of Justinian, the Black Death, the cholera pandemics, and the flu pandemics) in a fair amount of detail.

Some additional analysis on the human cost of the pandemics would have provided the broader context within which to examine these disasters. In particular, some further elaboration on the intersections between disease and already existing societal inequalities (that the authors briefly refer to) would have been helpful.

The authors discuss the role of technology and mobility in the spread of disease - what about, for instance, the action or inaction of governments? One response has been the acquisition by the state of sweeping new powers to police individuals - parallels can be found in India's Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 that enabled the government to enforce plague regulations.

It would also be interesting to expand on the association of disease with specific communities, which has happened both in the past and at present. What can these histories tell us about state and societal responses to the current pandemic?

## Article Information

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The references are a bit thin - it would have been helpful, for instance, to cite the specific WHO definitions being referred and the sources for the information in the table.

There is also extensive scholarship on the history of pandemics, including work by David Arnold, Sanjoy Bhattacharya, and Felice Batlan.