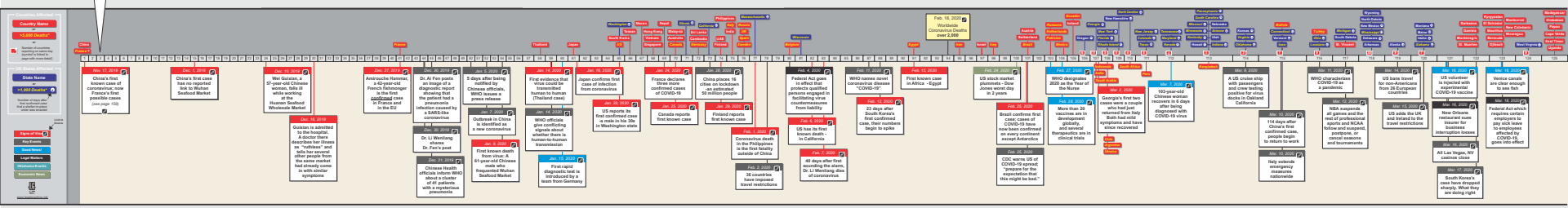
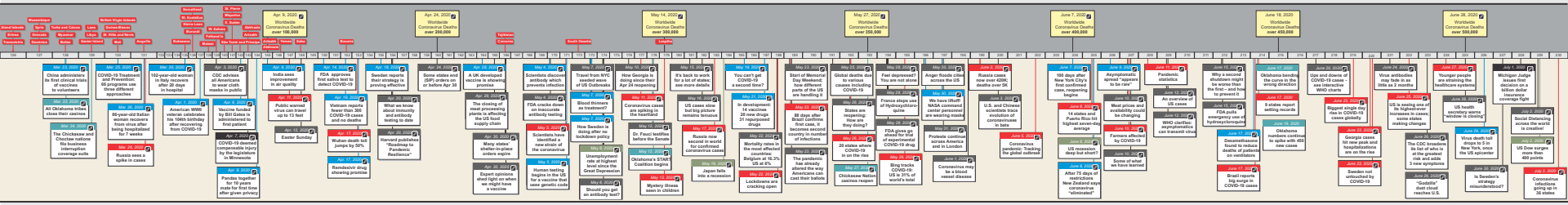
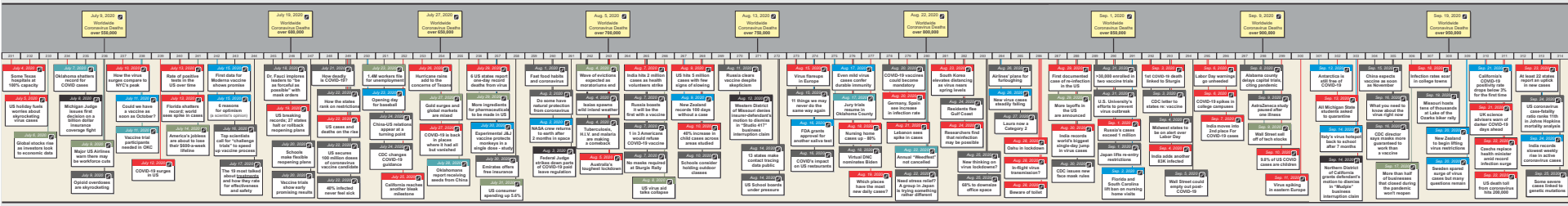
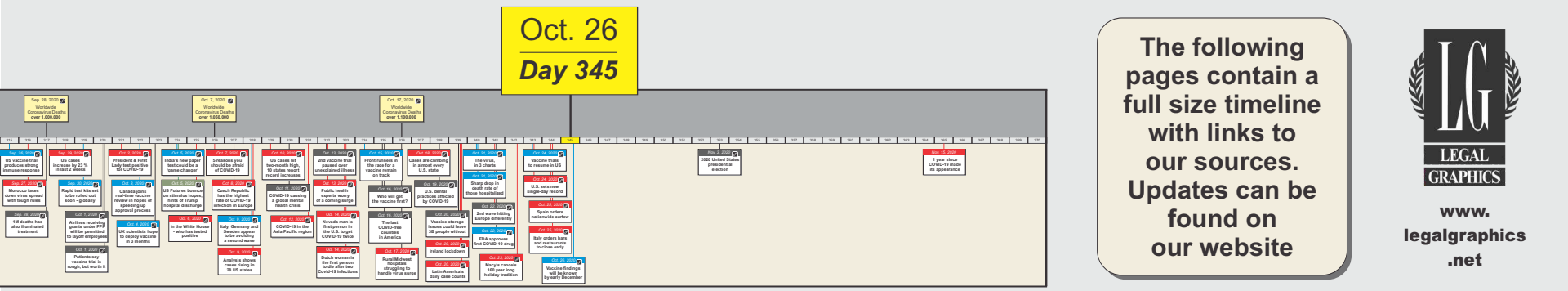
COVID-19 Events

Days since first sign of virus









Oct. 26

Day 345

The following pages contain a full size timeline with links to our sources. Updates can be found on our website

LEGAL GRAPHICS

www.legalgraphics.net

COVID-19 Events

Countries Affected

Country Name

or

>5,000 Deaths*

or

Number of countries reporting on same day (symbol is linked to page with more detail)

US States Affected

State Name

or

>1,000 Deaths* **#**

Number of days after first confirmed case that a shelter-in-place order was enacted

*Number as of timeline revision date

Link to Source

- Signs of Virus
- Key Events
- Good News!
- Legal Matters
- Oklahoma Events
- Economic News

Number of days since first sign of virus

China

France ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

Nov. 17, 2019

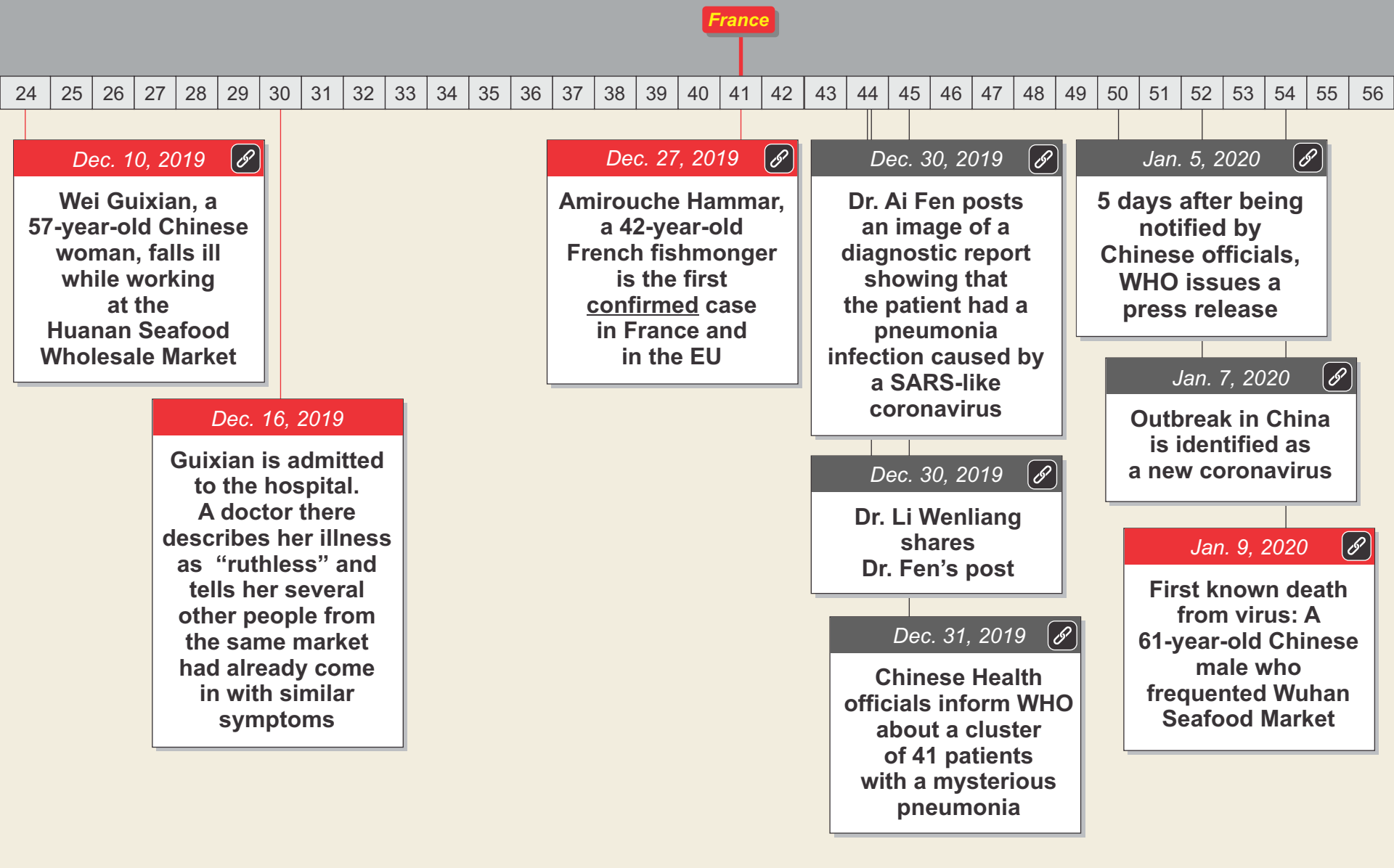
China's first known case of coronavirus; now France's first possible cases

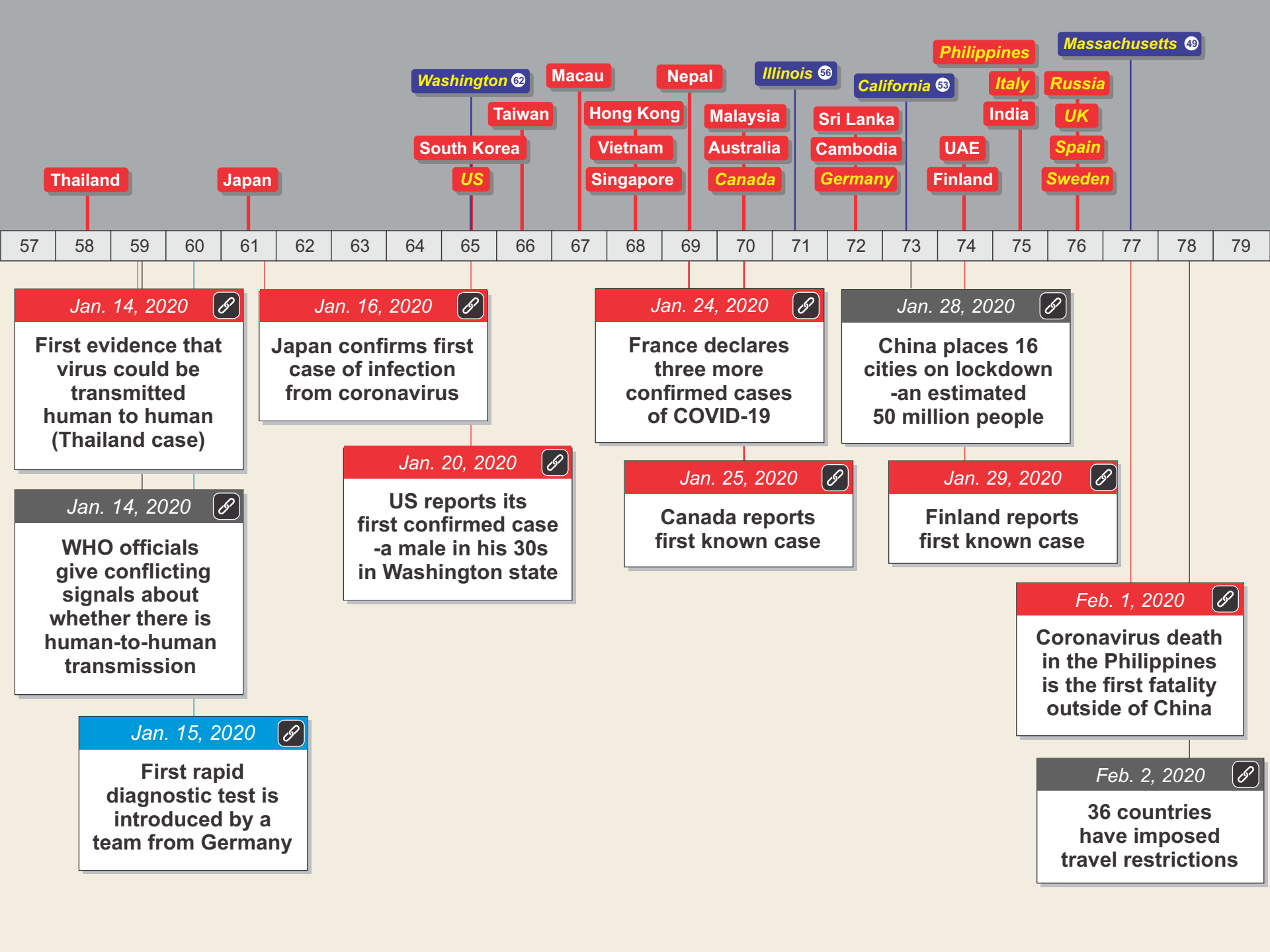
(see page 152)

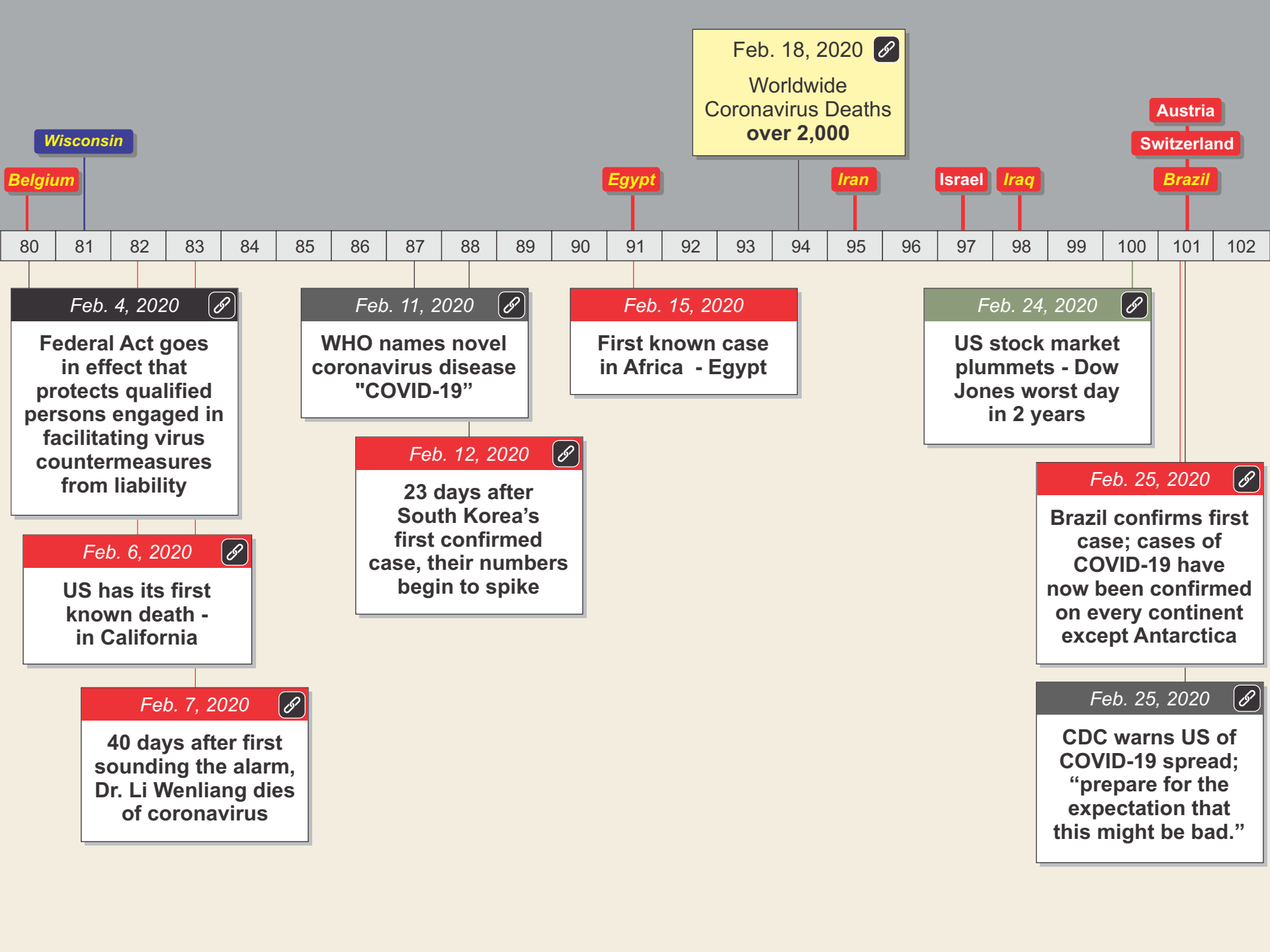
Dec. 1, 2019

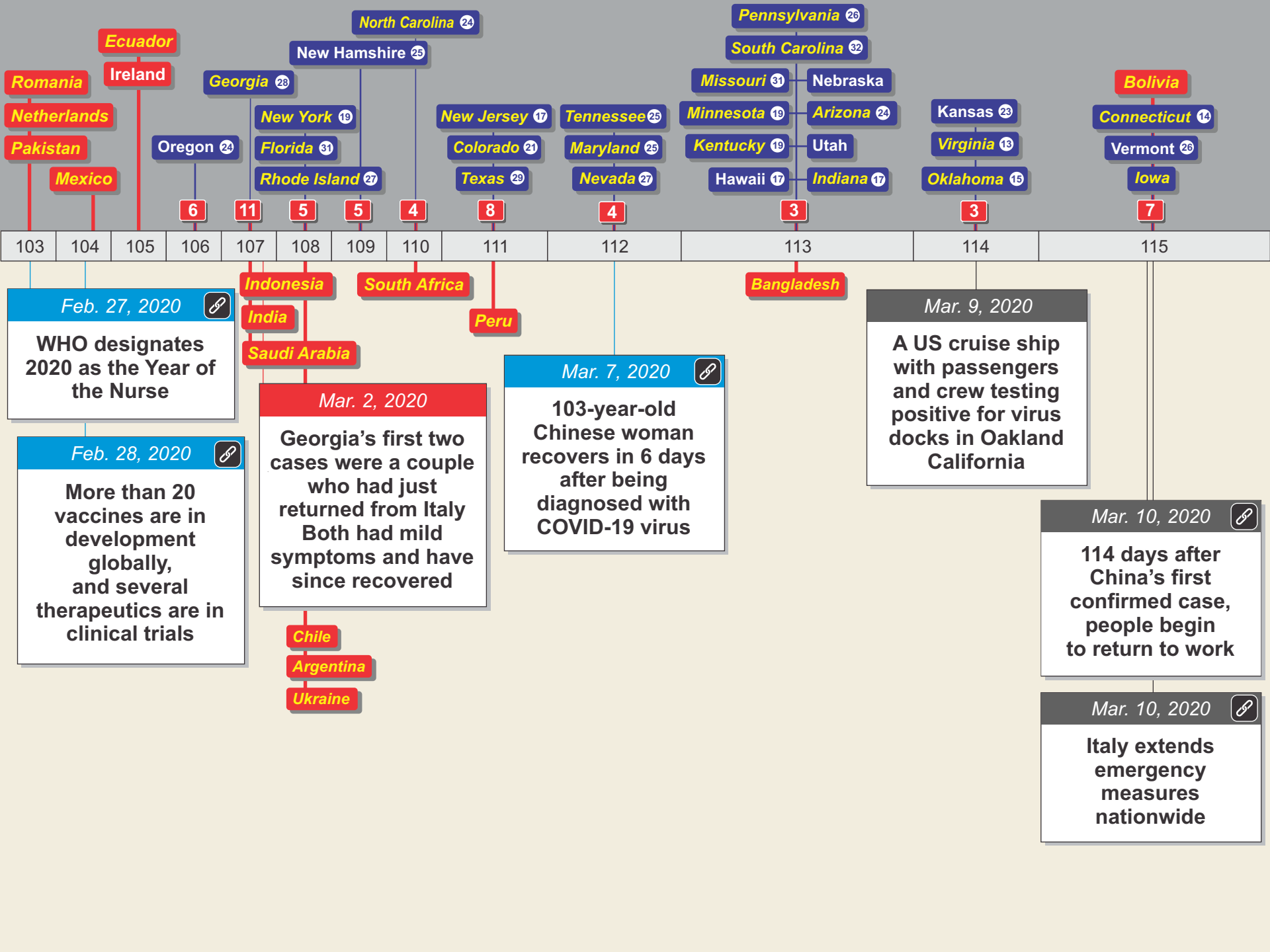
China's first case has no reported link to Wuhan Seafood Market

www.legalgraphics.net


France
24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56
Dec. 10, 2019
Wei Guixian, a 57-year-old Chinese woman, falls ill while working at the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market
Dec. 16, 2019
Guixian is admitted to the hospital. A doctor there describes her illness as "ruthless" and tells her several other people from the same market had already come in with similar symptoms
Dec. 27, 2019
Amirouche Hammar, a 42-year-old French fishmonger is the first confirmed case in France and in the EU
Dec. 30, 2019
Dr. Ai Fen posts an image of a diagnostic report showing that the patient had a pneumonia infection caused by a SARS-like coronavirus
Dec. 30, 2019
Dr. Li Wenliang shares Dr. Fen's post
Dec. 31, 2019
Chinese Health officials inform WHO about a cluster of 41 patients with a mysterious pneumonia
Jan. 5, 2020
5 days after being notified by Chinese officials, WHO issues a press release
Jan. 7, 2020
Outbreak in China is identified as a new coronavirus
Jan. 9, 2020
First known death from virus: A 61-year-old Chinese male who frequented Wuhan Seafood Market


Thailand
Japan
Washington 62
South Korea
US
Taiwan
Macau
Hong Kong
Vietnam
Singapore
Nepal
Malaysia
Australia
Canada
Illinois 56
Sri Lanka
Cambodia
Germany
California 53
UAE
Finland
Philippines
Italy
India
Massachusetts 49
Russia
UK
Spain
Sweden
57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79
Jan. 14, 2020
First evidence that virus could be transmitted human to human (Thailand case)
Jan. 14, 2020
WHO officials give conflicting signals about whether there is human-to-human transmission
Jan. 15, 2020
First rapid diagnostic test is introduced by a team from Germany
Jan. 16, 2020
Japan confirms first case of infection from coronavirus
Jan. 20, 2020
US reports its first confirmed case -a male in his 30s in Washington state
Jan. 24, 2020
France declares three more confirmed cases of COVID-19
Jan. 25, 2020
Canada reports first known case
Jan. 28, 2020
China places 16 cities on lockdown -an estimated 50 million people
Jan. 29, 2020
Finland reports first known case
Feb. 1, 2020
Coronavirus death in the Philippines is the first fatality outside of China
Feb. 2, 2020
36 countries have imposed travel restrictions


Feb. 18, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 2,000
Wisconsin
Belgium
Egypt
Iran
Israel
Iraq
Austria
Switzerland
Brazil
80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102
Feb. 4, 2020
Federal Act goes in effect that protects qualified persons engaged in facilitating virus countermeasures from liability
Feb. 6, 2020
US has its first known death - in California
Feb. 7, 2020
40 days after first sounding the alarm, Dr. Li Wenliang dies of coronavirus
Feb. 11, 2020
WHO names novel coronavirus disease "COVID-19"
Feb. 12, 2020
23 days after South Korea's first confirmed case, their numbers begin to spike
Feb. 15, 2020
First known case in Africa - Egypt
Feb. 24, 2020
US stock market plummets - Dow Jones worst day in 2 years
Feb. 25, 2020
Brazil confirms first case; cases of COVID-19 have now been confirmed on every continent except Antarctica
Feb. 25, 2020
CDC warns US of COVID-19 spread; "prepare for the expectation that this might be bad."


Ecuador
Ireland
Romania
Netherlands
Pakistan
Mexico
Georgia 28
North Carolina 24
New Hamshire 25
Oregon 24
New York 19
Florida 31
Rhode Island 27
New Jersey 17
Colorado 21
Texas 29
Tennessee 25
Maryland 25
Nevada 27
Pennsylvania 26
South Carolina 32
Missouri 31
Nebraska
Minnesota 19
Arizona 24
Kentucky 19
Utah
Hawaii 17
Indiana 17
Kansas 23
Virginia 13
Oklahoma 15
Bolivia
Connecticut 14
Vermont 26
Iowa
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110
111
112
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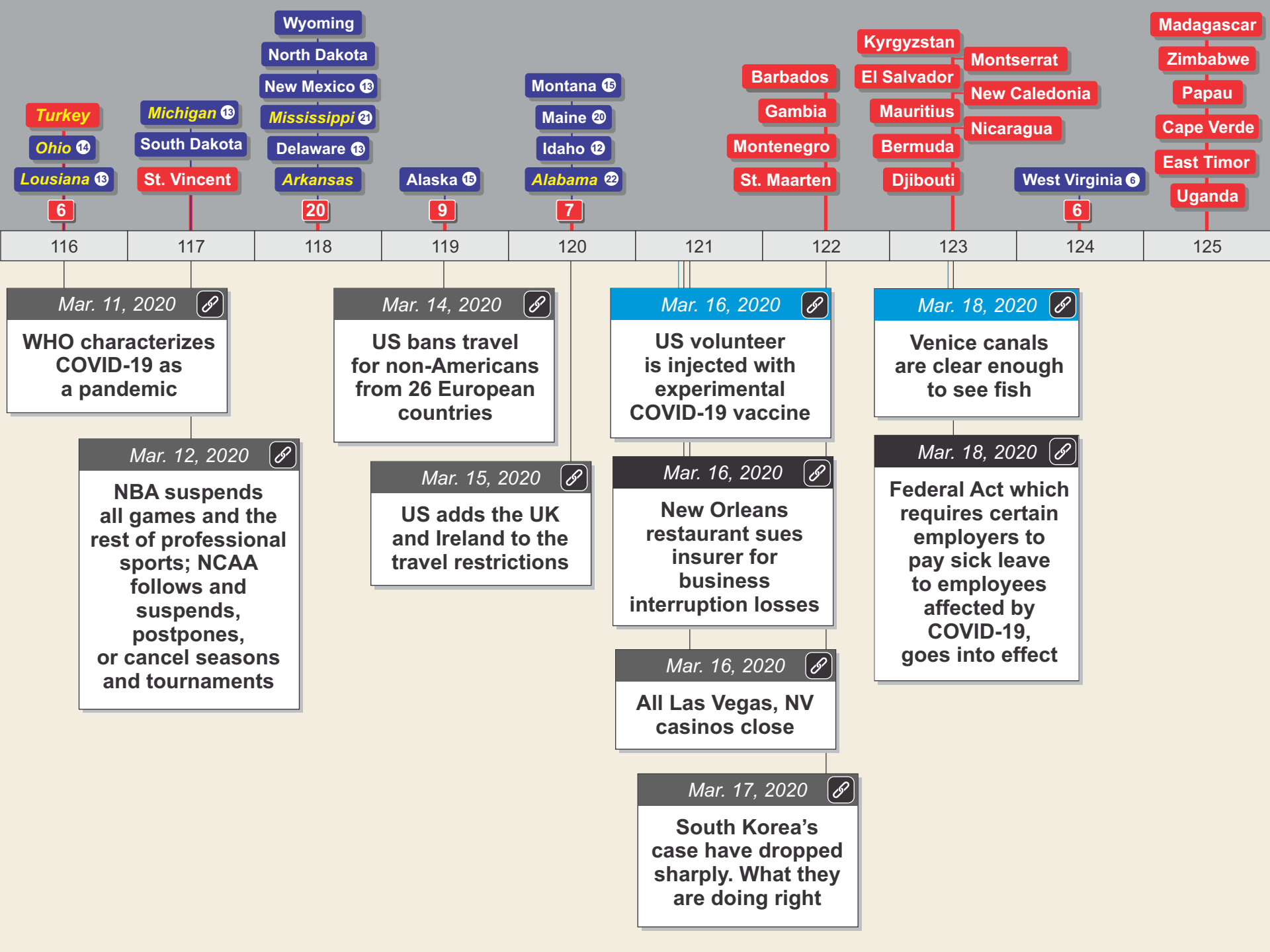
Indonesia
India
Saudi Arabia
South Africa
Peru
Bangladesh
Chile
Argentina
Ukraine
Feb. 27, 2020
WHO designates 2020 as the Year of the Nurse
Feb. 28, 2020
More than 20 vaccines are in development globally, and several therapeutics are in clinical trials
Mar. 2, 2020
Georgia's first two cases were a couple who had just returned from Italy Both had mild symptoms and have since recovered
Mar. 7, 2020
103-year-old Chinese woman recovers in 6 days after being diagnosed with COVID-19 virus
Mar. 9, 2020
A US cruise ship with passengers and crew testing positive for virus docks in Oakland California
Mar. 10, 2020
114 days after China's first confirmed case, people begin to return to work
Mar. 10, 2020
Italy extends emergency measures nationwide


Turkey
Ohio 14
Lousiana 13
6
Michigan 13
South Dakota
St. Vincent
Wyoming
North Dakota
New Mexico 13
Mississippi 21
Delaware 13
Arkansas
20
Alaska 15
9
Montana 15
Maine 20
Idaho 12
Alabama 22
7
Barbados
Gambia
Montenegro
St. Maarten
Kyrgyzstan
El Salvador
Mauritius
Bermuda
Djibouti
Montserrat
New Caledonia
Nicaragua
West Virginia 6
6
Madagascar
Zimbabwe
Papau
Cape Verde
East Timor
Uganda
116
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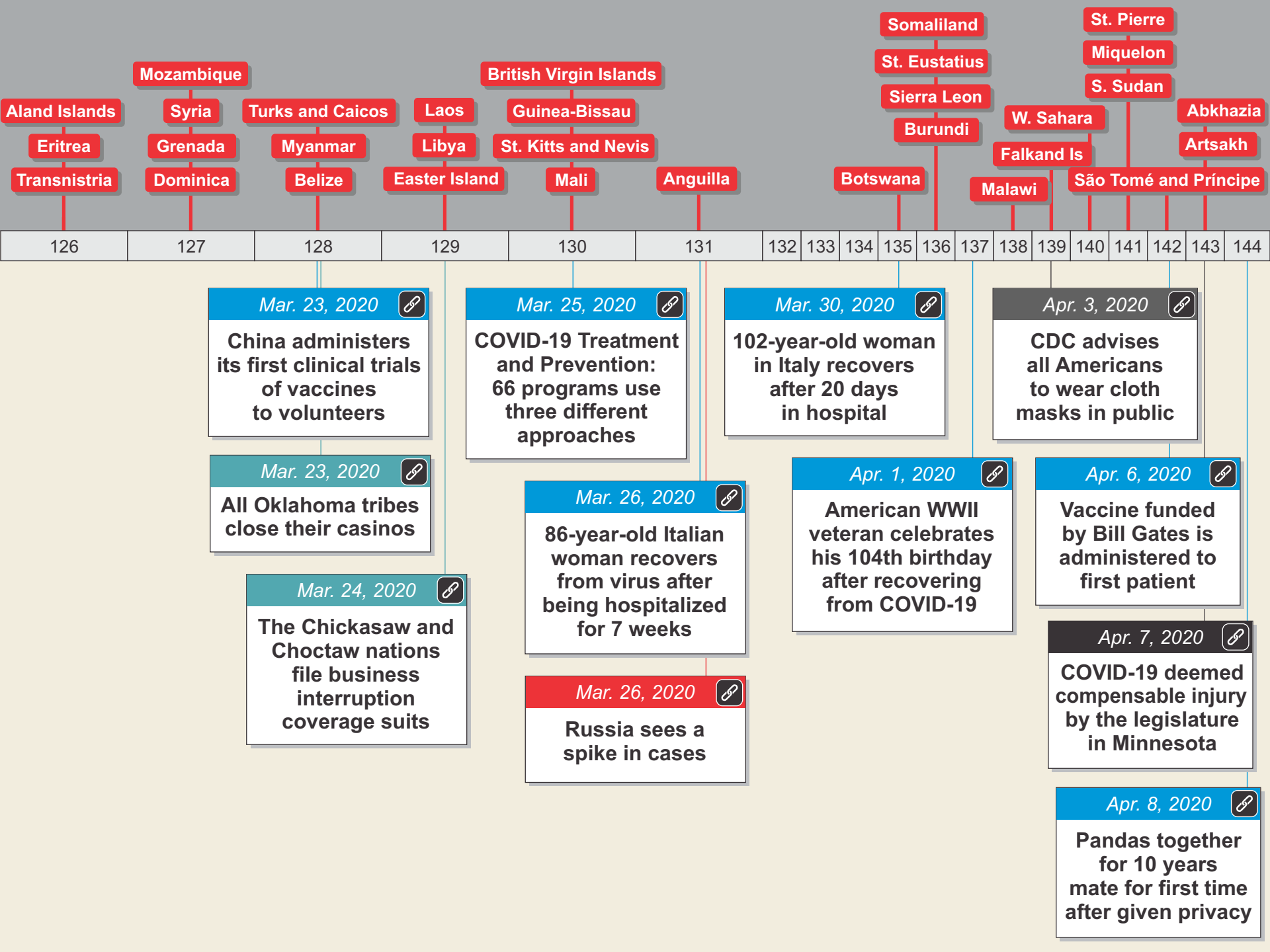
125
Mar. 11, 2020
WHO characterizes COVID-19 as a pandemic
Mar. 12, 2020
NBA suspends all games and the rest of professional sports; NCAA follows and suspends, postpones, or cancel seasons and tournaments
Mar. 14, 2020
US bans travel for non-Americans from 26 European countries
Mar. 15, 2020
US adds the UK and Ireland to the travel restrictions
Mar. 16, 2020
US volunteer is injected with experimental COVID-19 vaccine
Mar. 16, 2020
New Orleans restaurant sues insurer for business interruption losses
Mar. 16, 2020
All Las Vegas, NV casinos close
Mar. 17, 2020
South Korea's case have dropped sharply. What they are doing right
Mar. 18, 2020
Venice canals are clear enough to see fish
Mar. 18, 2020
Federal Act which requires certain employers to pay sick leave to employees affected by COVID-19, goes into effect


Aland Islands
Eritrea
Transnistria
Mozambique
Syria
Grenada
Dominica
Turks and Caicos
Myanmar
Belize
Laos
Libya
Easter Island
British Virgin Islands
Guinea-Bissau
St. Kitts and Nevis
Mali
Anguilla
Somaliland
St. Eustatius
Sierra Leon
Burundi
Botswana
W. Sahara
Falkand Is
Malawi
St. Pierre
Miquelon
S. Sudan
São Tomé and Príncipe
Abkhazia
Artsakh
126
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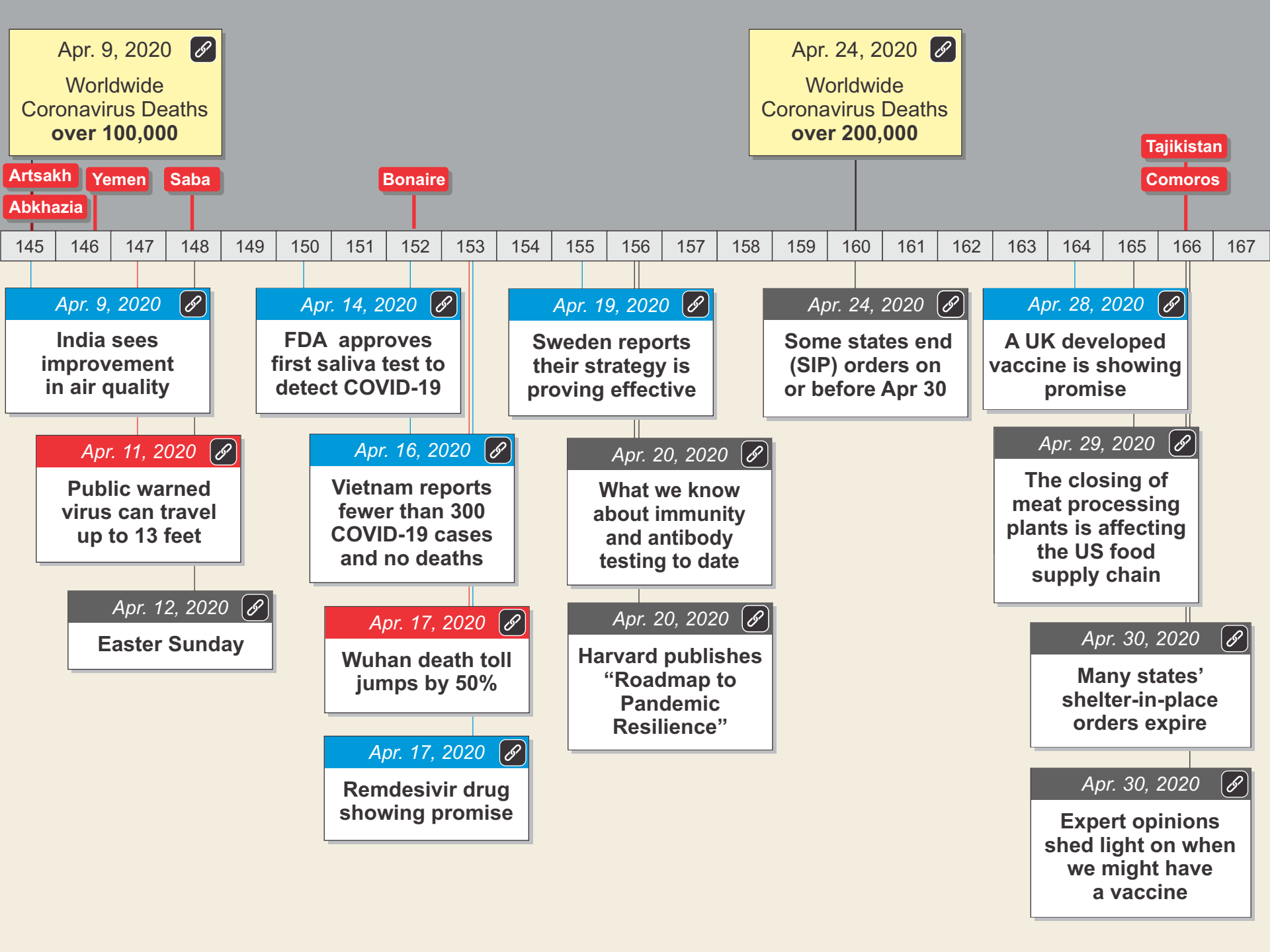
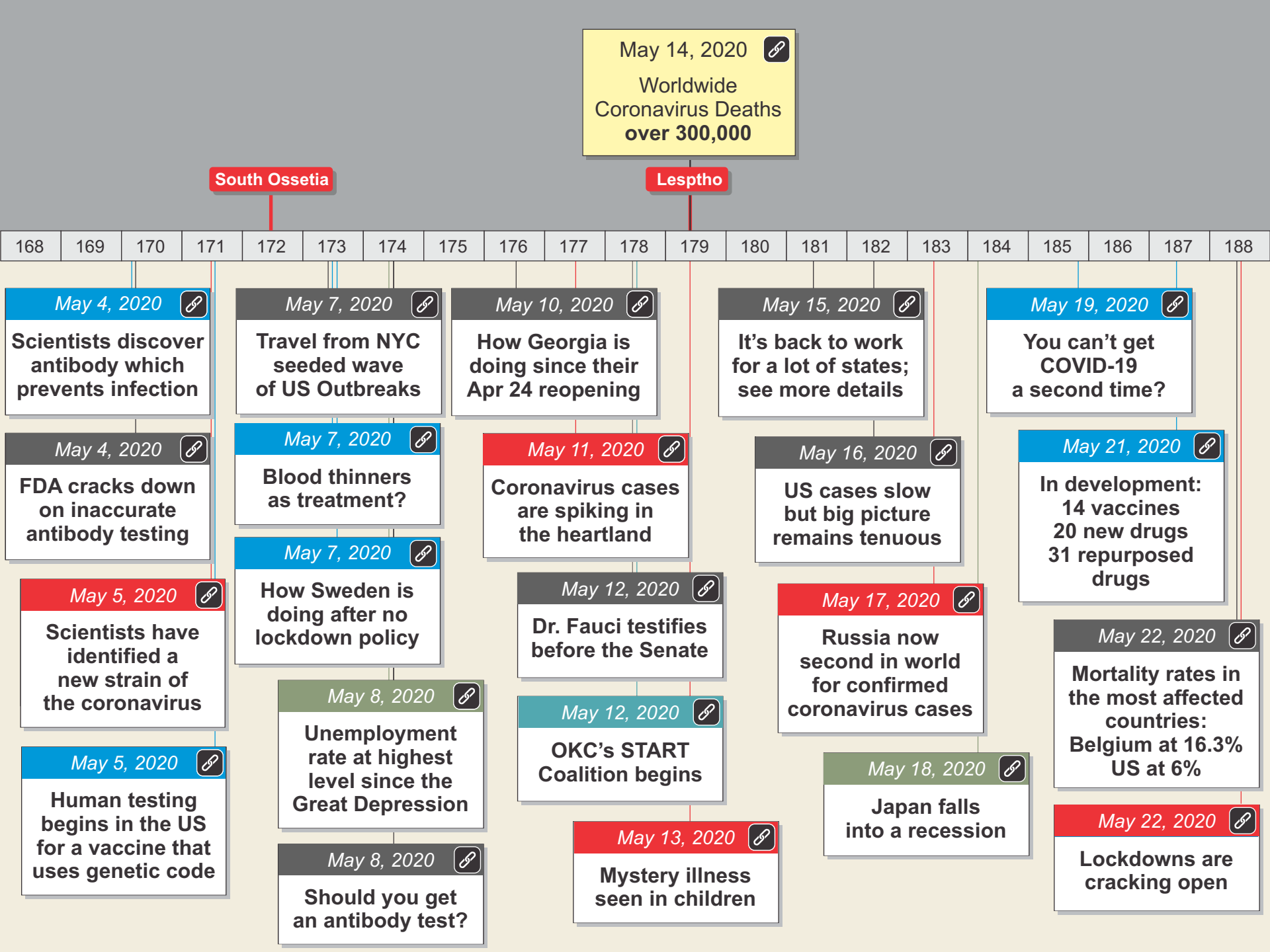
Mar. 23, 2020
China administers its first clinical trials of vaccines to volunteers
Mar. 23, 2020
All Oklahoma tribes close their casinos
Mar. 24, 2020
The Chickasaw and Choctaw nations file business interruption coverage suits
Mar. 25, 2020
COVID-19 Treatment and Prevention: 66 programs use three different approaches
Mar. 26, 2020
86-year-old Italian woman recovers from virus after being hospitalized for 7 weeks
Mar. 26, 2020
Russia sees a spike in cases
Mar. 30, 2020
102-year-old woman in Italy recovers after 20 days in hospital
Apr. 1, 2020
American WWII veteran celebrates his 104th birthday after recovering from COVID-19
Apr. 3, 2020
CDC advises all Americans to wear cloth masks in public
Apr. 6, 2020
Vaccine funded by Bill Gates is administered to first patient
Apr. 7, 2020
COVID-19 deemed compensable injury by the legislature in Minnesota
Apr. 8, 2020
Pandas together for 10 years mate for first time after given privacy


Apr. 9, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 100,000
Apr. 24, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 200,000
Artsakh
Abkhazia
Yemen
Saba
Bonaire
Tajikistan
Comoros
145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167
Apr. 9, 2020
India sees improvement in air quality
Apr. 11, 2020
Public warned virus can travel up to 13 feet
Apr. 12, 2020
Easter Sunday
Apr. 14, 2020
FDA approves first saliva test to detect COVID-19
Apr. 16, 2020
Vietnam reports fewer than 300 COVID-19 cases and no deaths
Apr. 17, 2020
Wuhan death toll jumps by 50%
Apr. 17, 2020
Remdesivir drug showing promise
Apr. 19, 2020
Sweden reports their strategy is proving effective
Apr. 20, 2020
What we know about immunity and antibody testing to date
Apr. 20, 2020
Harvard publishes "Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience"
Apr. 24, 2020
Some states end (SIP) orders on or before Apr 30
Apr. 28, 2020
A UK developed vaccine is showing promise
Apr. 29, 2020
The closing of meat processing plants is affecting the US food supply chain
Apr. 30, 2020
Many states' shelter-in-place orders expire
Apr. 30, 2020
Expert opinions shed light on when we might have a vaccine


May 14, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 300,000
South Ossetia
Lesptho
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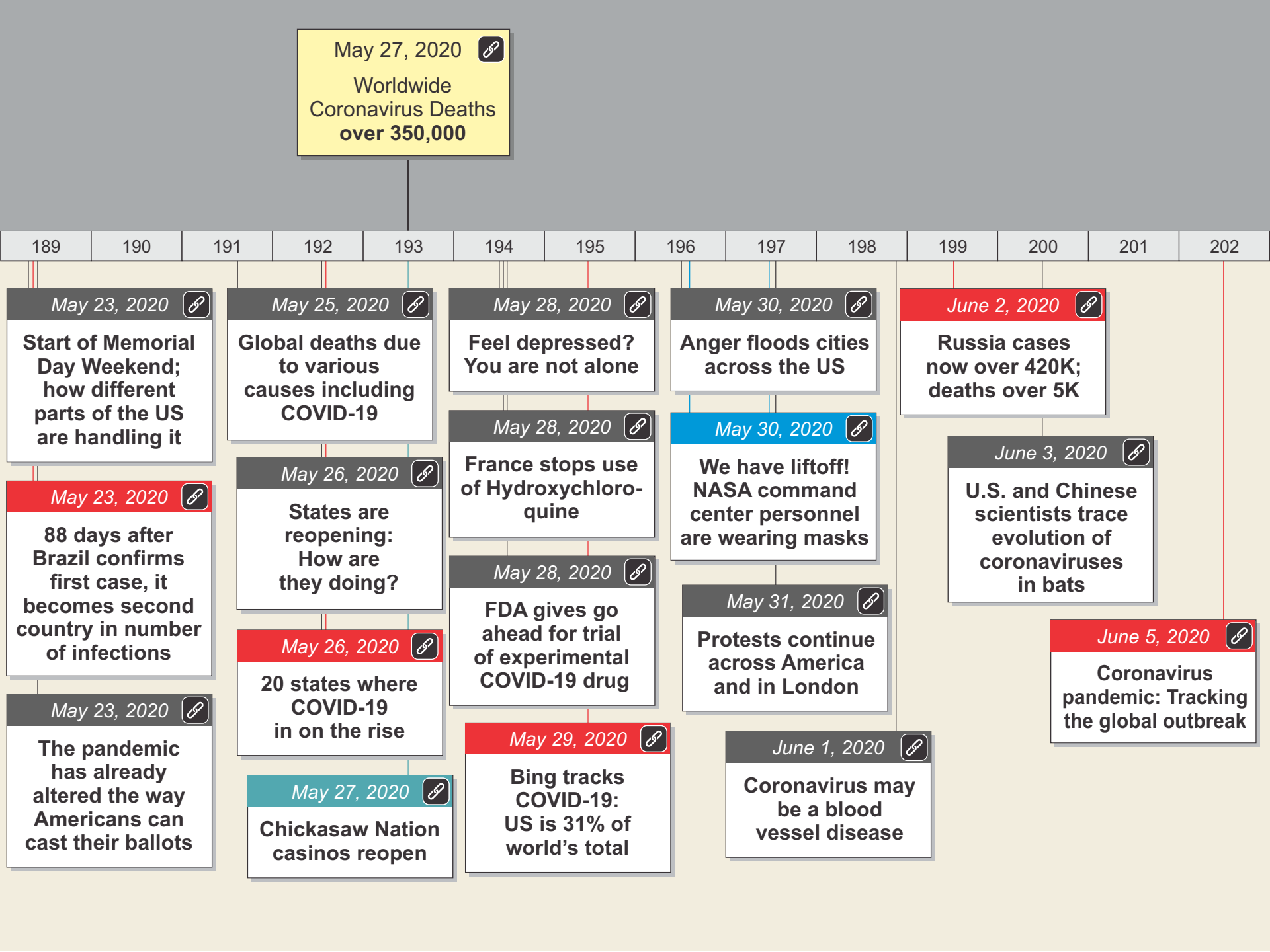
May 4, 2020
Scientists discover antibody which prevents infection
May 4, 2020
FDA cracks down on inaccurate antibody testing
May 5, 2020
Scientists have identified a new strain of the coronavirus
May 5, 2020
Human testing begins in the US for a vaccine that uses genetic code
May 7, 2020
Travel from NYC seeded wave of US Outbreaks
May 7, 2020
Blood thinners as treatment?
May 7, 2020
How Sweden is doing after no lockdown policy
May 8, 2020
Unemployment rate at highest level since the Great Depression
May 8, 2020
Should you get an antibody test?
May 10, 2020
How Georgia is doing since their Apr 24 reopening
May 11, 2020
Coronavirus cases are spiking in the heartland
May 12, 2020
Dr. Fauci testifies before the Senate
May 12, 2020
OKC's START Coalition begins
May 13, 2020
Mystery illness seen in children
May 15, 2020
It's back to work for a lot of states; see more details
May 16, 2020
US cases slow but big picture remains tenuous
May 17, 2020
Russia now second in world for confirmed coronavirus cases
May 18, 2020
Japan falls into a recession
May 19, 2020
You can't get COVID-19 a second time?
May 21, 2020
In development: 14 vaccines 20 new drugs 31 repurposed drugs
May 22, 2020
Mortality rates in the most affected countries: Belgium at 16.3% US at 6%
May 22, 2020
Lockdowns are cracking open


May 27, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 350,000
189
190
191
192
193
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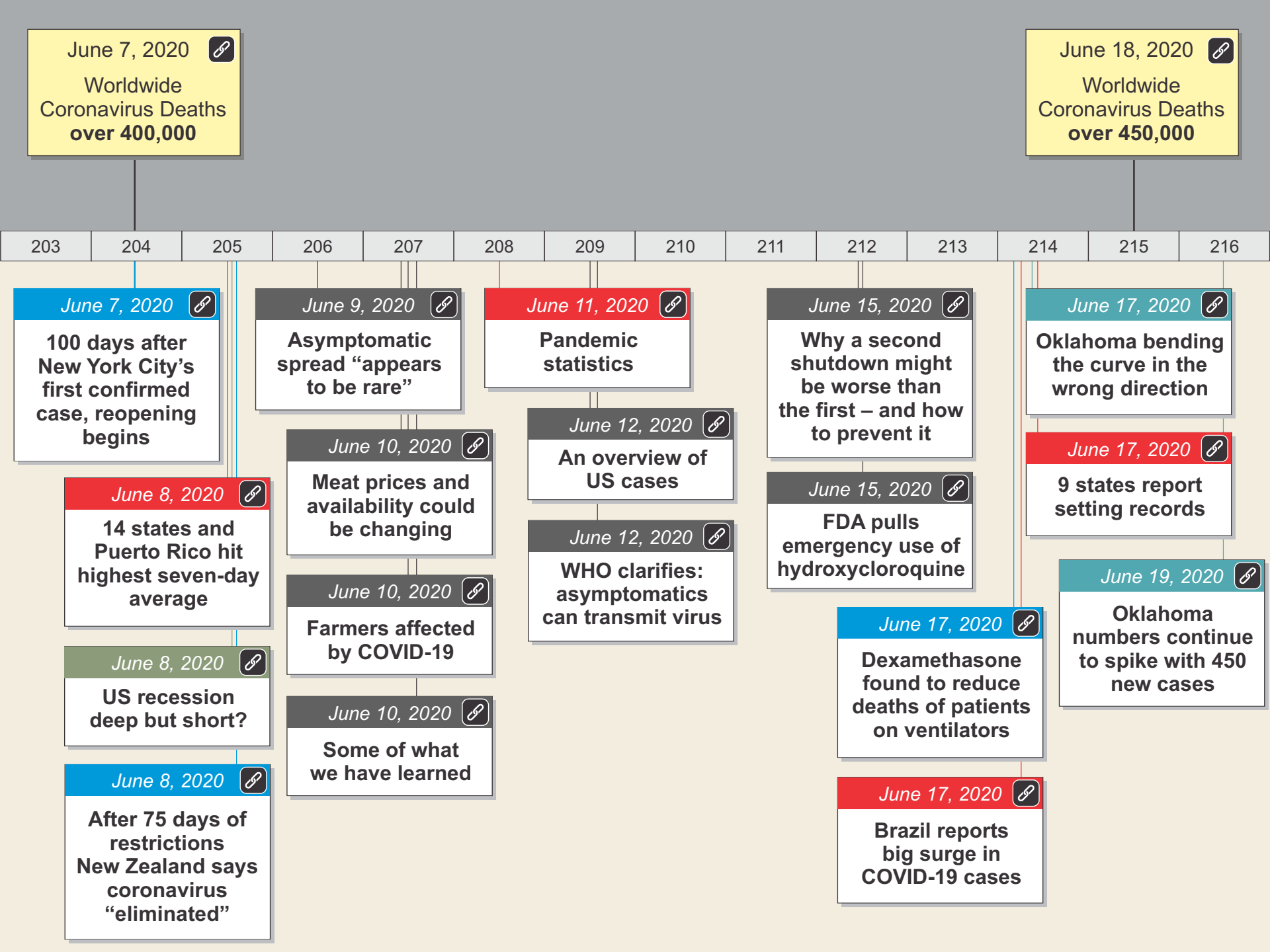
202
May 23, 2020
Start of Memorial Day Weekend; how different parts of the US are handling it
May 23, 2020
88 days after Brazil confirms first case, it becomes second country in number of infections
May 23, 2020
The pandemic has already altered the way Americans can cast their ballots
May 25, 2020
Global deaths due to various causes including COVID-19
May 26, 2020
States are reopening: How are they doing?
May 26, 2020
20 states where COVID-19 in on the rise
May 27, 2020
Chickasaw Nation casinos reopen
May 28, 2020
Feel depressed? You are not alone
May 28, 2020
France stops use of Hydroxychloro-quine
May 28, 2020
FDA gives go ahead for trial of experimental COVID-19 drug
May 29, 2020
Bing tracks COVID-19: US is 31% of world's total
May 30, 2020
Anger floods cities across the US
May 30, 2020
We have liftoff! NASA command center personnel are wearing masks
May 31, 2020
Protests continue across America and in London
June 1, 2020
Coronavirus may be a blood vessel disease
June 2, 2020
Russia cases now over 420K; deaths over 5K
June 3, 2020
U.S. and Chinese scientists trace evolution of coronaviruses in bats
June 5, 2020
Coronavirus pandemic: Tracking the global outbreak


June 7, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 400,000
June 18, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 450,000
203
204
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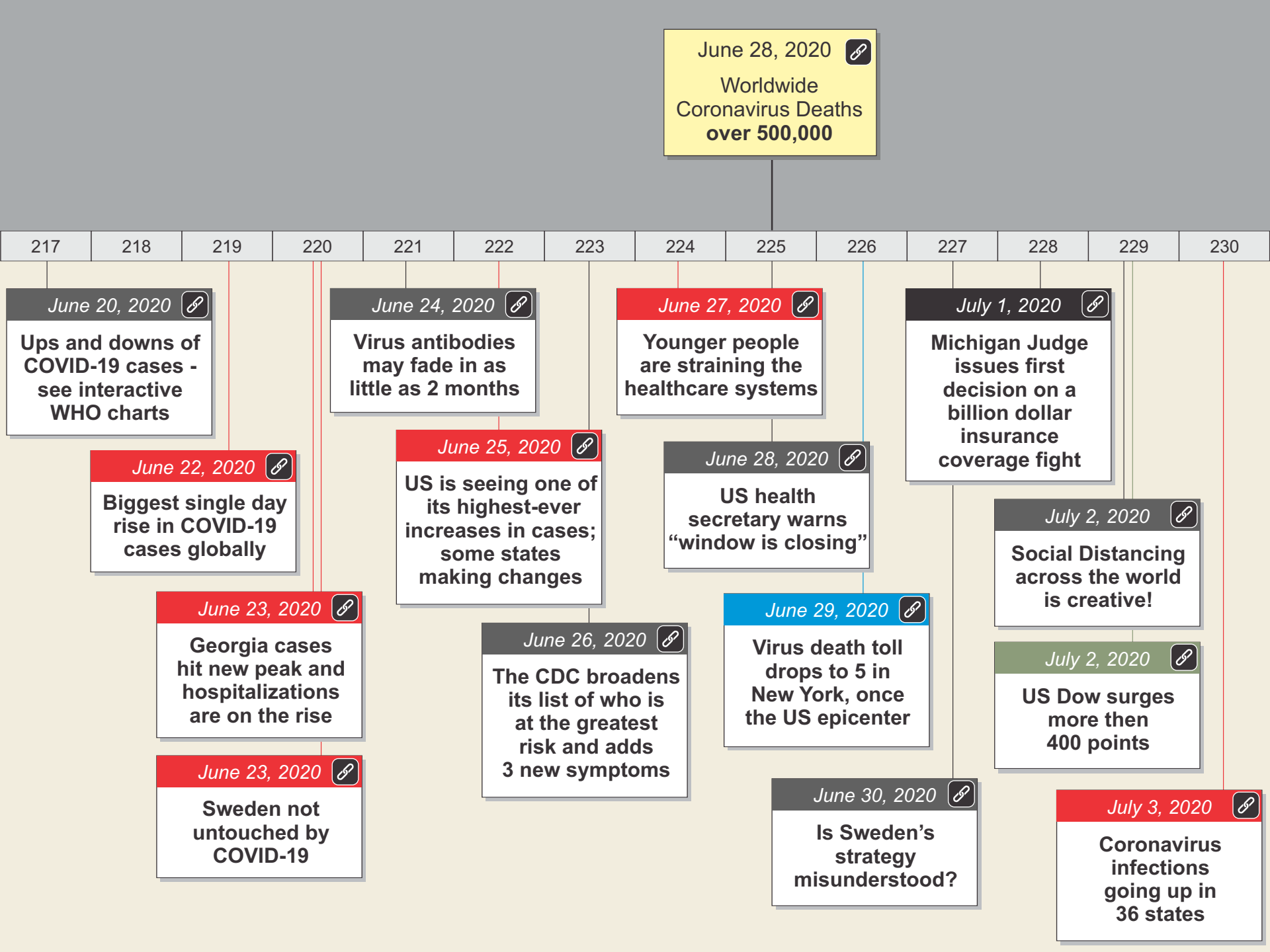
212
213
214
215
216
June 7, 2020
100 days after New York City's first confirmed case, reopening begins
June 8, 2020
14 states and Puerto Rico hit highest seven-day average
June 8, 2020
US recession deep but short?
June 8, 2020
After 75 days of restrictions New Zealand says coronavirus "eliminated"
June 9, 2020
Asymptomatic spread "appears to be rare"
June 10, 2020
Meat prices and availability could be changing
June 10, 2020
Farmers affected by COVID-19
June 10, 2020
Some of what we have learned
June 11, 2020
Pandemic statistics
June 12, 2020
An overview of US cases
June 12, 2020
WHO clarifies: asymptomatics can transmit virus
June 15, 2020
Why a second shutdown might be worse than the first – and how to prevent it
June 15, 2020
FDA pulls emergency use of hydroxycloroquine
June 17, 2020
Dexamethasone found to reduce deaths of patients on ventilators
June 17, 2020
Brazil reports big surge in COVID-19 cases
June 17, 2020
Oklahoma bending the curve in the wrong direction
June 17, 2020
9 states report setting records
June 19, 2020
Oklahoma numbers continue to spike with 450 new cases


June 28, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 500,000
217
218
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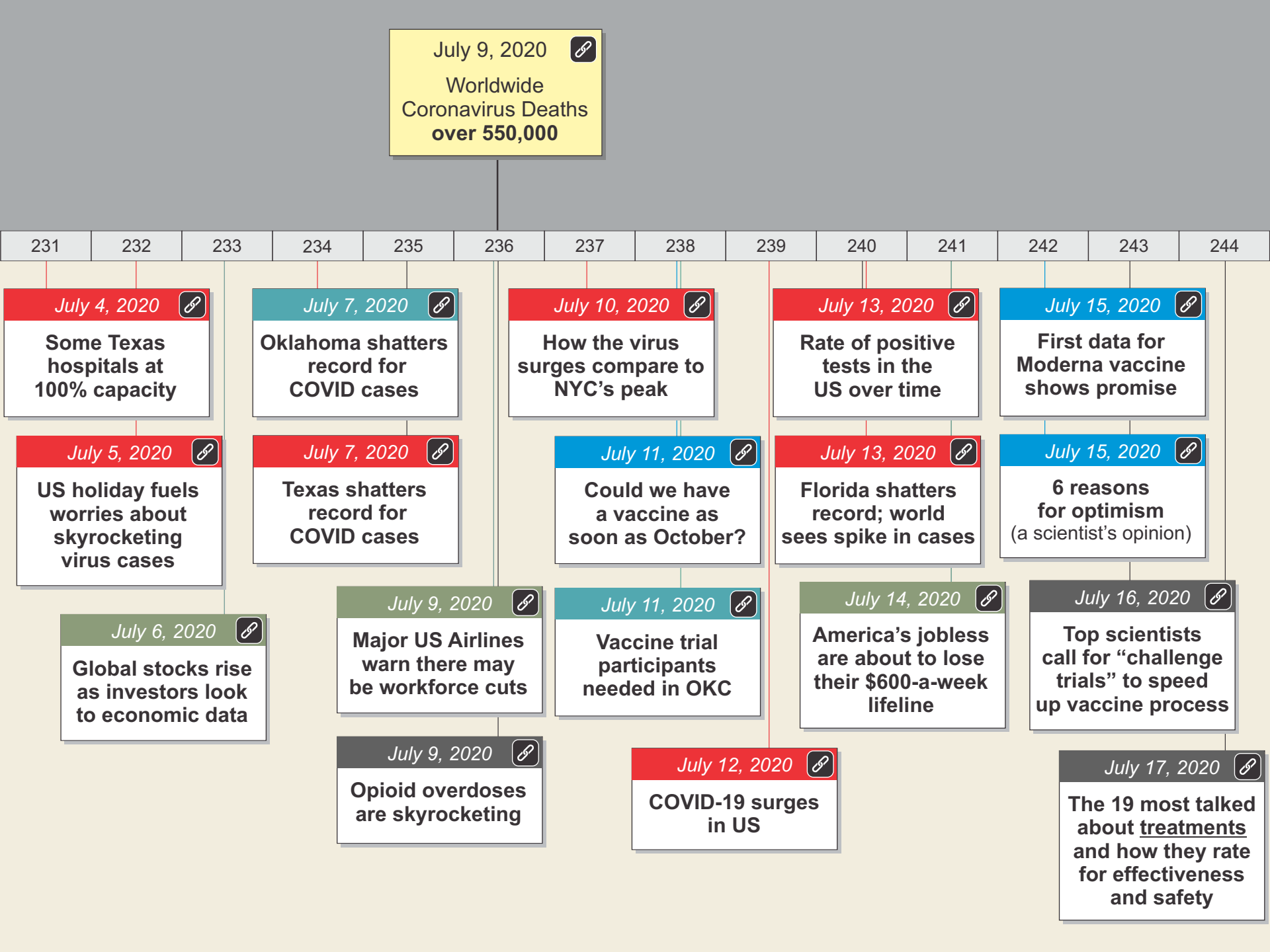
222
223
224
225
226
227
228
229
230
June 20, 2020
Ups and downs of COVID-19 cases - see interactive WHO charts
June 22, 2020
Biggest single day rise in COVID-19 cases globally
June 23, 2020
Georgia cases hit new peak and hospitalizations are on the rise
June 23, 2020
Sweden not untouched by COVID-19
June 24, 2020
Virus antibodies may fade in as little as 2 months
June 25, 2020
US is seeing one of its highest-ever increases in cases; some states making changes
June 26, 2020
The CDC broadens its list of who is at the greatest risk and adds 3 new symptoms
June 27, 2020
Younger people are straining the healthcare systems
June 28, 2020
US health secretary warns "window is closing"
June 29, 2020
Virus death toll drops to 5 in New York, once the US epicenter
June 30, 2020
Is Sweden's strategy misunderstood?
July 1, 2020
Michigan Judge issues first decision on a billion dollar insurance coverage fight
July 2, 2020
Social Distancing across the world is creative!
July 2, 2020
US Dow surges more then 400 points
July 3, 2020
Coronavirus infections going up in 36 states


July 9, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 550,000
231
232
233
234
235
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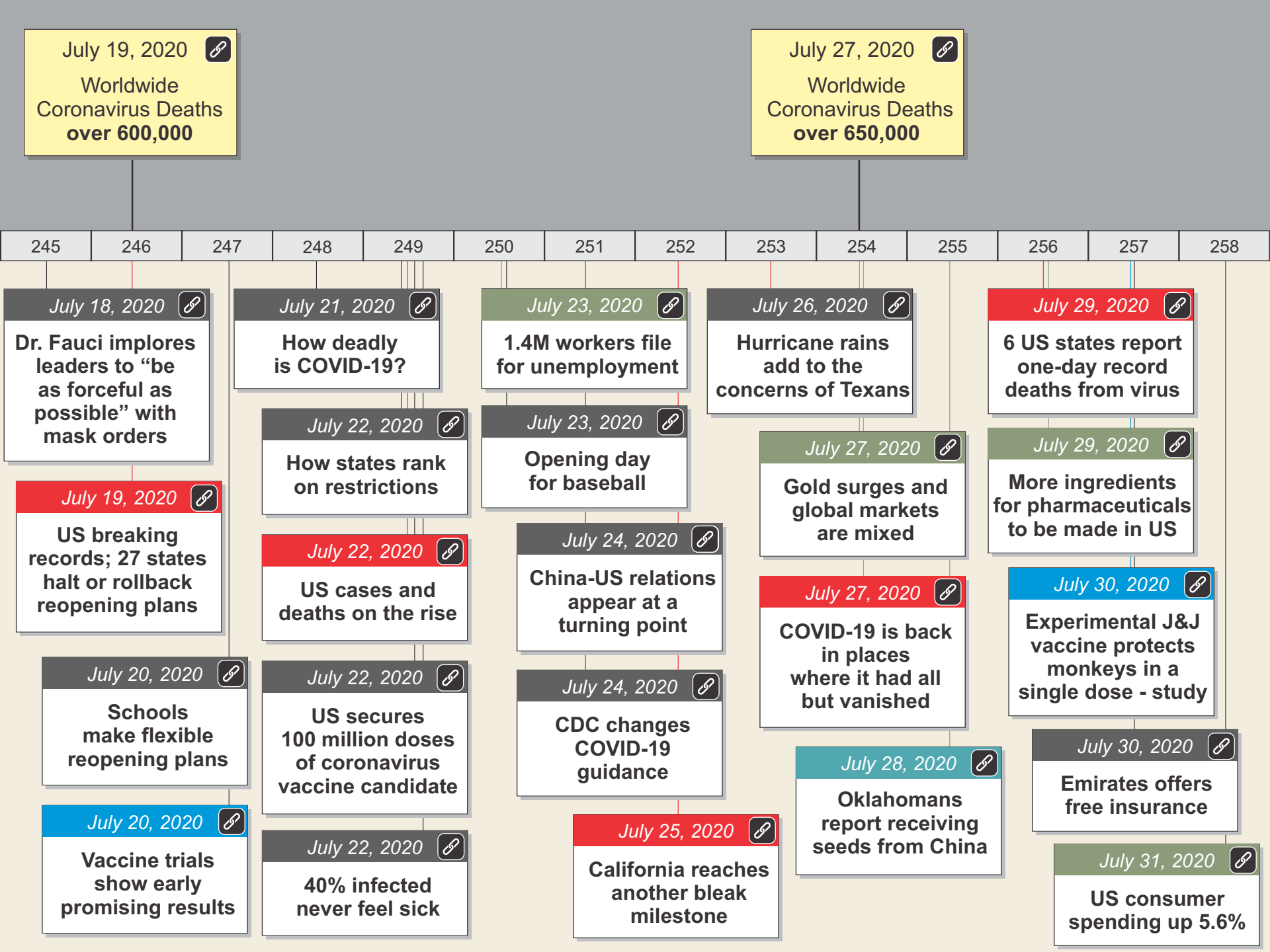
244
July 4, 2020
Some Texas hospitals at 100% capacity
July 5, 2020
US holiday fuels worries about skyrocketing virus cases
July 6, 2020
Global stocks rise as investors look to economic data
July 7, 2020
Oklahoma shatters record for COVID cases
July 7, 2020
Texas shatters record for COVID cases
July 9, 2020
Major US Airlines warn there may be workforce cuts
July 9, 2020
Opioid overdoses are skyrocketing
July 10, 2020
How the virus surges compare to NYC's peak
July 11, 2020
Could we have a vaccine as soon as October?
July 11, 2020
Vaccine trial participants needed in OKC
July 12, 2020
COVID-19 surges in US
July 13, 2020
Rate of positive tests in the US over time
July 13, 2020
Florida shatters record; world sees spike in cases
July 14, 2020
America's jobless are about to lose their $600-a-week lifeline
July 15, 2020
First data for Moderna vaccine shows promise
July 15, 2020
6 reasons for optimism (a scientist's opinion)
July 16, 2020
Top scientists call for "challenge trials" to speed up vaccine process
July 17, 2020
The 19 most talked about treatments and how they rate for effectiveness and safety


July 19, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 600,000
July 27, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 650,000
245
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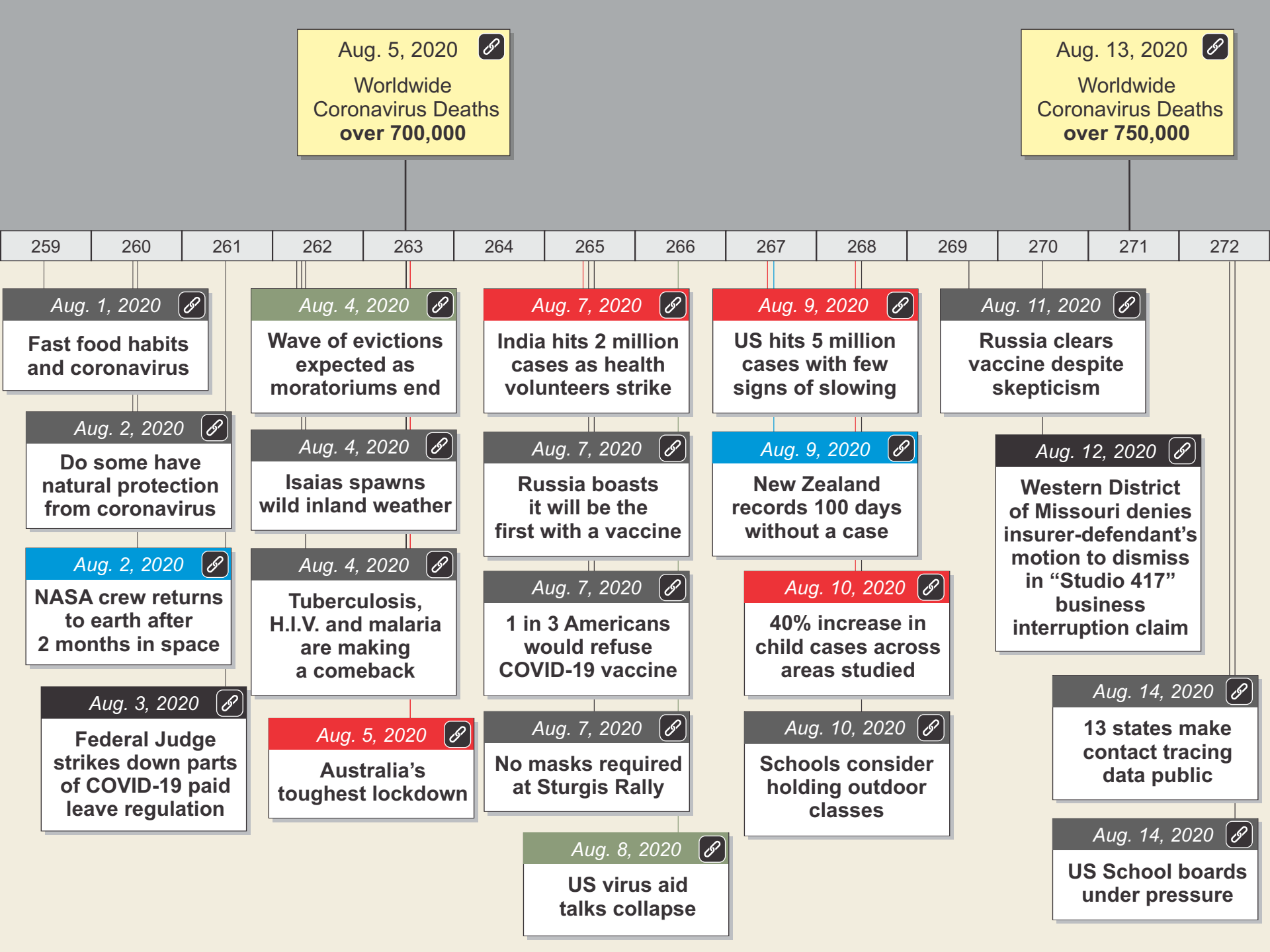
256
257
258
July 18, 2020
Dr. Fauci implores leaders to "be as forceful as possible" with mask orders
July 19, 2020
US breaking records; 27 states halt or rollback reopening plans
July 20, 2020
Schools make flexible reopening plans
July 20, 2020
Vaccine trials show early promising results
July 21, 2020
How deadly is COVID-19?
July 22, 2020
How states rank on restrictions
July 22, 2020
US cases and deaths on the rise
July 22, 2020
US secures 100 million doses of coronavirus vaccine candidate
July 22, 2020
40% infected never feel sick
July 23, 2020
1.4M workers file for unemployment
July 23, 2020
Opening day for baseball
July 24, 2020
China-US relations appear at a turning point
July 24, 2020
CDC changes COVID-19 guidance
July 25, 2020
California reaches another bleak milestone
July 26, 2020
Hurricane rains add to the concerns of Texans
July 27, 2020
Gold surges and global markets are mixed
July 27, 2020
COVID-19 is back in places where it had all but vanished
July 28, 2020
Oklahomans report receiving seeds from China
July 29, 2020
6 US states report one-day record deaths from virus
July 29, 2020
More ingredients for pharmaceuticals to be made in US
July 30, 2020
Experimental J&J vaccine protects monkeys in a single dose - study
July 30, 2020
Emirates offers free insurance
July 31, 2020
US consumer spending up 5.6%


Aug. 5, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 700,000
Aug. 13, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 750,000
259
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261
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267
268
269
270
271
272
Aug. 1, 2020
Fast food habits and coronavirus
Aug. 2, 2020
Do some have natural protection from coronavirus
Aug. 2, 2020
NASA crew returns to earth after 2 months in space
Aug. 3, 2020
Federal Judge strikes down parts of COVID-19 paid leave regulation
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Wave of evictions expected as moratoriums end
Aug. 4, 2020
Isaias spawns wild inland weather
Aug. 4, 2020
Tuberculosis, H.I.V. and malaria are making a comeback
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Australia's toughest lockdown
Aug. 7, 2020
India hits 2 million cases as health volunteers strike
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Russia boasts it will be the first with a vaccine
Aug. 7, 2020
1 in 3 Americans would refuse COVID-19 vaccine
Aug. 7, 2020
No masks required at Sturgis Rally
Aug. 8, 2020
US virus aid talks collapse
Aug. 9, 2020
US hits 5 million cases with few signs of slowing
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New Zealand records 100 days without a case
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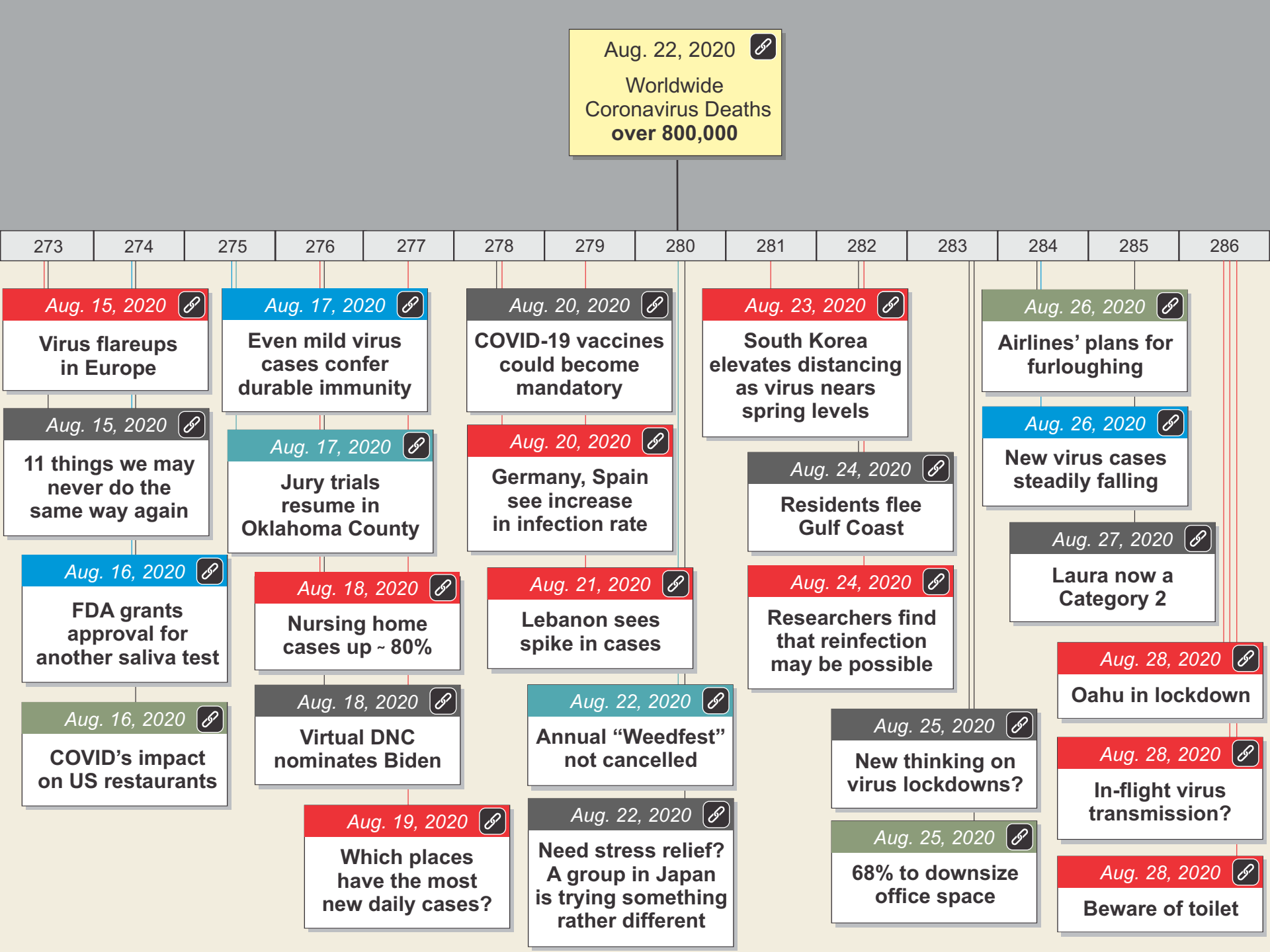
40% increase in child cases across areas studied
Aug. 10, 2020
Schools consider holding outdoor classes
Aug. 11, 2020
Russia clears vaccine despite skepticism
Aug. 12, 2020
Western District of Missouri denies insurer-defendant's motion to dismiss in "Studio 417" business interruption claim
Aug. 14, 2020
13 states make contact tracing data public
Aug. 14, 2020
US School boards under pressure


Aug. 22, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 800,000
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Aug. 15, 2020
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11 things we may never do the same way again
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FDA grants approval for another saliva test
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COVID's impact on US restaurants
Aug. 17, 2020
Even mild virus cases confer durable immunity
Aug. 17, 2020
Jury trials resume in Oklahoma County
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Nursing home cases up ~ 80%
Aug. 18, 2020
Virtual DNC nominates Biden
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Which places have the most new daily cases?
Aug. 20, 2020
COVID-19 vaccines could become mandatory
Aug. 20, 2020
Germany, Spain see increase in infection rate
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Lebanon sees spike in cases
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Annual "Weedfest" not cancelled
Aug. 22, 2020
Need stress relief? A group in Japan is trying something rather different
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South Korea elevates distancing as virus nears spring levels
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Residents flee Gulf Coast
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Researchers find that reinfection may be possible
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New thinking on virus lockdowns?
Aug. 25, 2020
68% to downsize office space
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Airlines' plans for furloughing
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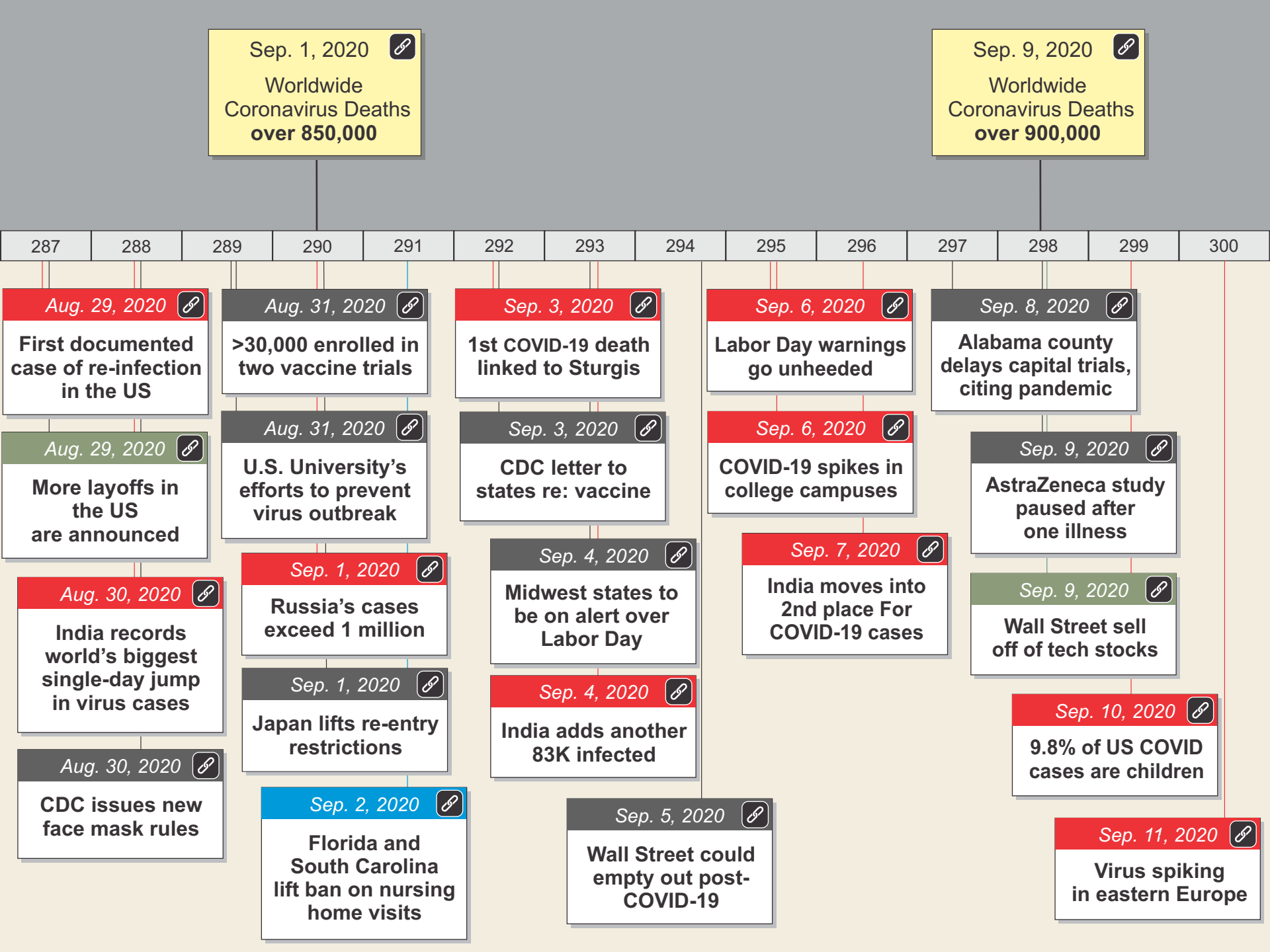
New virus cases steadily falling
Aug. 27, 2020
Laura now a Category 2
Aug. 28, 2020
Oahu in lockdown
Aug. 28, 2020
In-flight virus transmission?
Aug. 28, 2020
Beware of toilet


Sep. 1, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 850,000
Sep. 9, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 900,000
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Aug. 29, 2020
First documented case of re-infection in the US
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More layoffs in the US are announced
Aug. 30, 2020
India records world's biggest single-day jump in virus cases
Aug. 30, 2020
CDC issues new face mask rules
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>30,000 enrolled in two vaccine trials
Aug. 31, 2020
U.S. University's efforts to prevent virus outbreak
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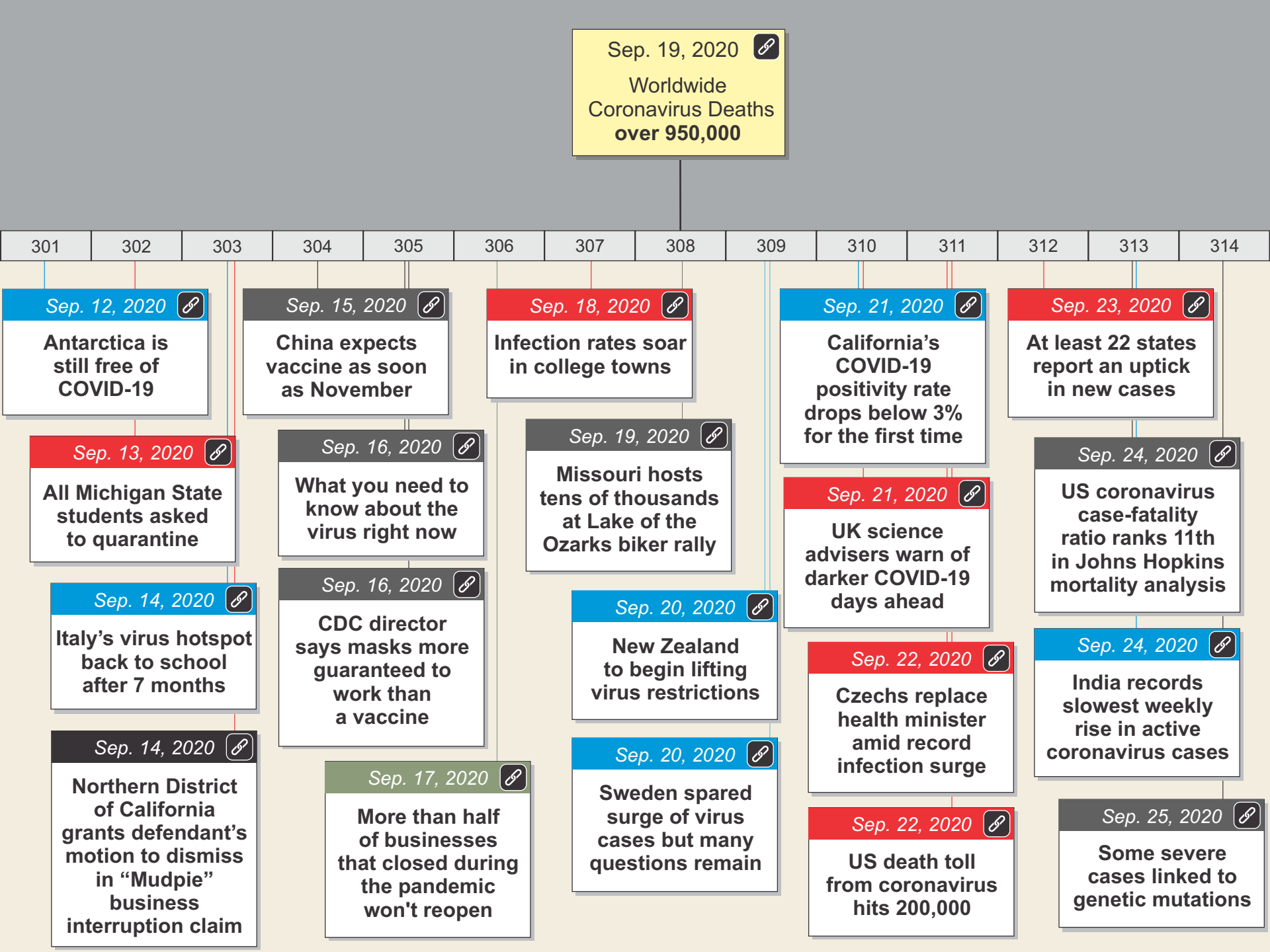
Russia's cases exceed 1 million
Sep. 1, 2020
Japan lifts re-entry restrictions
Sep. 2, 2020
Florida and South Carolina lift ban on nursing home visits
Sep. 3, 2020
1st COVID-19 death linked to Sturgis
Sep. 3, 2020
CDC letter to states re: vaccine
Sep. 4, 2020
Midwest states to be on alert over Labor Day
Sep. 4, 2020
India adds another 83K infected
Sep. 5, 2020
Wall Street could empty out post-COVID-19
Sep. 6, 2020
Labor Day warnings go unheeded
Sep. 6, 2020
COVID-19 spikes in college campuses
Sep. 7, 2020
India moves into 2nd place For COVID-19 cases
Sep. 8, 2020
Alabama county delays capital trials, citing pandemic
Sep. 9, 2020
AstraZeneca study paused after one illness
Sep. 9, 2020
Wall Street sell off of tech stocks
Sep. 10, 2020
9.8% of US COVID cases are children
Sep. 11, 2020
Virus spiking in eastern Europe


Sep. 19, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 950,000
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Sep. 12, 2020
Antarctica is still free of COVID-19
Sep. 13, 2020
All Michigan State students asked to quarantine
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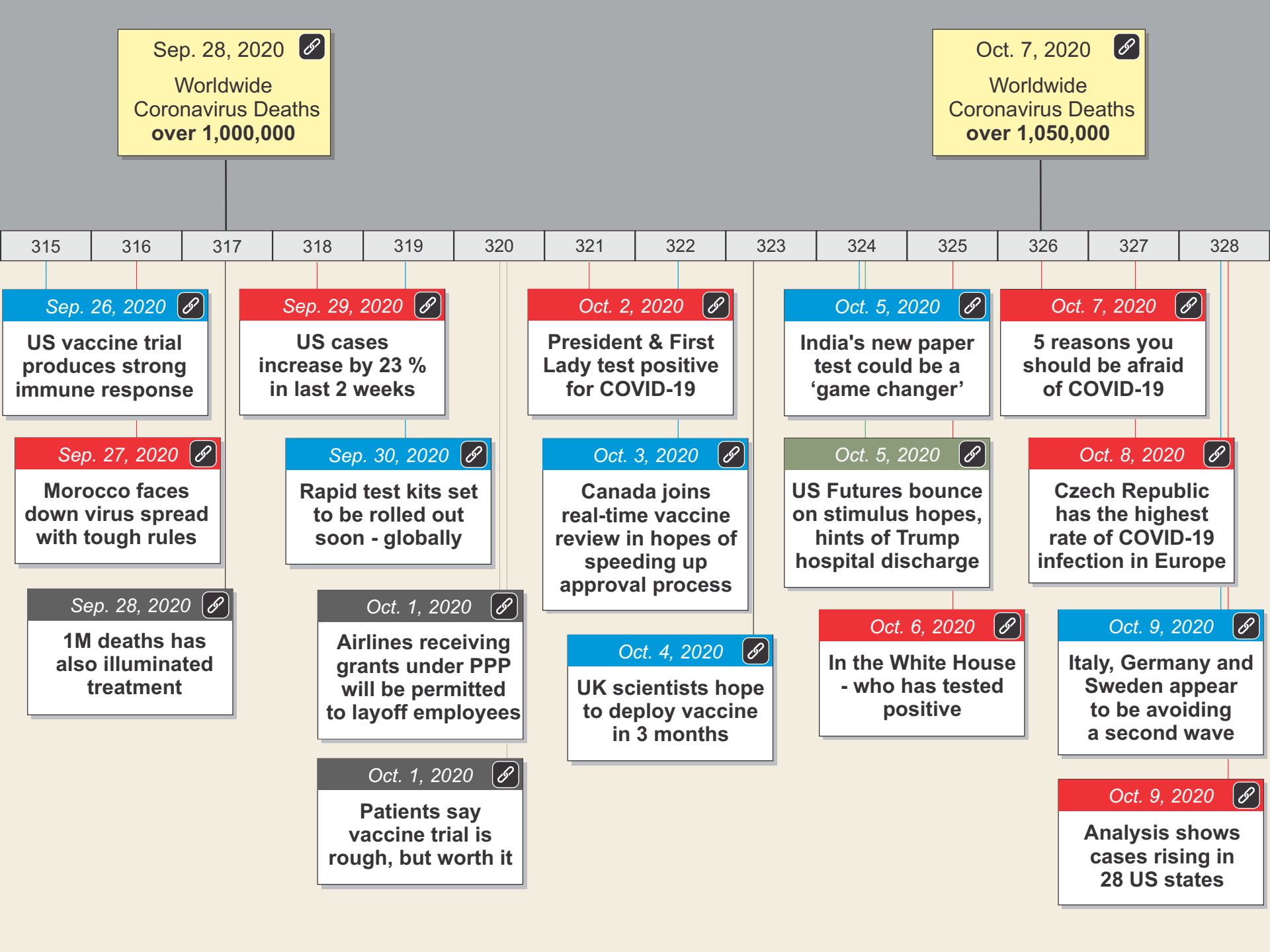
Italy's virus hotspot back to school after 7 months
Sep. 14, 2020
Northern District of California grants defendant's motion to dismiss in "Mudpie" business interruption claim
Sep. 15, 2020
China expects vaccine as soon as November
Sep. 16, 2020
What you need to know about the virus right now
Sep. 16, 2020
CDC director says masks more guaranteed to work than a vaccine
Sep. 17, 2020
More than half of businesses that closed during the pandemic won't reopen
Sep. 18, 2020
Infection rates soar in college towns
Sep. 19, 2020
Missouri hosts tens of thousands at Lake of the Ozarks biker rally
Sep. 20, 2020
New Zealand to begin lifting virus restrictions
Sep. 20, 2020
Sweden spared surge of virus cases but many questions remain
Sep. 21, 2020
California's COVID-19 positivity rate drops below 3% for the first time
Sep. 21, 2020
UK science advisers warn of darker COVID-19 days ahead
Sep. 22, 2020
Czechs replace health minister amid record infection surge
Sep. 22, 2020
US death toll from coronavirus hits 200,000
Sep. 23, 2020
At least 22 states report an uptick in new cases
Sep. 24, 2020
US coronavirus case-fatality ratio ranks 11th in Johns Hopkins mortality analysis
Sep. 24, 2020
India records slowest weekly rise in active coronavirus cases
Sep. 25, 2020
Some severe cases linked to genetic mutations


Sep. 28, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 1,000,000
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Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 1,050,000
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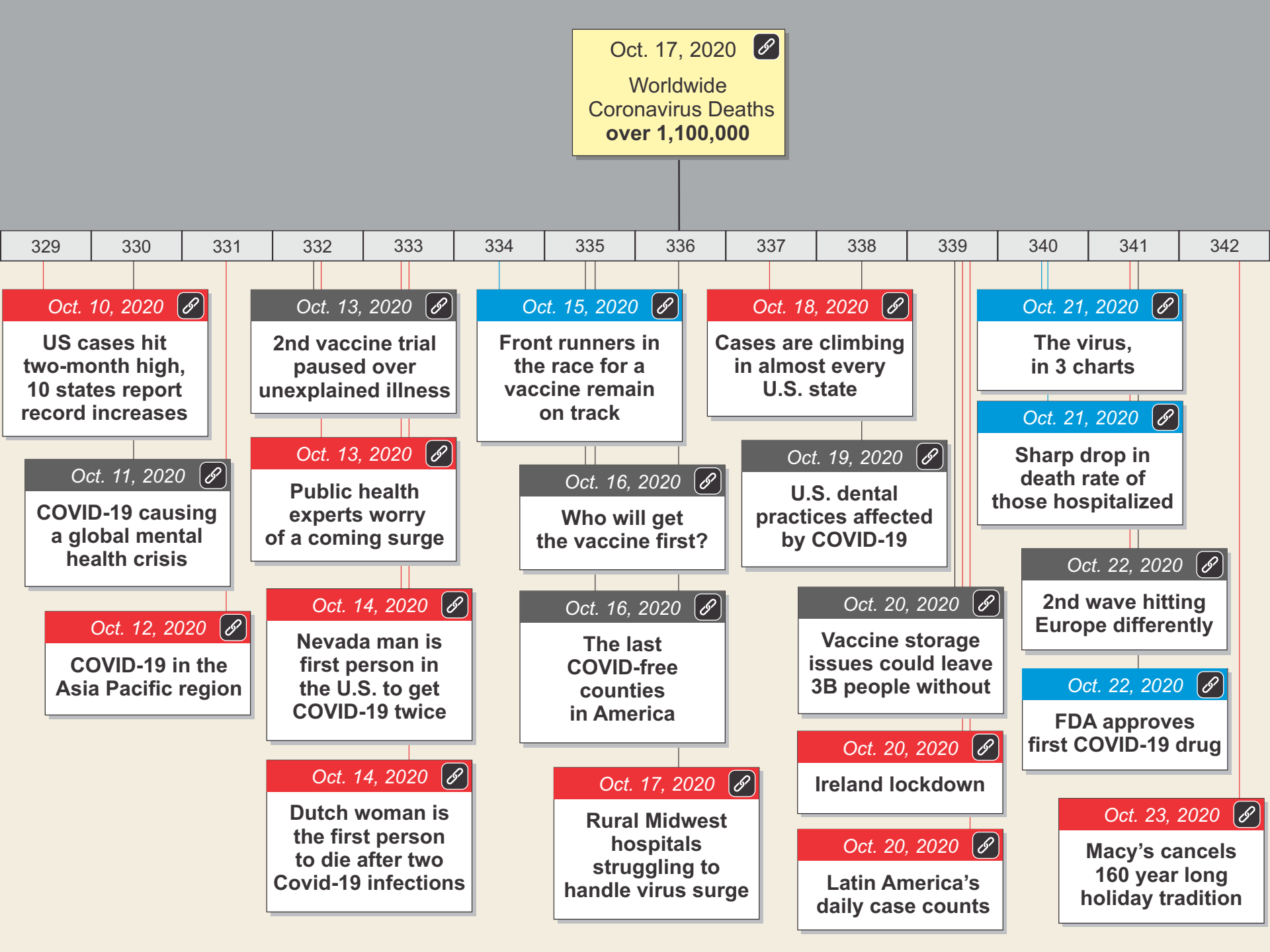
Sep. 26, 2020
US vaccine trial produces strong immune response
Sep. 27, 2020
Morocco faces down virus spread with tough rules
Sep. 28, 2020
1M deaths has also illuminated treatment
Sep. 29, 2020
US cases increase by 23 % in last 2 weeks
Sep. 30, 2020
Rapid test kits set to be rolled out soon - globally
Oct. 1, 2020
Airlines receiving grants under PPP will be permitted to layoff employees
Oct. 1, 2020
Patients say vaccine trial is rough, but worth it
Oct. 2, 2020
President & First Lady test positive for COVID-19
Oct. 3, 2020
Canada joins real-time vaccine review in hopes of speeding up approval process
Oct. 4, 2020
UK scientists hope to deploy vaccine in 3 months
Oct. 5, 2020
India's new paper test could be a 'game changer'
Oct. 5, 2020
US Futures bounce on stimulus hopes, hints of Trump hospital discharge
Oct. 6, 2020
In the White House - who has tested positive
Oct. 7, 2020
5 reasons you should be afraid of COVID-19
Oct. 8, 2020
Czech Republic has the highest rate of COVID-19 infection in Europe
Oct. 9, 2020
Italy, Germany and Sweden appear to be avoiding a second wave
Oct. 9, 2020
Analysis shows cases rising in 28 US states


Oct. 17, 2020
Worldwide Coronavirus Deaths over 1,100,000
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US cases hit two-month high, 10 states report record increases
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COVID-19 causing a global mental health crisis
Oct. 12, 2020
COVID-19 in the Asia Pacific region
Oct. 13, 2020
2nd vaccine trial paused over unexplained illness
Oct. 13, 2020
Public health experts worry of a coming surge
Oct. 14, 2020
Nevada man is first person in the U.S. to get COVID-19 twice
Oct. 14, 2020
Dutch woman is the first person to die after two Covid-19 infections
Oct. 15, 2020
Front runners in the race for a vaccine remain on track
Oct. 16, 2020
Who will get the vaccine first?
Oct. 16, 2020
The last COVID-free counties in America
Oct. 17, 2020
Rural Midwest hospitals struggling to handle virus surge
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Cases are climbing in almost every U.S. state
Oct. 19, 2020
U.S. dental practices affected by COVID-19
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Vaccine storage issues could leave 3B people without
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Latin America's daily case counts
Oct. 21, 2020
The virus, in 3 charts
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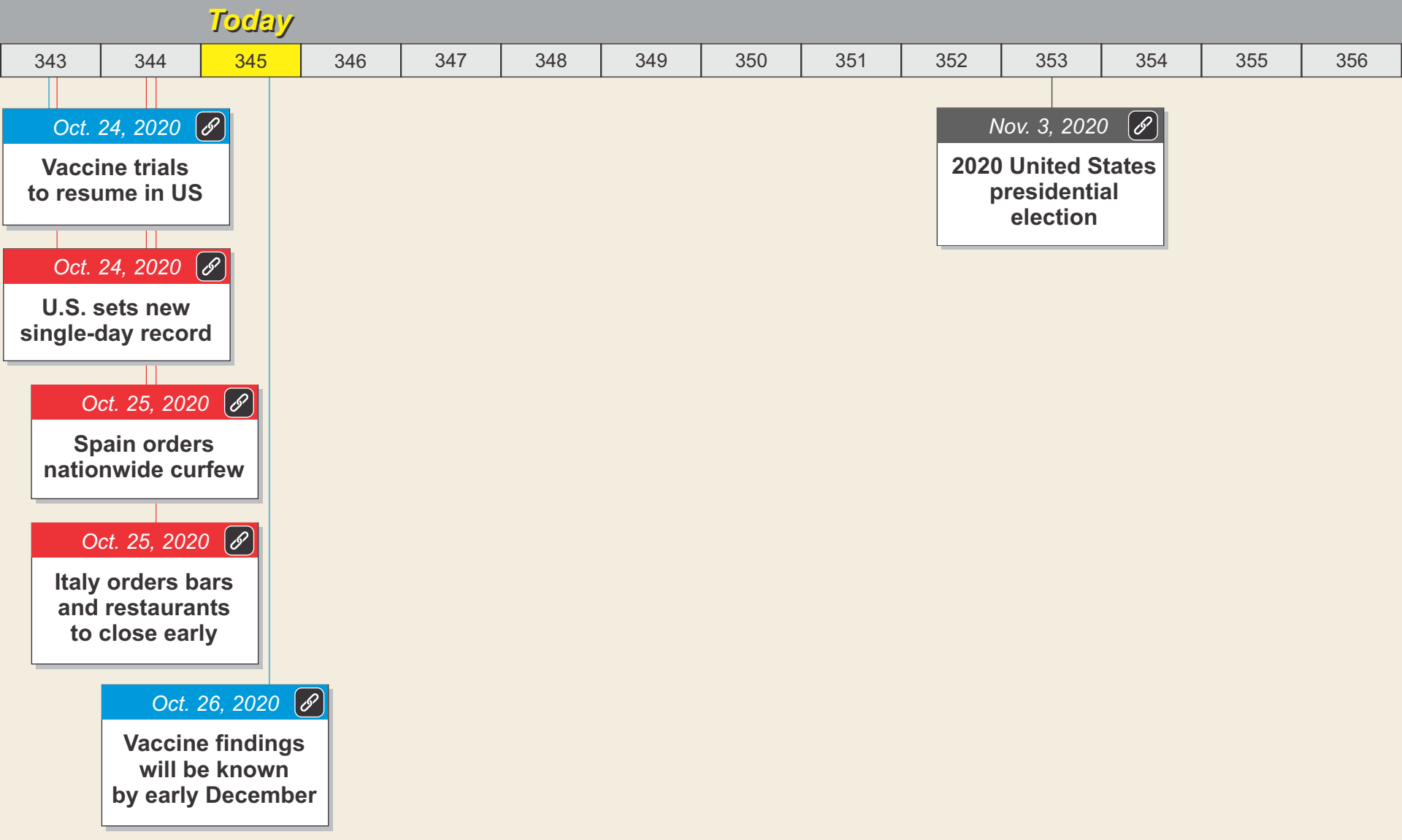
Sharp drop in death rate of those hospitalized
Oct. 22, 2020
2nd wave hitting Europe differently
Oct. 22, 2020
FDA approves first COVID-19 drug
Oct. 23, 2020
Macy's cancels 160 year long holiday tradition


Today
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Oct. 24, 2020
Vaccine trials to resume in US
Oct. 24, 2020
U.S. sets new single-day record
Oct. 25, 2020
Spain orders nationwide curfew
Oct. 25, 2020
Italy orders bars and restaurants to close early
Oct. 26, 2020
Vaccine findings will be known by early December
Nov. 3, 2020
2020 United States presidential election

357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370

Nov. 15, 2020

1 year since COVID-19 made its appearance

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https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back

Nov 17
China's first confirmed case

The first case of someone in China suffering from Covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, can be **traced back to November 17**, according to government data seen by the South China Morning Post.

Chinese authorities have so far identified at least 266 people who were infected last year, all of whom came under medical surveillance at some point.

Some of the cases were likely backdated after health authorities had tested specimens taken from suspected patients. Interviews with whistle-blowers from the medical community suggest Chinese doctors only realised they were dealing with a new disease in late December.

Scientists have been trying to map the pattern of the early transmission of Covid-19 since an epidemic was reported in the central China city of Wuhan in January, two months before the outbreak became a global health crisis.

Understanding how the disease spread and determining how undetected and undocumented cases contributed to its transmission will greatly improve their understanding of the size of that threat.

According to the government data seen by the Post, a **55 year-old from Hubei province** could have been the first person to have contracted Covid-19 on November 17.

From that date onwards, one to five new cases were reported each day. By December 15, the total number of infections stood at 27 – the first double-digit daily rise was reported on December 17 – and by December 20, the total number of confirmed cases had reached 60.

On December 27, Zhang Jixian, a doctor from Hubei Provincial Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine, told China's health authorities that the disease was caused by a new coronavirus. By that date, more than 180 people had been infected, though doctors might not have been aware of all of them at the time.

By the final day of 2019, the number of confirmed cases had risen to 266, On the first day of 2020 it stood at 381.

While the government records have not been released to the public, they provide valuable clues about how the disease spread in its early days and the speed of its transmission, as well as how many confirmed cases Beijing has recorded.

Scientists are now keen to identify the so-called patient zero, which could help them to trace the source of the coronavirus, which is **generally thought to have jumped to humans from a wild animal, possibly a bat.**

Of the **first nine cases** to be reported in November – four men and five women – none has been confirmed as being "patient zero". They **were all aged between 39 and 79**, but it is unknown how many were residents of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei and the epicentre of the outbreak.

It is possible that there were reported cases dating back even earlier than those seen by the Post.

According to the World Health Organisation's website, the first confirmed Covid-19 case in China was on December 8, but the global body does not track the disease itself but relies on nations to provide such information ...

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https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/01/wuhan-seafood-market-may-not-be-source-novel-virus-spreading-globally

Dec 1

China's first case had no reported link to Wuhan Seafood Market

As confirmed cases of a novel virus surge around the world with worrisome speed, all eyes have so far focused on a seafood market in Wuhan, China, as the origin of the outbreak. But **a description of the first clinical cases published in The Lancet on Friday challenges that hypothesis.**

The paper, written by a large group of Chinese researchers from several institutions, offers details about the first 41 hospitalized patients who had confirmed infections with what has been dubbed 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). **In the earliest case, the patient became ill on 1 December 2019 and had no reported link to the seafood market**, the authors report. "No epidemiological link was found between the first patient and later cases," they state. **Their data also show that, in total, 13 of the 41 cases had no link to the marketplace.** "That's a big number, 13, with no link," says Daniel Lucey, an infectious disease specialist at Georgetown University.

Earlier reports from Chinese health authorities and the World Health Organization had said the first patient had onset of symptoms on 8 December 2019—and those reports simply said "most" cases had links to the seafood market, which was closed on 1 January.

Lucey says if the new data are accurate, the first human infections must have occurred in November 2019—if not earlier—because there is an incubation time between infection and symptoms surfacing. If so, **the virus possibly spread silently between people in Wuhan—and perhaps elsewhere—before the cluster of cases from the city's now-infamous Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was discovered in late December.** "The virus came into that marketplace before it came out of that marketplace," Lucey asserts.

The Lancet paper's **data also raise questions about the accuracy of the initial information China provided**, Lucey says. At the beginning of the outbreak, the main official source of public information were notices from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission. Its notices on 11 January started to refer to the 41 patients as the only confirmed cases and the count remained the same until 18 January. The notices did not state that the seafood market was the source, but t**hey repeatedly noted that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission and that most cases linked to the market.** Because the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission noted that diagnostic tests had confirmed these 41 cases by 10 January and officials presumably knew the case histories of each patient, **"China must have realized the epidemic did not originate in that Wuhan Huanan seafood market,**" Lucey tells ScienceInsider. (Lucey also spoke about his concerns in an interview published online yesterday by Science Speaks, a project of the Infectious Disease Society of America.)

Kristian Andersen, an evolutionary biologist at the Scripps Research Institute who has analyzed sequences of 2019-nCoV to try to clarify its origin, says the 1 December timing of the first confirmed case was "an interesting tidbit" in The Lancet paper. "The scenario of somebody being infected outside the market and then later bringing it to the market is one of the three scenarios we have considered that is still consistent with the data," he says. "It's entirely plausible given our current data and knowledge." The other two scenarios are that the origin was a group of infected animals or a single animal that came into that marketplace.

Andersen posted his analysis of 27 available genomes of 2019-nCoV on 25 January on a virology research website. ...

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https://nypost.com/2020/03/27/shrimp-vendor-at-wuhan-market-may-be-coronavirus-patient-zero/

Dec 10

First Chinese case of coronavirus linked to Wuhan Market

The **57-year-old woman**, identified by the Wall Street Journal as Wei Guixian, was the **first person from the now-notorious Huanan market in Wuhan** to test positive for the deadly bug.

She was at work Dec. 10 when she developed what she thought were cold symptoms, Chinese outlet The Paper reported. So she walked to a small local clinic for treatment and then went back to work — likely spreading the contagion.

“I felt a bit tired, but not as tired as previous years,” she told The Paper, according to a translation by news.com.au. “Every winter, I always suffer from the flu. So I thought it was the flu.”

She visited a local clinic on Dec. 11 and received an injection, but didn’t feel any better, so she went to the Eleventh Hospital in Wuhan.

“The doctor at the Eleventh Hospital could not figure out what was wrong with me and gave me pills,” Wei told the Chinese outlet — but those didn’t work either.

“By then I felt a lot worse and very uncomfortable,” Wei said.
“I did not have the strength or energy.”

On Dec. 16, Wei went to Wuhan Union Hospital — one of the city’s biggest — to get checked out.

A doctor there described her illness as “ruthless” and told her several other people from the same market had already come in with similar symptoms.

By the end of the month, she was quarantined when doctors finally established the link between the emerging bug and the seafood market, the Chinese outlet reported.

A Dec. 31 statement from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission revealed that Wei was among the first 27 patients to test positive for COVID-19, and one of 24 cases with direct links to the seafood market.

Wei, who **has since recovered and left the hospital in January**, said she thinks she contracted the infection from a market toilet in the market she shared with meat sellers and others, according to the Journal.

The vendors who worked on either side of Wei, along with one of her daughters, a niece and the niece’s husband, also caught the deadly bug, the paper reported.

“A lot fewer people would have died” in the country if the government had acted sooner, Wei told the Journal in February.

Wei may have been “patient zero” at the market, but it’s still unclear if she was the first person to ever contract the novel coronavirus in the country.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/world/europe/france-coronavirus-timeline.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

Dec 27

First confirmed case of coronavirus in France

PARIS — Weeks before Chinese authorities acknowledged that the coronavirus could be transmitted by humans, and nearly a month before the first officially recorded cases in Europe, a **42-year-old fishmonger showed up at a hospital in suburban Paris coughing, feverish and having trouble breathing. It was Dec. 27.**

Now doctors in France say that the December patient may have been the earliest known coronavirus case in Europe.

If confirmed, the case of the fishmonger, Amirouche Hammar, would mean the deadly virus made an appearance on the continent long before officials there began tackling it. Such a discovery would bring a strange new wrinkle to the story of the virus in Europe, one that has the potential of blowing up the previously established chronology.

The French government says it is looking at the report. The doctors who made the finding said that they are confident in it, and that they tested the patient's old sample twice to avoid false positives. But they acknowledged that they could not completely rule out that possibility.

... [it] would help explain the rapidly developing catastrophe that has since unfurled in France and Europe. There have been thousands of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, in numbers that only in recent weeks have begun to abate somewhat, as a result of the French government's rigid confinement measures.
...
The journal publishing the report about the case has had a brush with controversy over the coronavirus, walking back a study it published about treatments for the virus. And much about this apparent first case remains a mystery.

But the authors of the paper, doctors at the Avicenne Hospital in the Paris suburb of Bobigny, among others, declare flatly: **Their study is of a "patient infected with Covid-19 one month before the first reported cases in our country" whose "lack of recent travel suggests that the disease was already spreading among the French population at the end of December 2019."**

...What is not clear is how the patient, Mr. Hammar, got it. Apart from a trip to Algeria last summer, he had not traveled. His wife, however, briefly exhibited some of the symptoms — coughing, principally — of the coronavirus, Dr. Cohen said.

"We've got some theories," he said. "His wife had a little cough."

Mr. Hammar's wife, Fatiha, who works in a supermarket near Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, told French television this week that she serves customers who come directly from the airport, "with their suitcases," she said.

There were direct flights between that airport and the one in Wuhan, China, before borders were closed.
...
Mr. Hammar, who lives in Bobigny, a northern suburb of Paris, said in an interview with BFM TV that he drove himself to the emergency ward at 5 a.m. on Dec. 27 after several days of coughing, difficulty breathing and chest pains.

Mr. Hammar, who has a history of asthma and diabetes, was diagnosed with a pulmonary infection but quickly recovered and was discharged two days later.

"I was surprised, given the devastation that the illness is causing," Mr. Hammar said of learning, months later, that he had been tested positive for Covid-19.

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https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074622/coronavirus-wuhan-doctor-says-officials-muzzled-her-sharing

Dec 30

A Wuhan doctor posts image of diagnostic report

A Wuhan doctor who posted information about the new coronavirus on social media that was shared by the late whistle-blower Li Wenliang has broken her silence, saying she was muzzled by authorities for raising the alarm without their permission at the start of the outbreak.

Ai Fen, director of the emergency department at Wuhan Central Hospital, told Chinese magazine People that she posted an image of a diagnostic report on social network WeChat on December 30, showing that the patient had a pneumonia infection caused by a Sars-like coronavirus.

Ai's interview suggests local health authorities in Wuhan, the centre of the epidemic, missed an opportunity to issue a warning about an imminent outbreak before the virus spread and infected more than 117,000 people globally and caused over 4,200 deaths.

It was published on Tuesday but later deleted from the magazine's WeChat account, prompting angry internet users to repost the article on other platforms. The magazine is published by the state-run People's Publishing House.

It also coincided with President Xi Jinping's first visit to Wuhan since the crisis began, during which he praised residents for their hard work and sacrifices.

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https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30382-2/fulltext

Dec. 30

Doctor shares image of diagnostic report

On Dec 30, 2019, Li Wenliang sent a message to a group of fellow doctors warning them about a possible outbreak of an illness that resembled severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, where he worked. Meant to be a private message, he encouraged them to protect themselves from infection. Days later, he was summoned to the Public Security Bureau in Wuhan and made to sign a statement in which he was accused of making false statements that disturbed the public order.

In fact, Li was one of the first people to recognise the outbreak of 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Wuhan that has now spread to 25 countries, killing 1669 people and infecting more than 51 800 people as of Feb 16, 2020. Li returned to work after signing the statement and contracted severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), apparently from a patient. His death sparked outrage in China, where citizens took to message boards to voice their gratitude for Li's dedicated front-line service and to criticise the initial response of Wuhan's security and medical officials to his warning.

In the days before his death, Li said “If the officials had disclosed information about the epidemic earlier I think it would have been a lot better”, in an interview with The New York Times. “There should be more openness and transparency”, he said.

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https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/

Dec 31

China notifies WHO they are seeing cases of pneumonia with unknown etiology

On 31 December 2019, the WHO China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology (unknown cause) detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. As of 3 January 2020, a total of 44 patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology have been reported to WHO by the national authorities in China. Of the 44 cases reported, 11 are severely ill, while the remaining 33 patients are in stable condition. According to media reports, the concerned market in Wuhan was closed on 1 January 2020 for environmental sanitation and disinfection.

The causal agent has not yet been identified or confirmed. On 1 January 2020, WHO requested further information from national authorities to assess the risk.

National authorities report that all patients are isolated and receiving treatment in Wuhan medical institutions. The clinical signs and symptoms are mainly fever, with a few patients having difficulty in breathing, and chest radiographs showing invasive lesions of both lungs.

According to the authorities, some patients were operating dealers or vendors in the Huanan Seafood market. Based on the preliminary information from the Chinese investigation team, no evidence of significant human-to-human transmission and no health care worker infections have been reported.

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https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/

Jan 5

5 days after being notified by China, WHO issues a press release

World Health Organization

Pneumonia of unknown cause – China

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https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/timeline-china-coronavirus-spread-200126061554884.html

Jan 7

WHO identifies virus as 2019-nCoV

On January 7, officials announced they had identified a new virus, according to the WHO. The novel virus was named 2019-nCoV and was identified as belonging to the coronavirus family, which includes SARS and the common cold.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/world/asia/china-virus-wuhan-death.html

Jan 9

China reports first known death from new virus

HONG KONG — Chinese state media on Saturday reported the first known death from a new virus that has infected dozens of people in China and set off worries across Asia.

The Xinhua news agency cited the health commission in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the illness first appeared, in reporting the death. The health commission said the patient, a **61-year-old man**, died on Thursday night.

Forty-one people have been found to have the new virus, a coronavirus, and seven patients are still in severe condition, the health commission said, according to the Xinhua report. Two patients have been discharged, it said.

There is no evidence that the virus can be spread between humans, according to the commission. The initial cases were linked to workers at a market that sold live fish, birds and other animals. More than 700 people who had close contact with patients, including 419 medical workers, have been put under observation, the commission said, adding that no additional cases have been found.

The man who died was a regular customer at the market in Wuhan and had previously been diagnosed with abdominal tumors and chronic liver disease, said the city's health commission.

While no new cases have been detected since Jan. 3, questions remain. Experts have said the minimum incubation period for some viral infections is 15 days, suggesting that it may be another week before authorities can determine the full extent of the illness.

Reports of the man's death came just before the Spring Festival, China's biggest holiday, which begins Jan. 25, and a time when hundreds of millions people travel across the country. That mass migration raises the potential of spreading and worsening any outbreak. According to government estimates, Chinese passengers will take three billion trips in the next five weeks for family reunions and tourism.

http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/01/report-thailands-coronavirus-patient-didnt-visit-outbreak-market

Jan 14

Thailand's coronavirus patient didn't visit outbreak market

A Chinese woman whose novel coronavirus (nCoV-2019) infection was detected after she arrived in Thailand didn't visit the market at the center of Wuhan's pneumonia outbreak, but she frequently visited a different market, answering some questions—and raising new ones—about exposure to the virus.

In another development, a Wuhan health official said there may be a family cluster among the outbreak patients, **pointing to the possibility of human-to-human spread.**

Patient frequented different Wuhan market
Yesterday's announcement from Thailand about the detection of the first nCoV-2019 case outside of China didn't have information about how she was exposed to the virus, a key question as health officials trace the animal source of the virus and assess the risk of human-to-human spread.

A new statement from the World Health Organization (WHO) today had several new details, including that the woman had not visited the Wuhan seafood market, which also sold live animals such as chickens, bats, and marmots, where most patients are thought to have been exposed. However, she reported regularly visiting a local fresh market before her symptoms began on Jan 5.

That illness onset is later than that of the others infected in the outbreak, which ranged from Dec 8 to Jan 2, according to a Jan 12 update from the WHO. The incubation period for nCoV-2019 isn't known, and authorities closed the seafood market on Jan 1.

"As the traveler did not report having visited the market linked to most of the other cases, it is vital that investigations continue to identify the source of infection," the WHO said in its statement. It added that more investigation is also needed to gauge human-to-human transmission, the mode of transmission, common exposure sources, and whether there are undetected asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic cases.

The woman's initial symptoms were fever, chills, sore throat, and headache. On Jan 8, she took a direct flight from Wuhan to Thailand with 5 family members in a tour group consisting of 16 people. Upon their arrival, thermal surveillance at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok detected her fever and she was hospitalized the same day.

Her samples tested positive for coronaviruses based on reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction testing on Jan 12, and genetic sequencing confirmed that she was infected with nCoV-2019. The Emerging Infectious Diseases Health Science Center, the Thai Red Cross Society, and the Thai National Institute of Health conducted the testing.

Currently, the patient is hospitalized in stable condition.

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https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1217043229427761152

Jan 14

WHO tweets

Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found **no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission** of the novel #coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in #Wuhan #China

Return to Timeline

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Drosten

Jan 15

First rapid diagnostic test introduced

Virologist Christian Drosten

A team from the German Center for Infection Research and virologists at Charite Hospital in Berlin announced today that they have developed a new lab test to detect 2019-nCoV and that the assay protocol has now been published by the WHO.

The team was led by Christian Drosten, MD, who directs the Charite's virology institute and was involved in developing a test for Middle East respiratory coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and was involved in the discovery of SARS-CoV.

According to a statement from the groups, an international consortium is now evaluating the test. "Now that this diagnostic test is widely available, I expect that it won’t be long before we are able to reliably diagnose suspected cases. This will also help scientists understand whether the virus is capable of spreading from human to human," Drosten said in the statement. "This is an important step in our fight against this new virus."

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https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/japan-confirms-first-case-of-infection-with-new-china-coronavirus

Jan 16

Japan confirms first case of infection from coronavirus

TOKYO - Japan confirmed its first case of infection from the mystery Wuhan pneumonia-like virus on Thursday (Jan 16), as Vietnam said it has isolated two visitors from the Chinese city as a preventive measure.

Japanese health authorities said a resident in his 30s of Kanagawa prefecture, south of Tokyo, had tested positive for the new virus strain. But officials took pains to stress that this was an isolated case, and that nobody else in Japan are suspected to have been infected.

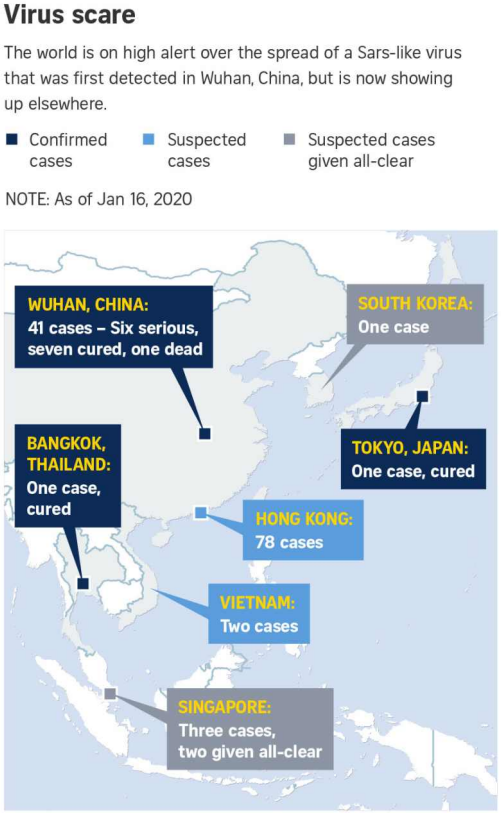
“It has not been confirmed at this moment that sustained human-to-human infections can occur,” Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said.

The man, a Chinese national, had been in close contact with a patient when he was in Wuhan, the Health Ministry said. It added that none of his family members who live with him in Japan, nor the doctors who treated him, have tested positive for the virus.

The Wuhan outbreak coincides with the annual flu season in Japan, and the ministry has reiterated its advisory for people to wash their hands, gargle, and wear masks to avoid falling sick.

Meanwhile, two Chinese tourists with fever symptoms from Wuhan were quarantined by Vietnam’s Ministry of Health and are now under observation after they landed at Danang International Airport on Tuesday (Jan 14). Hanoi dispatched a medical team to the coastal city and called an emergency meeting on Wednesday on prevention efforts.

Japan’s is the second confirmed Wuhan virus case to be reported outside China, after Thailand confirmed on Monday (Jan 13) that a 61-year-old Chinese woman had been hospitalised last week for high fever and breathing difficulties. She is now in a stable condition.



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https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2001191

Jan 20

First confirmed case in the United States

Confirmed on January 20, 2020

On January 19, 2020, a 35-year-old man presented to an urgent care clinic in Snohomish County, Washington, with a 4-day history of cough and subjective fever. On checking into the clinic, the patient put on a mask in the waiting room. After waiting approximately 20 minutes, he was taken into an examination room and underwent evaluation by a provider. He disclosed that he had returned to Washington State on January 15 after traveling to visit family in Wuhan, China. The patient stated that he had seen a health alert from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about the novel coronavirus outbreak in China and, because of his symptoms and recent travel, decided to see a health care provider.

Apart from a history of hypertriglyceridemia, the patient was an otherwise healthy nonsmoker. The physical examination revealed a body temperature of 37.2°C, blood pressure of 134/87 mm Hg, pulse of 110 beats per minute, respiratory rate of 16 breaths per minute, and oxygen saturation of 96% while the patient was breathing ambient air. Lung auscultation revealed rhonchi, and chest radiography was performed, which was reported as showing no abnormalities

A rapid nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) for influenza A and B was negative.

A nasopharyngeal swab specimen was obtained and sent for detection of viral respiratory pathogens by NAAT; this was reported back within 48 hours as negative for all pathogens tested, including influenza A and B, parainfluenza, respiratory syncytial virus, rhinovirus, adenovirus, and four common coronavirus strains known to cause illness in humans (HKU1, NL63, 229E, and Oc43).

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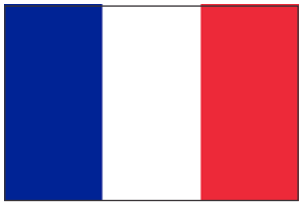
https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-outbreak-hospital-to-be-built-in-five-days-as-death-toll-rises-in-china-11916211



Jan 24

France declares three more infections

A 48-year-old man is being treated in a Bordeaux hospital in the southwest of the country after testing positive.

He had passed through the Chinese city of Wuhan - the epicentre of the outbreak - before arriving in France on Wednesday.

Two other people are in hospital in Paris. They also traveled to China and are believed to belong to the same family.

Health minister Agnes Buzyn said France has developed a test doctors can use to quickly diagnose patients and this was one reason why it was the first European nation to confirm cases.

Ms Buzyn predicted there would probably be more positive tests in her country.

It comes as the United States announced a second case after a woman was found to have contracted the strain.

She is in her 60s and is being treated in a Chicago hospital where she is reportedly doing well. She had traveled to Wuhan in December before flying home to Illinois.

China announced today it is building a new 1,000-bed hospital in just six days to treat victims of the virus.

Work has started on the structure in Wuhan in the style of a facility Beijing constructed during the SARS epidemic 17 years ago.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_coronavirus_pandemic_in_Canada#January_2020

Jan 25

First confirmed case in Canada

On January 25, the first identified presumptive case in Canada was a male in his 50s who travelled between Wuhan and Guangzhou before returning to Toronto on January 22

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https://www.businessinsider.com/wuhan-coronavirus-officials-quarantine-entire-city-2020-1

Jan 28

China puts 50 million people on lockdown

More than 100 people have died from a coronavirus outbreak that started in Wuhan, China, and more than 4,600 people have been infected across 17 countries.

The virus, which is marked by fevers and pneumonialike symptoms, likely originated in a wet market in Wuhan, an 11 million-person city in China's Hubei province.

On January 23, authorities put Wuhan under quarantine — halting all public transportation, including city buses, trains, and ferries. The order prevents any buses or trains from coming into or leaving the city and grounds all planes at the Wuhan airport. Wuhan authorities started to limit car travel the next day as well, The Guardian reported.

The city of Huanggang (which is home to around 7.5 million people) also went into lockdown last week, as authorities closed subway and train stations. By the following day, 10 additional cities — Chibi, Enshi, Ezhou, Huangshi, Suizhou, Qianjjiang, Xianning, Xiantao, Yichang, and Zhijiang — had followed suit with their own travel restrictions. As of Monday, the cities of Xiangyang, Jingmen, Xiaogan, and Dangyang were also quarantined.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization, said these efforts to quarantine cities will help Chinese authorities control the virus' spread and "minimize the chances of this outbreak spreading internationally."

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https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finlands_first_coronavirus_case_confirmed_in_lapland/11182855

Jan 29

Finland's first coronavirus case confirmed in Lapland

A Chinese tourist who was admitted to hospital for tests after showing symptoms was confirmed to have the deadly new strain of coronavirus that has so far killed more than a hundred people in China.

Infectious diseases specialist Markku Broas from Lapland Central Hospital said that the tourist left the city of Wuhan five days before seeking treatment in Finland. Wuhan is the capital of Hubei province, which the epicentre of the current outbreak, and shut down soon afterwards by Chinese authorities trying to stop the spread of the disease.

The tourist is said to be a female aged 32 and in relatively good health. She sought medical attention in Ivalo when symptoms first appeared. Samples were taken after a transfer to Lapland Central Hospital in Rovaniemi. Tests conducted in Helsinki confirmed the infection.

"It was to be expected that cases brought by visitors could also come to light in Finland. However the risk of the disease spreading in Finland is still very small, so there is no need for concern," said THL director Mika Salminen.

So far officials estimate that about 15 people may have been exposed to infection. Health authorities will monitor persons exposed to the risk of infection for 14 days, in accordance with World Health Organization recommendations.

Lapland hospital specialist Broas said that the majority of people under observation after possible exposure to the disease are
foreign nationals. "Travel restrictions in China will reduce the risk of infection," he noted.

Health officials from the Lapland hospital district as well as local health officials will continue to manage the situation in collaboration with the THL.

"Finland is prepared for possible cases. The health care system and laboratories have operating systems in place. Hospitals are also prepared to investigate and care for coronavirus infections in isolation wards," Salminen added.

Meanwhile THL officials said in a press conference Wednesday evening that the possible window for infection from this patient was likely very narrow. They added that there are no locations at Helsinki-Vantaa Airport where people might have been exposed to infection.

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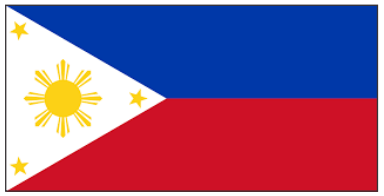
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-02/first-person-outside-of-china-dies-from-virus-in-philippines



Feb 1

Coronavirus death in Philippines is first fatality outside China

A 44-year-old Chinese male from Wuhan died in the Philippines on Feb. 1 from the novel coronavirus, the first death recorded outside of China, the World Health Organization said on Sunday.

The man arrived in the Philippines on Jan. 21 accompanying the country's first confirmed case, a 38-year-old woman, after they had traveled from Wuhan via Hong Kong, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said at a televised briefing in Manila. He was hospitalized on Jan. 25 after experiencing a fever, cough and sore throat, which developed into severe pneumonia.

"This is the first reported death outside China, however we need take into mind it is not a locally acquired case," WHO's representative in the Philippines, Rabindra Abeyasinghe, said at the briefing. "This patient is from the epicenter of this outbreak in Wuhan, China, where they have a very large number of deaths."

Earlier on Sunday, President Rodrigo Duterte widened his travel ban previously imposed on visitors from Hubei province to all of China, including Hong Kong and Macau, and also prohibited Filipinos from traveling to those areas, according to his spokesman, Salvador Panelo. Citizens returning from China and its special administrative regions must go into quarantine for 14 days, Panelo said.

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https://www.factcheck.org/2020/04/trump-biden-spin-china-travel-restrictions/

Feb 2

FACTCHECK.ORG

36 countries have imposed travel restrictions

Both President Donald Trump and leading Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden are spinning the facts on the administration's coronavirus travel restrictions for those who had been in China.

Trump has repeatedly boasted, as he did on April 4, that "I stopped people from China very early — very, very early — from coming into our country." On April 1, Trump said that "banning dangerous foreign travel that threatens the health of our people" was one of the actions his administration took that was "far earlier than anyone would have thought and way ahead of anybody else."

On ABC's "This Week" on April 5, Biden said "45 nations had already moved" to restrict travel from China "before the president moved." Said Biden, "We started off awfully slow."

The U.S. did not act "way ahead of anybody else" in imposing travel restrictions from China, as Trump alleges, nor was it late getting into the act compared with other countries around the world, as Biden says.

ThinkGlobalHealth, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations, has been tracking the travel restrictions on China due to COVID-19. Its country-by-country analysis of the date and type of travel restrictions shows that in the days after the World Health Organization on Jan. 30 declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, **36 countries imposed travel restrictions, including the U.S., by Feb. 2.**

"What this data shows is that the United States was neither behind nor ahead of the curve in terms of imposing travel restrictions against China," a co-author of the tracker, Samantha Kiernan, a research associate on global health, economics, and development at the Council on Foreign Relations, told us via email.

A day after the WHO decision, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar declared a public health emergency for the U.S. for the novel coronavirus and announced travel restrictions to and from China, effective Feb. 2. The policy prohibited non-U.S. citizens, other than the immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents, who have traveled to China within the last two weeks from entering the U.S. ...

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https://hallboothsmith.com/the-department-of-health-and-human-services-declaration-and-the-public-readiness-and-emergency-preparedness-act/

Feb 4

HHS “PREP Act” effective

Written by: Christopher Eads, Esq.

The Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) recently issued a declaration under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (“PREP Act”) Act to provide immunity to liability for activities related to medical countermeasures against the coronavirus(COVID-19). The declaration is effective retroactively to February 4, 2020.

Executive Summary

Under the declaration, makers, distributors, program planners, administering entities and licensed health professionals (referred to in the declaration as “qualified persons”) **engaged in facilitating coronavirus countermeasures are protected from liability.** HHS is encouraging companies to proactively develop and disseminate medical countermeasures undaunted by potential legal claims attendant to these products. Licensed health professionals are also being protected for their work in prescribing, administering or dispensing the products while treating COVID-19 patients. The immunity protects covered entities from liability, except for acts of willful misconduct, for losses relating to use of the countermeasures.

The HHS declaration was issued under the authority granted by the PREP Act. The PREP Act reflects the HHS Secretary’s determination that the development of countermeasures for coronavirus should be facilitated. The PREP Act was previously used to prevent liability for similar situations in response to Ebola, Zika and anthrax.

What Is the Duration of Coverage?

Legal immunity is retroactive from February 4, 2020 and extends through October 1, 2024. An additional 12 months of liability protection is granted for manufacturers and distributors to dispose of and collect the countermeasures or otherwise limit use of the countermeasures.

Who Is Covered?

Immunity is afforded to countermeasure “manufacturers,” “distributors,” “program planners” and other “qualified persons,” as well as their officials, agents and employees. These terms are interpreted broadly:

“Manufacturer” includes any supplier or licenser of a component or service rendered in the design, development, testing, investigation or manufacturing of a covered countermeasure.
“Distributor” includes any entity engaged in the distribution of a covered countermeasure, ranging from repackers to retail pharmacies.
“Program planners” include any entity that supervises or administers a countermeasure program, including any entity that “has established requirements, provided policy guidance, or supplied technical or scientific advice or assistance or ...

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https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-22/coronavirus-first-known-fatality-us-california

Feb 6
First U.S. coronavirus death

A mystery clouded the death of Patricia Dowd in early February.

The San Jose woman was a seemingly healthy 57-year-old who exercised routinely, watched her diet and took no medication. She had flu-like symptoms for a few days, then appeared to recover, a family member said. Then she was found dead Feb. 6, and the initial culprit appeared to be a heart attack.

This week, authorities confirmed to Dowd's family that she tested positive for the novel coronavirus, making her the first such documented fatality in the nation.

Health authorities in Santa Clara County did not identify Dowd by name, describing the decedent as a 57-year-old woman who died at home. The Times independently confirmed her death from family members.

Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody said the deaths of three people in the county — one Feb. 6, another Feb. 17, and a third March 6 — were evidence that the novel coronavirus arrived in the Bay Area far earlier than expected and spread. Previously, the first documented fatality was outside Seattle on Feb. 29.

"None of these cases had a significant travel history," Cody said Wednesday of the three deaths. "We presume that each of them represent community transmission and that there was some significant level of virus circulating in our community in early February ... and who knows how much earlier."

Cody referred to the cases as "iceberg tips," an omen of a vast and unseen propagation. The person who died on Feb. 17 was a 69-year-old man. The March 6 victim was a 70-year-old man.

Cody said the robust influenza season this winter, coupled with limited testing and a nascent understanding of the coronavirus, led to this late detection.

"It would be difficult to pick out what was influenza and what was COVID-19," Cody said. She credited the county's medical examiner and health officials for taking the time to understand the virus and help detect these three deaths.

Family members said Dowd, who worked as manager for semiconductor company, became unusually sick in late January and was forced to cancel plans to go to a weekend funeral.

After a bout with flu-like symptoms, however, she had improved and was working from home, corresponding with a colleague at about 8 a.m. the day of her death.

About two hours later, her daughter found her dead. As family members learned more about the symptoms of the coronavirus, suspicions grew.

Dowd had a history of foreign travel, as did her co-workers at Lam Research in the Bay Area.

Her brother-in-law, Jeff Macias, said Dowd had planned to travel to China later this year and went abroad "multiple times a year to different global locations."

"Where did this come from if it wasn't her traveling?" Macias said. "Patricia may not be the first. It's just the earliest we have found so far."...

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https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/07/803680463/china-to-investigate-after-whistleblower-doctor-dies-from-coronavirus

Feb 7

Dr. Li Wenliang dies from coronavirus

China says it has launched an investigation into "issues" related to the death on Friday of a doctor whose early efforts to alert his colleagues to the dangers of a new coronavirus were quashed by authorities.

Meanwhile, President Trump spoke with China's leader Xi Jinping to discuss the coronavirus epidemic, which has rapidly gone global since it began in China in December.

Dr. Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist working in Wuhan, the Chinese city where the epidemic originated, died on Friday local time, weeks after he was hospitalized and treated for a coronavirus infection.

Li, 34, had first sought to warn his college classmates in the medical profession of the disease in late December. Using the popular Chinese social media platform WeChat, Li wrote that he had become aware of several cases similar to severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, another coronavirus that killed nearly 800 people in a 2002-2003 outbreak that Beijing initially tried to cover up.

However, within days, local police paid him a visit and reprimanded him for the posts. He signed a statement on Jan. 3, a copy of which has circulated online in China, in which he acknowledges making "false statements."

"This is a type of illegal behavior!" the statement said.

Days later, Li was hospitalized with a coronavirus infection.

On Cruise Ship Quarantined In Japan, New Cases Could Reset The Isolation Clock
ASIA
On Cruise Ship Quarantined In Japan, Any New Cases Would Reset The Isolation Clock
After the announcement of his death Friday, China's National Supervisory Commission, the country's top anti-corruption body, said it would send a team to Wuhan to "thoroughly investigate issues related to Dr. Li Wenliang," according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The report did not specify what exactly would be investigated, but it comes within a broader context of growing criticism of Beijing for its handling of the crisis. China was initially praised for being quicker to seek international help than it did during the SARS outbreak; however, in recent days it has become more clear that in the initial phase of the epidemic, authorities may have been less than transparent.

Li is one of several whistleblowers in the medical profession who tried to sound the alarm but were apparently shut down by authorities in the crucial first weeks of the outbreak. News of his death on Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter, sparked an outpouring of sympathy and rare expressions of anger at authorities, according to the South China Morning Post.

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https://www.statnews.com/2020/02/11/disease-caused-by-the-novel-coronavirus-has-name-covid-19/

Feb 11

Disease caused by the novel coronavirus officially has a name: COVID-19

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization, announced the name Tuesday, giving a specific identifier to a disease that has been confirmed in more than 42,000 people and caused more than 1,000 deaths in China. There have been fewer than 400 cases in 24 other countries, with one death.

In choosing the name, WHO advisers focused simply on the type of virus that causes the disease. Co and Vi come from coronavirus, Tedros explained, with D meaning disease and 19 standing for 2019, the year the first cases were seen.

The virus that causes the disease has been known provisionally as 2019-nCoV. Also on Tuesday, a coronavirus group from the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, which is responsible for naming new viruses, proposed designating the novel coronavirus as SARS-CoV-2, according to a preprint of a paper posted online. (Preprints are versions of papers that have not yet been peer-reviewed or published in a scientific journal.) The name reflects the genetic similarities between the new coronavirus and the coronavirus that caused the SARS outbreak of 2002-2003.

In selecting Covid-19 as the name of the disease, the WHO name-givers steered clear of linking the outbreak to China or the city of Wuhan, where the illness was first identified. Although origin sites have been used in the past to identify new viruses, such a namesake is now seen as denigrating. Some experts have come to regret naming the infection caused by a different coronavirus the Middle East respiratory syndrome.

“Having a name matters to prevent the use of other names that can be inaccurate or stigmatizing,” Tedros said. “It also gives us a standard format to use for any future coronavirus outbreaks.”

Viruses and the disease they cause do not have to have related names — think HIV and AIDS — but more recently those responsible for the formal naming process have kept them associated. For example, SARS, the disease, is caused by SARS-CoV, the virus.

The provisional name of the new virus stemmed from the year it was first seen (2019), the fact that it was new (n), and a member of the coronavirus family (CoV).

A clear name could also stop the ad hoc identifiers that have sprung up in the press and online, many of which, like the Wuhan virus or Wu Flu, linked the virus to the city.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/22/world/asia/china-coronavirus.html

Feb 12

South Korea sees a spike in cases

South Korea reported 123 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, bringing its total to 556, and reported a fourth death. The news added to concerns that another Asian country was losing control of the disease and that the window to avert a pandemic was closing.

As of Saturday, the virus had spread to 28 countries. Some 1,500 cases had been confirmed outside China; multiple infections in the United States, Italy, Iran and the United Arab Emirates; and one in Egypt, the first to be confirmed on the African continent. The highest death toll outside of China is in Iran, with six as of Saturday.

Early Sunday, China, where the virus emerged, raised its numbers to 76,936 confirmed cases and 2,442 deaths.

Panic was spreading in Israel on the news that nine South Koreans who had spent a week visiting often-crowded religious sites as part of a Roman Catholic tour group had tested positive upon returning home.

Many African countries are bracing for the disease. The World Health Organization has identified 13 as priorities because of their direct links to China or their high volume of travel to it.

With hundreds of infections having been confirmed in South Korea in just a few days, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun called the situation “grave.”

“We will deal sternly with any acts that interfere with the government’s quarantine efforts and add to anxiety among the people,” Mr. Chung said in a nationally televised statement on Saturday. He urged citizens not to hoard facial masks or other hygiene products.

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https://www.cnn.com/asia/live-news/coronavirus-outbreak-02-18-20-intl-hnk/index.html

Feb 18

Global death toll for coronavirus exceeds 2,000

More than 2,000 people have died from coronavirus across the globe, according to the latest figures released Tuesday.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) reported Tuesday that 136 more people died of coronavirus in mainland China, 132 of which occurred in the Hubei province.

The latest figures brings the total number of deaths in mainland China to 2,004, and the global death toll to 2,009. There have been five deaths reported outside of mainland China with one death in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines and France.

The global number of confirmed coronavirus cases now stands at 75,117, with the majority of cases in mainland China.

China's National Health Commission is expected to release numbers for all of China's provinces later.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

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https://www.wbrz.com/news/stock-market-has-its-worst-day-in-2-years/

Feb 24

US stock market plummets - Dow Jones has worst day in 2 years

WALL STREET- Stock markets were slammed on Monday with investors unnerved by rising coronavirus concerns.

The relentless spread and widening economic impact of the coronavirus now threatens havoc on a global scale.

The Dow Jones industrial average sank by more than 1,000 points or 3.5 percent, to close at 27,961.01 as Wall Street interpreted disease clusters in South Korea, Italy, and Iran as a sign that the respiratory illness has outraced confinement efforts in China. The technology-heavy Nasdaq index sank by more than 3.7 percent.

Factories around the world are grappling with parts shortages as their Chinese suppliers struggle to resume normal operations. The Federal Reserve and other central banks are facing calls for emergency help as global economic engines sputter.

Interest rates are already in negative territory in Europe and near historic lows in the United States, making it even more difficult for central bank chiefs to battle the economic consequences of the flu-like illness.

“There’s just growing angst in the investor community that this thing is more serious than we realized,” said Chris Meekins, an analyst with Raymond James and former Trump administration preparedness official. “When you’re worried about catching a disease, you’re not going to go out to dinner; you’re not going to go to the movies or sporting events or concerts. The only question is how widespread this becomes.”

Investors on Monday rushed into traditional safe havens, sending the price of gold soaring as government bond yields, which move opposite prices, plumbed new depths. After weeks of playing down the likely impact outside China, oil also fell into bear market territory amid expectations of prolonged global weakness.

“It may not be an actual pandemic yet, but it’s an economic pandemic,” said Diane Swonk, chief economist for Grant Thornton. “It’s global in scope and disrupting activity around the world.”

Monday’s markets action showed the rapid evolution of the coronavirus from a limited threat to supply chains into an across-the-board tightening of financial conditions ...

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https://www.businessinsider.com/antarctica-last-continent-no-coronavirus-brazil-confirms-case-south-america-2020-2

Feb 25

Brazil has first confirmed case; the coronavirus has now hit every continent except Antarctica

The coronavirus has now reached every continent except Antarctica after Brazil confirmed its first case.

On Tuesday, Brazil's Ministry of Health confirmed a man in São Paulo tested positive for COVID-19, according to Reuters.

The 61-year-old man returned to São Paulo from Lombardy, Italy, on February 21, the ministry said. He had flown to Italy for work on February 9.

This is the first confirmed case in South America, leaving Antarctica the only continent without a registered case.

Return to Timeline

https://www.statnews.com/2020/02/25/cdc-expects-community-spread-of-coronavirus-as-top-official-warns-disruptions-could-be-severe/

Feb 25

CDC expects ‘community spread’ of coronavirus, as top official warns disruptions could be ‘severe’

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday warned that it expects the novel coronavirus that has sparked outbreaks around the world to begin spreading at a community level in the United States, as a top official said that disruptions to daily life could be “severe.”

“As we’ve seen from recent countries with community spread, when it has hit those countries, it has moved quite rapidly. We want to make sure the American public is prepared,” Nancy Messonnier, director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, told reporters.

“As more and more countries experience community spread, successful containment at our borders becomes harder and harder,” she said.

There have been 14 cases of the virus diagnosed in the U.S., all in people who traveled recently to China or their close contacts. Another 39 U.S. residents have been infected in other parts of the world before being repatriated and quarantined. But CDC officials say the country could soon see more cases as the virus starts to spread through communities in areas outside China, including Iran, South Korea, and Italy.

The CDC urged American businesses and families to start preparing for the possibility of a bigger outbreak. Messonnier said that parents should ask their children’s schools about plans for closures. Businesses should consider whether they can offer telecommuting options to their employees, while hospitals might need to look into expanding telehealth services, she said.

“Disruption to everyday life might be severe,” Messonnier said, adding that she talked to her children about the issue Tuesday morning. “While I didn’t think they were at risk right now, we as a family ought to be preparing for significant disruption to our lives.”

The CDC’s messaging seemed to be at odds with the position of the World Health Organization, which reiterated Tuesday that countries could stop transmission chains if they acted swiftly and aggressively ...

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https://www.oncnursingnews.com/publications/oncology-nurse/2020/april-2020/2020-whos-international-year-of-the-nurse-and-the-midwife

Feb 27

WHO designates 2020 as the year of the nurse

The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the “International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife,” in honor of the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale’s birth.

Nightingale was a visionary nurse and leader, and we are thrilled to honor her in 2020 with this initiative.

This may not seem significant to us in the United States, where nursing is ranked as the most trusted profession, according to Gallup’s polls, but in many countries, nurses and midwives are considered less important and treated with less respect.

WHO’s 2020 International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife celebration will hopefully elevate nursing throughout the world and lead individuals to recognize the many roles we nurses fill in global healthcare.

The Year of the Nurse designation by the WHO highlights the push to increase the global nursing workforce. Nurses and midwives make up more than half the healthcare workforce worldwide, and the WHO estimates that this year there will be a shortage of nearly 9 million nurses.

As the world faces growing healthcare shortages, there are ambitious efforts being made to reach a goal of universal health coverage around the world by 2030. Nurses need to be on the front line.

Portrait of Florence Nightingale

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https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/transcripts/who-audio-emergencies-coronavirus-press-conference-full-28feb2020.pdf?sfvrsn=13eeb6a4_2

Feb 28

More than 20 vaccines are in development globally

World Health Organization

... Our epidemiologists have been monitoring these developments continuously and we have now increased our assessment of the risk of spread and the risk of impact of COVID-19 to very high at global level. What we see at the moment are linked epidemics of COVID-19 in several countries but most cases can still be traced to known contacts or clusters of cases.

We do not see evidence as yet that the virus is spreading freely in communities. As long as that's the case we still have a chance of containing this virus if robust action is taken to detect cases early, isolate and care for patients and trace contacts.

As I said yesterday, there are different scenarios in different countries and different scenarios within the same country. The key to containing this virus is to break the chain of transmission. Yesterday I spoke about the things countries must do to prepare for cases and prevent onward transmission. The WHO/China joint mission has now published its report, which is available in English on the WHO website and will also be posted in Chinese on the National Health Commission website.

The report includes a wealth of information and 22 recommendations for China, for affected and unaffected countries, for the international community and the general public. It calls for all countries to educate their populations, to expand surveillance, to find, isolate and care for every case, to trace every contact and to take an all-of-government and all-of-society approach. This is not a job for the health ministry alone.

At the same time, work is also progressing on vaccines and therapeutics. **More than 20 vaccines are in development globally and several therapeutics are in clinical trials. We expect the first results in a few weeks** but we don't need to wait for vaccines and the therapeutics.

There are things every individual can do to protect themselves and others today.

Your risk depends on where you live, your age and general health ...

Return to Timeline

Mar 1

6 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Armenia confirmed its first case, a 29-year-old man returning from Iran.
2. Czech Republic confirmed the first three cases in the country, individuals that have travelled from Northern Italy.
3. Dominican Republic confirmed its first case, a 62-year-old Italian tourist.
4. Saint Barthélemy confirmed its first case.
5. Saint Martin confirmed its first case.
6. Scotland confirmed its first case.

Return to Timeline

Mar 2

11 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Andorra confirmed its first case.
2. India reported its first cases since the initial outbreak. One case was detected in New Delhi, while the other was from Telangana. Another confirmed case was later detected in Jaipur, bringing the total number to 6.
3. Indonesian president Joko Widodo announced the first two confirmed cases in the country. The two people contracted the virus from a Japanese in Depok, who later tested positive in Malaysia. The mother and daughter are now hospitalized in North Jakarta.
4. Ireland Tourism authorities announce that one of the largest annual events, the 2020 Dublin St Patricks Day Parade, is cancellled.
5. Jordan confirmed its first case.
6. Latvia confirmed its first case, a woman who had flown from Milan to Riga through Munich
7. Morocco saw its first case confirmed.
8. Portugal confirmed its first two cases, one of whom had returned from Italy, the other from Spain.
9. Saudi Arabia confirmed their first case in a citizen who had travelled to Iran and returned to Saudi Arabia via Bahrain.
10. Senegal confirmed its first case, where the person had recently travelled from France.
11. Tunisia confirmed its first case.

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Mar 3

5 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Argentina confirmed its first case, a person who had recently returned from Italy.
2. Chile confirmed its first case.
3. Gibraltar confirmed its first case, a person who had travelled back from Northern Italy via Malaga airport.
4. Liechtenstein confirmed its first case.
5. Ukraine confirmed its first case, a person having travelled from Italy via Romania.

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Mar 4

5 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Faroe Islands confirmed its first case
2. Hong Kong confirmed a case of human-to-animal transmission involving a pet dog
3. Hungary confirmed its first cases, two Iranian students who are asymptomatic.
4. Poland confirmed its first case.
5. Slovenia confirmed its first case. A person traveled through Italy.

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Mar 5

4 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed the first two cases in the country.
2. Egypt confirmed the first case in an Egyptian national, who had recently travelled from Serbia via France.
3. Martinique confirmed its first two cases.
4. South Africa records its first case in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

Return to Timeline

Mar 6

8 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Bhutan announced its first case, an American tourist who had recently also travelled to India after leaving the United States on 18 February.
2. Cameroon confirmed its first case, a French citizen.
3. Colombia confirmed its first case, a woman who recently traveled from Italy.
4. Costa Rica has confirmed its first case involving an American from New York.
5. Peru confirmed its first case.
6. Serbia confirmed its first case.
7. Slovakia confirmed its first case.
8. Togo confirmed its first case.

The cruise ship Grand Princess announced it had 21 people on board testing positive.

The Vatican City confirmed its first case.

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Mar 7

4 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Maldives confirmed its first cases, two overseas hotel employees.

2. Malta reported its first three cases, an Italian family who are residents in Malta. They had gone on holiday to northern Italy and had been in self-quarantine before being tested for the coronavirus. They are now in isolation at Mater Dei Hospital.

3. Moldova confirmed its first case, a person taken to hospital after arriving on a flight from Italy.

4. Palestine confirms 22 cases.

Return to Timeline

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/coronavirus-latest-103-year-old-woman-recovers-wuhan-hubei-china-a9393991.html

Mar 7

A 103-year-old woman becomes the oldest person to beat coronavirus and return home

Zhang Guangfen recovered from the disease after receiving treatment for just six days at a hospital in Wuhan – the Chinese city at the centre of the outbreak.

The centenarian's quick recovery was down to her having no underlying health conditions apart from mild chronic bronchitis, her doctor Dr Zeng Yulan told reporters.

She was diagnosed at Liyuan Hospital, Tongji Medical College, in Wuhan on 1 March, Chutian Metropolis Daily reports.

The grandmother has become the oldest person to recover from the deadly disease so far – days after a 101-year-old man also beat the virus in Wuhan.
A 100-year-old man with Alzheimer's disease, hypertension and heart failure also recovered from the virus in Wuhan this week after being treated by military doctors.

Wuhan's 11 million residents have been in lockdown since late January.

The disease has infected more than 80,700 people in China and killed more than 3,000.

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Mar 8

3 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Albania confirmed the first two cases in the country.
2. Bangladesh confirmed its first three cases, two people who had come from Italy separately, and a contact of one of the cases.
3. Bulgaria confirmed its first four cases.

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Mar 9

3 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Brunei's health ministry confirmed a first case of a local man who returned from Kuala Lumpur on 3 March. Symptoms began on 7 March and preliminary tests indicate the person is positive

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2. Cyprus confirmed its first two cases.

3. Panama announced its first COVID-19 case, a 40 year old Panamanian woman from Spain.

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https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/11/china-new-normal-coronavirus-pandemic-quarantine-ai-fen-propaganda/

Mar 10

Is China Returning to Business as Usual?

Life in China appears to be beginning to return to normal after weeks of lockdown due to the coronavirus. Although the streets of major cities aren't anywhere near as crowded as before, people are coming out again and offices and factories are starting to spring back to life. The makeshift hospitals erected in Wuhan amid the outbreak have been closed, and the epidemic seems to have been broken there. On Tuesday, President Xi Jinping arrived in Wuhan for a carefully planned visit. There, local leaders have demanded that the people show their gratitude to the party, which received some pushback.

Don't confuse this with actual normality. Life in China is still happening under the shadow of the virus, with temperature checks, app monitoring, and other biosecurity measures. That includes a just-announced 14-day quarantine period for all international arrivals at Beijing's airports, which could extend across the country soon. (That make Beijing's insistence in February that other countries' travel restrictions were unnecessary look a little hypocritical.) Movement within the country is still restricted, including for migrant workers. But China is edging toward a consensus on what life will look like now.

A boy rides a scooter as he walks with his mother on March 10 in Beijing. KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

Return to Timeline

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51810673

Mar 10

Italy extends emergency measures nationwide

Italy has extended its emergency coronavirus measures, which include travel restrictions and a ban on public gatherings, to the entire country.

On Monday, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte ordered people to stay home and seek permission for essential travel.

He said the measures were designed to protect the most vulnerable. "There is no more time," he said in a TV address.

Italy's coronavirus death toll jumped from 366 to 463 on Monday. It is the worst-hit country after China.

The number of confirmed infection also increased by 24% from Sunday, official figures showed.

Cases of the virus have been confirmed in all 20 Italian regions.

What did Mr Conte say?
Mr Conte said the best thing was for people to stay at home. "We're having an important growth in infection... and of deaths," he said in an evening address.

"We all must give something up for the good of Italy. We have to do it now.

"This is why I decided to adopt even more strong and severe measures to contain the advance... and protect the health of all citizens."

In an earlier interview with La Repubblica newspaper, Mr Conte said of the outbreak: "I have been thinking about the old speeches of [Winston] Churchill - it is our darkest hour, but we will make it".

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Mar 10

7 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Bolivia confirmed its first cases, two women who had been in Italy, arriving the country without showing any symptoms.

2. Burkina Faso confirmed its first cases with two infections, a couple who had returned from France in February.

3. Democratic Republic of Congo reported its first case, a foreigner who flew into Kinshasa from Belgium who tested positive on arrival and was isolated. It was later confirmed by the Ministry of Health that the information they had originally released was incorrect and that the first case was rather a Congolese citizen returning From France, who had contacted the Health Services two days after his arrival in Congo and had been quarantined in a local neighborhood.

4. Jamaica confirmed its first case, a Jamaican national who travelled to the country from the United Kingdom.

5. Jersey confirmed its first case, a person who returned from Italy.

6. Northern Cyprus reported its first case, a 65-year-old German woman who was visiting as a tourist.

7. Turkey confirmed its first case.

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https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020

Mar 11

WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19

WHO has been assessing this outbreak around the clock and we are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction.

We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly. It is a word that, if misused, can cause unreasonable fear, or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death.

Describing the situation as a pandemic does not change WHO's assessment of the threat posed by this virus. It doesn't change what WHO is doing, and it doesn't change what countries should do.

We have never before seen a pandemic sparked by a coronavirus. This is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus.

And we have never before seen a pandemic that can be controlled, at the same time.

WHO has been in full response mode since we were notified of the first cases.

And we have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action.

We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear.

World Health Organization

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Mar 11

6 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Cuba confirmed its first three cases.

2. French Polynesia reported its first case. The person is Maina Sage, a member of the French National Assembly.

3. Guyana confirmed its first two case, from a 52-year-old woman suffering from underlying health conditions, including diabetes and hypertension.

4. Honduras confirmed its first two cases, one from Spain and one from Switzerland.

5. Ivory Coast declared its first case, a local citizen who had recently been in Italy.

6. Réunion confirmed its first case.

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nba-suspends-remainder-season-coronavirus-spreads-n1156156

Mar 12

The NBA suspends all games starting Thursday after a player for the Utah Jazz tests positive for COVID-19

The league said play would be suspended until further notice.

The test result was reported **shortly before tipoff of Wednesday night's game between the Utah Jazz and Oklahoma City Thunder in Oklahoma City, according to a statement from the NBA. The game was canceled immediately.**

The affected player was not in the arena at the time of cancellation. The NBA also announced that it would use the hiatus to determine its next steps.

NBA suspends all games as coronavirus spreadsA game between the Sacramento Kings and the New Orleans Pelicans in New Orleans was also suspended because one of the referees at the game had worked a Jazz game earlier in the week, according to NBC Sports.

Wednesday night's other games were allowed to go ahead.

The move by the NBA is the biggest in the U.S. to date in response to concerns about the spreading coronavirus.

Earlier Wednesday, the NCAA said it would restrict attendance at its coming Division I men's and women's basketball tournaments to staff and family.

Reporters at the Jazz-Thunder game tweeted that the entire arena was emptied and that both teams were still in their locker rooms while the Jazz bench area was cleaned.

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Mar 13

20 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Antigua and Barbuda confirmed its first case.
2. Aruba confirmed its first two cases, people who traveled in from New York.
3. The Cayman Islands confirmed its first case.
4. Curaçao reported its first case, a Dutch tourist.
5. Ethiopia confirmed its first case.
6. Gabon confirmed its first case.
7. Ghana confirmed its first two cases, a Norwegian Embassy official and a Turkish citizen.
8. Guadeloupe confirmed its first case, a citizen who recently returned from France.
9. Guatemala confirmed its first case, a traveler from Italy.
10. Guinea reported its first case, an employee of the EU delegation.
11. Kazakhstan confirmed its first two cases, which were also the first in Central Asia.
12. Kenya confirmed its first case, a Kenyan national who had returned from the United States via London.
13. Kosovo confirmed its first two cases.
14. Puerto Rico confirmed its first three cases, a 71-year-old man and an Italian couple, aged 68 and 70.
15. Saint Lucia confirmed its first case, a 63-year-old woman who had traveled to the UK.
16. Sudan confirmed its first case and first death, a man in his 50s who travelled to the United Arab Emirates.
17. Suriname confirmed its first case.
18. U.S. Virgin Islands confirmed the first case in the territory.
19. Uruguay confirmed its first four cases, all of them having travelled from Milan, Italy.
20. Venezuela confirmed its first two cases, one a traveler from the United States, and the second who had traveled from Spain.

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/12/trump-bans-travel-from-europe-here-what-you-need-to-know.html

Mar 14

US travel ban on 26 European countries comes into force

The U.S. is banning entry to those traveling from the 26 European countries that form the so-called Schengen Area, where there are no passport checks between internal borders. These nations are: **Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.**

Most people who have been in these countries in the 14 days prior to their scheduled arrival in the United States will not be allowed in. This two-week limit means those affected can't get around the rules by changing flights in a non-European airport.

The ban does not apply to legal permanent residents of the U.S., according to the Department of Homeland Security, and in most cases, it does not apply to Countries in Europe not part of the Schengen area are **excluded from the ban**. These include the **U.K., Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania.**

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Mar 14

9 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Central African Republic confirmed its first case.
2. Congo Republic confirmed its first case, a person who had travelled from France.
3. Equatorial Guinea confirmed its first case, a 42-year-old woman who returned from Madrid.
4. Eswatini confirmed its first case, a 33-year-old woman, who traveled to the United States and then Lesotho before returning home to Eswatini.
5. Mauritania confirmed its first case.
6. Mayotte confirmed its first case.
7. Namibia confirmed its first cases, two tourists visiting the country.
8. Rwanda confirmed its first case.
9. Seychelles reported its first two cases.

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/14/us-to-extend-travel-restrictions-to-uk-ireland-due-to-coronavirus-source.html

Mar 15

US adds UK and Ireland to coronavirus travel restrictions

The U.S. will added the U.K. and Ireland to sweeping travel restrictions as the coronavirus spreads, President Donald Trump said Saturday, as he discouraged the American public from unnecessary travel.

Trump earlier this week announced that foreigners who have been in 26 European countries over the last two weeks won't be allowed in to the U.S. for 30 days. Vice President Mike Pence said the rules will take effect midnight Monday.

Airlines have scrambled to slash flights amid the pandemic and unprecedented travel restrictions to stop the spreading virus have crushed demand. Air cargo and ocean freight are exempt from the rules. The new ban to entry on foreigners who have been in the U.K. and Ireland takes effect at midnight Monday.

Speaking at a coronavirus briefing on Saturday, Trump said further travel restrictions, possibly within the United States, from places with high numbers of cases, is possible.

"If you don't have to travel, I wouldn't do it," Trump said, when asked whether people should travel domestically.

Trump said his administration is considering domestic travel restrictions "from certain areas," he said, without elaborating. "We're working with the states and considering other restrictions."

Airlines will likely run flights for several days to allow citizens to return home and then will begin cancellations, according to a person familiar with the matter.

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Mar 15

7 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Bahamas confirmed their first case, a person with no recent travel history.
2. Uzbekistan confirmed its first case, a citizen who had returned from France.
3. Benin confirmed its first case, a 49-year-old man who had traveled to Belgium and Burkina Faso.
4. Greenland confirmed its first case.
5. Liberia confirmed its first case.
6. Somalia confirmed its first case.
7. Tanzania confirmed its first case.

Return to Timeline

https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/nation-and-world/us-volunteer-gets-1st-shot-of-experimental-virus-vaccine-1982464/

Mar 16

US volunteer gets first shot of experimental COVID-19 vaccine

U.S. researchers gave the first shot to the first person in a test of an experimental coronavirus vaccine Monday — leading off a worldwide hunt for protection even as the pandemic surges.

With a careful jab in a healthy volunteer's arm, **scientists at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Research Institute in Seattle begin an anxiously awaited first-stage study of a potential COVID-19 vaccine** developed in record time after the new virus exploded from China and fanned across the globe.

"We're team coronavirus now," Kaiser Permanente study leader Dr. Lisa Jackson said on the eve of the experiment. "Everyone wants to do what they can in this emergency."

The Associated Press observed as the study's first participant, an operations manager at a small tech company, received the injection inside an exam room. Three others were next in line for a test that will ultimately give 45 volunteers two doses, a month apart.

"We all feel so helpless. This is an amazing opportunity for me to do something," Jennifer Haller, 43, of Seattle, said as she awaited the shot.

She's the mother of two teenagers and "they think it's cool" that she's taking part in the study.

'I'm feeling great'

After the injection, she left the exam room with a big smile: "I'm feeling great."

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https://www.businessinsurance.com/article/20200317/NEWS06/912333570/New-Orleans-restaurant-sues-for-coronavirus-business-interruption-cover-Oceana-G

Mar 16

New Orleans restaurant sues insurer for business interruption losses

A New Orleans restaurant facing operating restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic filed suit Monday seeking a declaratory judgment that its insurer should cover related business interruption losses.

In the lawsuit filed in state court in New Orleans, Oceana Grill, a 500-seat restaurant in the city's French Quarter, says it has an all risk property policy with unspecified syndicates at Lloyd's of London, the policy covers civil authority-ordered shutdowns, and it does not have an exclusion for viruses or pandemics.

The new coronavirus, which causes the disease COVID-19, "physically infects and stays on the surface of objects or materials, 'fomites,' for up to twenty-eight days, particularly in humid areas," according to the suit Cajun Conti LLC, Cajun Cuisine 1 LLC and Cajun Cuisine LLC d/b/a Oceana Grill v. Certain Underwriters at Lloyd's of London and Governor John B. Edwards.

"It is clear that contamination of the insured premises by the coronavirus would be a direct physical loss needing remediation to clean the surfaces of the establishment," the suit says.

On March 13, Gov. John B. Edwards issued an order banning gatherings of 250 or more people, and on March 15 New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell ordered restaurants to cease operations at 9 p.m. daily and to restrict capacity to 50%.

The suit seeks an order from the court that the Lloyd's policy does not contain an exclusion for a viral pandemic, it covers any future civil authority shutdowns due to the coronavirus, and it provides business income coverage "in the event that the coronavirus has contaminated the insured premises."

The suit seeks a declaration "that the policy of insurance extends coverage from direct physical loss and/or from a civil authority shutdown due to a global pandemic virus" and requests that Gov. Edwards testify that the ...

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https://www.fool.com/investing/2020/03/18/all-las-vegas-casinos-forced-to-close-due-to-coron.aspx

Mar 16

All Las Vegas casinos forced to close due to coronavirus

Gov. Sisolak took the unprecedented action Tuesday night.

"I have spoken with Nevada's top medical experts to get their assessment of our current situation and most responsible next steps," he said in a press release. "They have advised that the most effective course of action is to direct all Nevadans to stay home and for all nonessential businesses to close to the public for 30 days."

The governor explicitly called out casinos in his public remarks on the attempts to keep COVID-19 at bay.

“This is not the time for casinos to remain open," he said. "This is not a time for community recreation centers, clubhouses, movie theaters, and malls to remain open. If your business brings groups of people together, it should not be open.”

All casino operations were suspended on March 16 at midnight. MGM and Wynn had already planned shutdowns, and the cancellation of conventions and the March Madness NCAA tournament had already devastated business to Las Vegas' casinos.

March Madness is traditionally one of the busiest times of the year for Las Vegas, driven by people looking to gamble on the tournament. Its cancellation, along with these forced closures, will likely lead to large layoffs and perhaps even casino closures, unless the federal government steps in.

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https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/coronavirus-cases-have-dropped-sharply-south-korea-whats-secret-its-success

Mar 17

Coronavirus cases have dropped sharply in South Korea. What's the secret to its success?

Europe is now the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. Case counts and deaths are soaring in Italy, Spain, France, and Germany, and many countries have imposed lockdowns and closed borders. Meanwhile, the United States, hampered by a fiasco with delayed and faulty test kits, is just guessing at its COVID-19 burden, though experts believe it is on the same trajectory as countries in Europe.

Amid these dire trends, **South Korea has emerged as a sign of hope and a model to emulate. The country of 50 million appears to have greatly slowed its epidemic;** it reported only 74 new cases today, down from 909 at its peak on 29 February. And it has done so without locking down entire cities or taking some of the other authoritarian measures that helped China bring its epidemic under control. "South Korea is a democratic republic, we feel a lockdown is not a reasonable choice," says Kim Woo-Joo, an infectious disease specialist at Korea University. South Korea's success may hold lessons for other countries—and also a warning: Even after driving case numbers down, the country is braced for a resurgence.

Behind its success so far has been the most expansive and well-organized testing program in the world, combined with extensive efforts to isolate infected people and trace and quarantine their contacts. South Korea has tested more than 270,000 people, which amounts to more than 5200 tests per million inhabitants—more than any other country except tiny Bahrain, according to the Worldometer website. The United States has so far carried out 74 tests per 1 million inhabitants, data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show.

South Korea's experience shows that "diagnostic capacity at scale is key to epidemic control," says Raina MacIntyre, an emerging infectious disease scholar at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. "Contact tracing is also very influential in epidemic control, as is case isolation," she says.

Yet whether the success will hold is unclear. New case numbers are declining largely because the herculean effort to investigate a massive cluster of more than 5000 cases—60% of the nation's total—linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a secretive, messianic megachurch, is winding down. But because of that effort, "We have not looked hard in other parts of Korea," says Oh Myoung-Don, an infectious disease specialist at Seoul National University.

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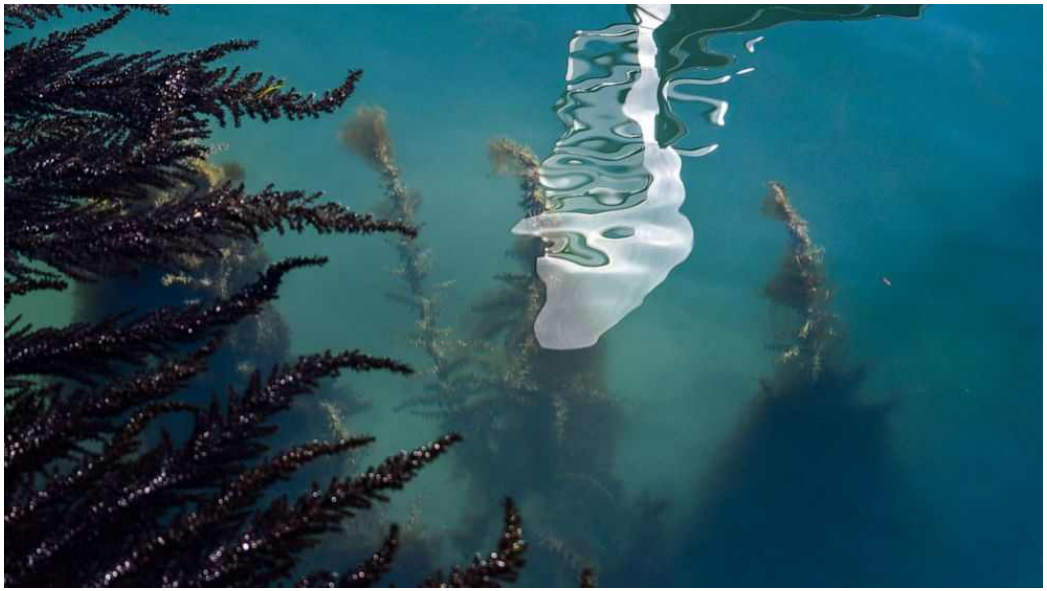
https://abcnews.go.com/International/venice-canals-clear-fish-coronavirus-halts-tourism-city/story?id=69662690

Mar 18

Venice canals are clear enough to see fish as coronavirus halts tourism in the city



Swans were seen in the water, while dolphins have been spotted swimming in the port.

However, the transparent water isn't so much a sign of better water quality as it is the result of the lack of boat traffic, which typically kicks sediment to the surface, Pierpaolo Campostrini, the managing director for the Consortium for Managing Scientific Research on Venice Lagoon System, told ABC News via email.

The cold temperature of the water also plays a part, Campostrini said. At about 57 degrees Fahrenheit, there is little synthesis of organic compounds from carbon dioxide, which doesn't begin until about 62 degrees Fahrenheit.

It's likely that the air quality has improved since "every kind of pollutants decreased a lot," but a chemical analysis would need to be performed to say so for sure, Campostrini added.

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https://hallboothsmith.com/the-health-care-provider-exemption-to-emergency-paid-sick-leave-in-the-families-first-coronavirus-act/

Mar 18

Health Care Provider Exemption to emergency paid sick leave in the Families First Coronavirus Responce Act (FFCRA) goes into effect

Written by: Jacqueline Voronov, Esq. and Jeffrey M. Daitz, Esq.

On March 18, 2020, President Trump signed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ("FFCRA") into law. The FFCRA modified the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and created a new paid sick leave policy to assist workers who contract COVID-19, are caring for family members with COVID-19, or face other extenuating family circumstances, such as a lack of childcare due to school closures.

Since the FFCRA was signed, employers across the nation have wondered how much of their workforce would be eligible for emergency paid sick leave and expanded FMLA leave. In response, the U.S. Department of Labor's ("DOL") Wage and Hour Division rolled out guidance on implementation of the paid leave provisions and published temporary regulations intended to clarify the scope and application of leaves. You can find the full regulations here.

Notably, the paid FMLA and paid sick leave provisions of the FFCRA both say that employers of "health care providers" can decide to not allow their employees to take such paid FMLA and paid sick leave. But these exclusions are not mandatory. Employers who are health care providers and/or emergency responders under the FFCRA may provide FFCRA paid leave to their employees on the same basis as other employers and receive the same refundable tax credits eligible to employers who do so.

The DOL guidance clarifies the definition of "health care provider" and emphasizes that the intent behind the health care provider exemption is to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, the DOL "encourages employers to be judicious" when using the exemption for health care providers and emergency responders.

Definition of Health Care Providers

The DOL states that excluded health care providers include any of the following persons:

Employees who work "at any doctor's office, hospital, health care center, clinic, post-secondary educational institution offering health care instruction, medical school, local health department or agency, nursing facility, retirement facility, nursing home, home health care provider,"
Employees who work at "any facility that performs laboratory or medical testing, pharmacy, or any similar institution, employer, or entity. This includes any permanent or temporary institution, facility, location, or site where medical services are provided that are similar to such institutions."

Employees who work for an entity who "contracts with any of the above institutions, employers, or entities ...

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Mar 19

6 more countries confirm first known case of COVID-19

1. Angola confirmed its first case, a Chinese businessman.
2. Chad confirmed its first case, a Moroccan national who had traveled to the country from Cameroon.
3. Fiji confirmed its first case.
4. Haiti reported its first two cases.
5. Isle of Man confirmed its first case, a person who recently returned from Spain.
6. Niger confirmed its first case, a local 36-year-old man who traveled a lot to Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso due to work.

https://www.clinicaltrialsarena.com/news/china-covid-19-vaccine-trial-begins/

Mar 23

China begins Phase I trial of Covid-19 vaccine

China has commenced a Phase I clinical trial of a vaccine against Covid-19, the infection caused by the novel coronavirus that is so far responsible for 341,700 infections and 14,750 deaths globally.

According to Chinese media, a staff member associated with the government-funded project said that participants in the trial are already being vaccinated.

The trial is designed to enrol 108 volunteers aged 18-60 years who are residents of Wuhan, the city where the virus originated. Participants will be divided into three groups and administered with different dosages.

The experimental candidate is a recombination vaccine developed by biotechnology company CanSino Biologics in alliance with a research team from the PLA Academy of Military Medical Sciences.

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https://kfor.com/health/coronavirus/oklahoma-indian-gaming-association-all-tribal-members-have-closed-casinos/

Mar 23

All tribes close their casinos

OKLAHOMA CITY (KFOR) – Officials with the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association confirmed on Monday that all of its tribal members have closed their casinos temporarily.

Although they are independent sovereign nations, each tribe is united under the common purpose of preserving the public health.

“Nothing is of greater importance to the Tribes than the health and well-being of the citizens of their Nations and the citizens of Oklahoma. We always want to be good neighbors, and to lead by positive example. In making the decision to temporarily suspend our gaming operations, we are hopeful that we will have a positive impact on the health of Oklahomans,” said OIGA Chairman Matthew L. Morgan.

Each tribal nation has drafted its own COVID-19 response plans and protocols.

https://www.500nations.com/Oklahoma_Casinos.asp

Oklahoma has 33 tribes operating 143 Indian casinos and gaming centers located across 50 Oklahoma counties.

These 143 gambling locations include Class III casinos with vegas-style gambling, Class II casinos with no-banker electronic gaming, travel plazas with slot machines, and smoke shops with Indian gaming.

Oklahoma Indian gaming is the state's second largest industry. It is also the largest Indian gaming revenue in the country after California. Revenues from Indian gaming and casino construction in 2017 was $7.2 billion.

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https://oklahoman.com/article/5658477/coronavirus-in-oklahoma-tribe-sues-insurance-companies-over-business-interruption-coverage

Mar 24

Tribes sue insurance companies over business interruption coverage

The Chickasaw and Choctaw nations filed separate lawsuits against several insurance companies Tuesday seeking judicial rulings that financial losses to their casinos and other businesses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are covered by their business interruption insurance policies.

The insurance companies have not specifically denied that these are covered losses at this point, but such denial of coverage has taken place in Louisiana and other locations, said Michael Burrage of Whitten Burrage, the Oklahoma City law firm that filed the lawsuits on behalf of the tribes.

Burrage said the lawsuits simply seek declaratory judgments that these are covered losses.

In an effort to help stem the spread of COVID-19 in Oklahoma,the Chickasaw, Choctaw and other Oklahoma tribes have temporarily closed their casinos, resulting in yet to be determined financial losses. The tribes also operate hotels, travel plazas and other businesses that have been impacted in various ways by the virus.

In cases where insurance companies have denied claims, they have taken the position that the losses aren't covered because there has been no physical damage to property, Burrage said.

“But the property has been damaged by the virus and the pandemic because it cannot be used for its intended purpose," Burrage said.

There are also insurance policy provisions that cover business interruptions by civil authority, he said.

"On the civil side we have the emergency orders, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) orders and that sort of stuff that would make it impossible to use as a casino," Burrage said.

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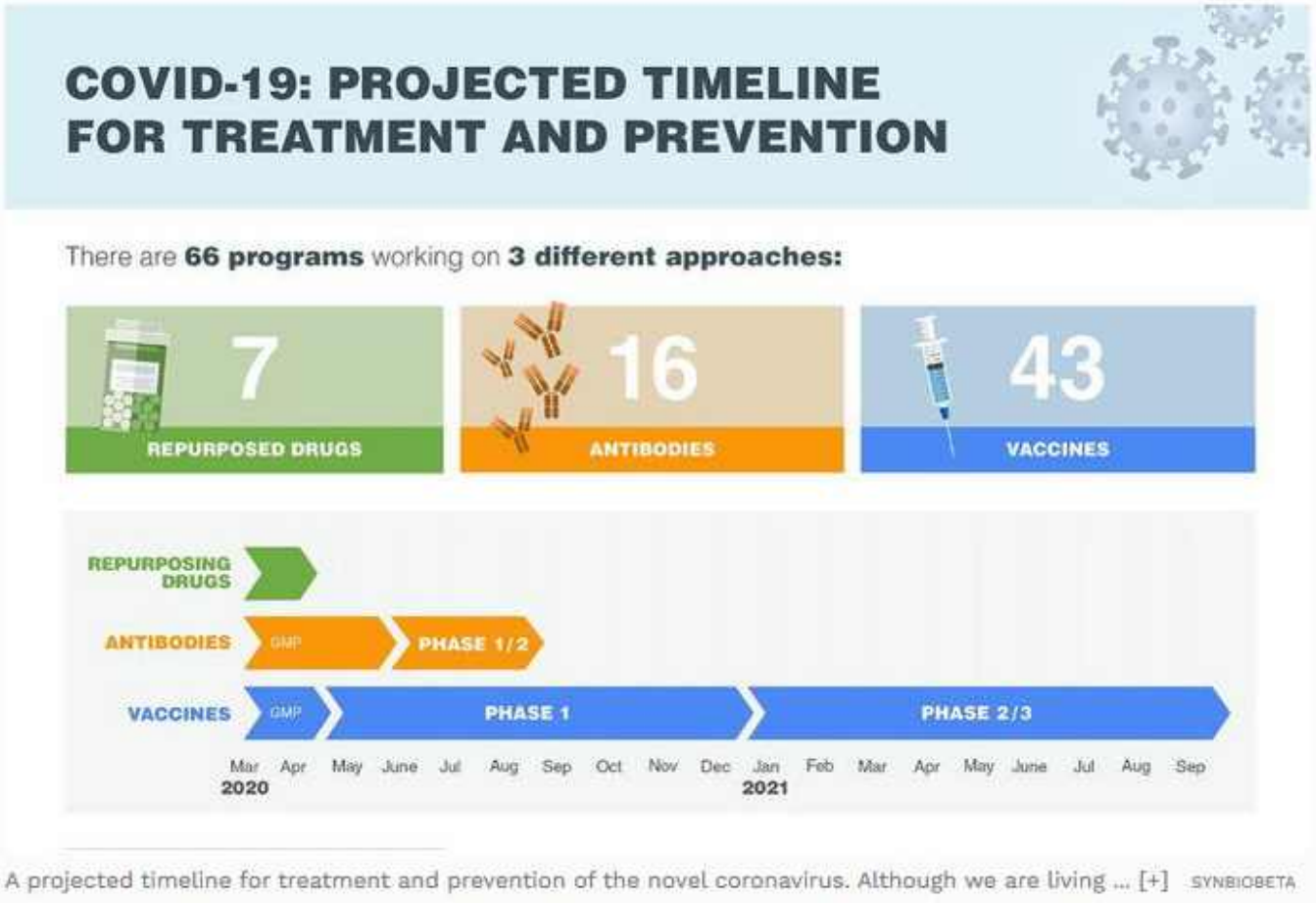
https://www.forbes.com/sites/johncumbers/2020/03/25/timeline-shows-3-paths-to-covid-19-treatment-and-prevention-infographic/#204bb43d4789

Mar 25

John Cumbers Senior Contributor ⓘ
Manufacturing
Synthetic biology & space settlement connector, founder and investor.

In uncertain times, we are witnessing one of the greatest moments in the history of science.



A projected timeline for treatment and prevention of the novel coronavirus. Although we are living ... [+] SYNBIOBETA

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https://abc30.com/6052493/

Mar 26

86-year-old Italian woman beats coronavirus after 7 weeks in hospital

CASALPUSTERLENGO, Italy -- An 86-year-old woman broke down tears as she left a hospital in northern Italy after a weeks-long battle with COVID-19.

The woman, identified only as Gianna, was shown being wheeled out of the hospital in a video posted to Facebook by Elia Delmiglio, the mayor of Casalpusterlengo. Delmiglio shared Gianna's story with the blessing of her family.

Delmiglio said Gianna contracted COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, during a hospital stay. Over the course of seven weeks, she spent time in two different hospitals.

“She fought hard with all her strength in these weeks and, thanks to incredible work by doctors and nurses, managed to recover from COVID-19," Delmiglio wrote on Facebook. "Among the many stories of pain and suffering, Gianna's recovery gives us a great deal of hope."

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https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/new-coronavirus-finally-slamming-russia-country-ready

Mar 26

The new coronavirus is finally slamming Russia. Is the country ready?

For weeks, Russia seemed to have dodged a bullet. As coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) raged just across the border in China, **Russia was virtually untouched, reporting just seven confirmed infections as recently as 10 March. Since then, the number has risen fast**: Russia has now reported 840 infections, about two-thirds of them in the Moscow region.

Some health care providers have questioned whether Russia truly kept the novel coronavirus at bay. Anastasia Vasilyeva, head of Russia's Alliance of Doctors trade union, has pointed out that pneumonia cases in Moscow spiked in January—they were 37% higher than in January 2019, according to Rosstat, Russia's statistics agency. She asserts that COVID-19 must have accounted for at least part of the increase. Others attribute the increase to a greater number of pneumonia patients, anxious about the new coronavirus, seeking treatment.

With COVID-19 cases now indisputably on the rise in Russia, authorities are moving fast to ramp up detection and hospital bed capacity. Russia's federal coronavirus coordination council says 193,000 tests based on the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) have been done to date. Swabs initially had to be shipped to Siberia for analysis at the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology VECTOR. Russia's Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare (Rospotrebnadzor)—the country's analog of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—has just expanded testing to its regional laboratories and the Anti-Plague Research Institute.

The agency says it has created a reserve of 700,000 test kits that it will regularly replenish. And the coronavirus council announced yesterday it is allotting 1.4 billion rubles ($17.7 million) to VECTOR, the antiplague facility, and several Rospotrebnadzor labs to spur vaccine and drug development.

To cope with a rising tide of patients, Russia's federal government is building a new hospital on Moscow's outskirts. Authorities have called on Moscow residents over age 65 to self-isolate at home—an admonishment that Russian President Vladimir Putin, 67, exempted himself from. But Putin on 24 March donned protective gear while visiting a hospital treating COVID-19 patients, and yesterday he ordered all nonessential workplaces to close from 28 March to 5 April, declaring that "the safest thing is to be at home now." Today, the government suspended international travel into and out of Russia—starting tomorrow—except for charter flights for bringing expatriates home.

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https://abc30.com/coronavirus-102-year-old-woman-survives-italy/6063077/

Mar 30

A 102-year-old woman in Italy recovered from COVID-19 after spending 20 days in the hospital

GENOA, Italy -- A 102-year-old woman in Italy recovered from COVID-19 after spending 20 days in the hospital.

Italica Grondona's doctors said they nicknamed her "Highlander - the Immortal." They said she represents a hope for "all the elderly facing this pandemic."

Grondona was hospitalized at the beginning of March with heart failure related to COVID-19. She left the hospital on March 26 and will spend time in a care facility to fully recover.

According to the World Health Organization, the COVID-19 death rate is currently between 4-5 percent with the highest rate of fatalities coming from older patients.

The doctors said Grondona is the only person they know of who might have gone through the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918/1919 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Spanish flu pandemic killed at least 50 million people worldwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Italica Grondona

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https://nypost.com/2020/04/02/104-year-old-wwii-vet-recovers-from-coronavirus-celebrates-birthday/

Apr 1

COVID-19 survivor celebrates his 104th birthday

An Oregon World War II veteran who just turned 104 could be one of the oldest people on the planet to survive COVID-19, his family said this week.

William “Bill” Lapschies — whose birthday was on Wednesday — was one of the first two residents to test positive for the illness at the Edward C. Allworth Veterans’ Home in the city of Lebanon [Oregon], local station KOIN reported.

To date, 15 residents have tested positive and two have died, according to the report.

Lapschies — who has two grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren — has been isolated in his room since he first showed symptoms March 5, according to the report.

He was diagnosed with the bug on March 10, The Oregonian reported.

A few days later, a doctor from the nursing home called Lapschies’ daughter Carolee Brown to say he wasn’t doing well — his temperature had spiked and his breathing was labored, according to the report.

Brown spoke with the doctor about end-of-life decisions.

But as of this week, Lapschies “has met the guidelines by the CDC and Oregon Health Authority to be considered recovered from COVID-19,” a VA spokesperson told KOIN.

His recovery came just in time for his 104th birthday celebration. A caregiver brought him outside in a wheelchair, wearing a mask and a World War II veteran hat. His family gathered to meet him — but didn’t get too close, following social distancing guidelines.

Lapschies told the station it feels “pretty good” to be 104.

“I made it,” he said, before pausing and adding, “Good for a few more.”

Lapschies lived through the Spanish Flu, the Great Depression, and a couple recessions, Carolee’s husband, Jim Brown, told the station. He was stationed in the Aleutian Islands during WWII.

“Bill’s pretty resilient,” he said.

“It seemed like he just made this wonderful recovery,” Carolee added. “We were like shocked that he was kind of sitting in his wheelchair waving at us through the window and we were like, ‘He’s gonna make it!’”

“His smile, I wish you could have seen it,” granddaughter Jamie Yutzie said. “That mask covers it but his smile is absolutely contagious.”

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https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

Apr 3

CDC recommends the use of cloth face coverings

CDC continues to study the spread and effects of the novel coronavirus across the United States. We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-feet social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. CDC is additionally advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

This recommendation complements and does not replace the President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America, 30 Days to Slow the Spreadexternal icon, which remains the cornerstone of our national effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus. CDC will make additional recommendations as the evidence regarding appropriate public health measures continues to develop.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/a-potential-coronavirus-vaccine-funded-by-bill-gates-is-set-to-begin-testing-in-people-with-the-first-patient-expected-to-get-it-today/ar-BB12e01f?li=BBnb7Kz

Apr 6

A potential coronavirus vaccine funded by Bill Gates is set to begin testing in people, with the first patient expected to get it today

Healthy volunteers in Philadelphia and Kansas City, Missouri, will begin to test an experimental coronavirus vaccine starting this week.

The small Pennsylvania-based biotech Inovio Pharmaceuticals received regulatory clearance to begin testing. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with other nonprofits, have poured funding into Inovio's vaccine project.

The biotech expects to have early safety data by late summer and is aiming to produce 1 million doses by the end of 2020.

Researchers plan to dose the first person Monday. The experimental vaccine was developed by Inovio Pharmaceuticals, with the effort receiving funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

https://hallboothsmith.com/covid-19-deemed-a-compensable-injury-by-the-legislature-in-minnesota/

Apr 7

COVID-19 deemed a compensable injury by the legislature in Minnesota

Written by: Peter Skaily, Esq.

There has been extensive literature published in the past few weeks across the United States explaining the reasons that COVID-19 is (for most, if not all, states) not a covered "accident" and "injury" under the given state's workers' compensation laws.

However, on April 7, 2020, the Minnesota Legislature removed all ambiguity on whether certain groups' contraction of the COVID-19 virus is a compensable injury. Specifically, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill on April 7, 2020 that **deemed COVID-19 a compensable injury for first responders, health care workers, and daycare workers up and until May 1, 2020.** Furthermore, there is no causation requirement for the individuals that fall within one of the three aforementioned positions. In other words, first responders, health care workers, and daycare workers do not have to show they contracted the COVID-19 virus in the scope of their employment. In fact, the bill only requires the infected individual to show lab tests showing the individual is positive for COVID-19 from the licensed health care provided that diagnosed the individual with COVID-19. While Minnesota appears to be the first state to pass such legislation, many other states seem to be considering similar legislation at this time.

As of April 7, 2020, the State of Minnesota reportedly had approximately 1,069 total COVID-19 cases since the virus' outbreak in the United States. However, there were only 486 active cases of the 1,069 total cases. On this same date, the State of Minnesota had only reported 34 deaths due to the COVID-19 virus since it was first reported in the United States. Of note, the Minnesota Department of Public Health confirmed at least 173 health care had contracted the COVID-19 virus as well. With all of this being said, as of April 7, 2020, the peak of the COVID-19 cases in Minnesota was estimated to be April 18, 2020.

In support of Minnesota's recently passed bill, Sen. Jeremy Miller opined, "[t]hese workers on the front lines will have one less thing to worry about when they are at work taking care of Minnesotans." While this is undeniably the case, it begs the question of who will the fund the legal rights these employees now have in the workers' compensation system. Minnesota's House Majority leader Ryan Winkler reportedly estimated the medical treatment could cost between $320 million and $580 million. As a lobbyist for League of Minnesota Cities reportedly stated, "local governments will have no choice but to pass along the costs to property taxpayers at a time when they can least afford it." In the private sector, the employer, workers' compensation insurer, and self-insurers will bear the great burden of this cost, as well ...

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https://www.sciencealert.com/two-pandas-at-a-hong-kong-zoo-finally-mated-during-the-coronavirus-closure

Apr 8

Pandas kept together for 10 Years have finally mated during the lockdown

If the world wants more pandas to 'get it on', perhaps all we humans need to do is get out the way.

Far from the prying eyes of the public, two captive giant pandas in a closed Hong Kong zoo are making up for lost time with a whole lotta boning. Well, not a whole lot. Just once, but for this particular couple that's something to celebrate.

In the 10 years Ying Ying and Le Le have known each other, they've never once gotten down and dirty. And yet, this breeding season, amid a global pandemic, something between them seemed to change.

In late March, after a month or so of unusual privacy, Ying Ying began spending more time in the water. Meanwhile, Le Le began leaving a trail of scents around his habitat, actively searching for his companion's smell all the while. On Monday the two were seen cuddling. Love was clearly in the air.

At 9am, the deed was done and dusted, according to zoo officials.

[We should know by late June if Ying Ying is pregnant]

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-09/china-reports-42-new-cases-u-s-airlines-bailout-virus-update

Apr 9

Worldwide Deaths Top 100,000

Deaths worldwide from coronavirus have exceeded 100,000. New York's daily virus deaths fell slightly after three record-high days as U.S. cases neared 500,000. Italy extended its lockdown into May, ignoring pleas from business.

France reported four deaths in Covid-19 patients using experimental drugs, including one touted by U.S. President Donald Trump. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is walking around as part of his recovery while the nation had the most deaths in one day.

Canada says summer reopening of business is possible, if restrictions remain in place.
...
U.S. cases were 486,994 on Friday, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and Bloomberg News. The rise in national cases was below the average daily increase of 10% over the past week. U.S. deaths reached 18,022.

In **New York**, the number of deaths dropped slightly on Friday to 777, a figure that remains grimly high following three straight days of record fatalities, Governor Andrew Cuomo said. The total death toll in New York has reached 7,844, he said. Cuomo said that Friday's figure shows a high but apparently leveling number of fatalities. He also reported, for the first time, a dramatic drop in the number intensive care admissions.

In **New Jersey**, huge daily infection increases are slowing in Bergen County, which has the state most cases, another big sign that the curve is flattening, Governor Phil Murphy said. Infections in Bergen now are doubling every seven days or more.

California added 49 deaths amid improving signs among patients in intensive-care units edged up 1.1% to 1,145 after a decrease the day before, Governor Gavin Newsom said. The number of deaths rose to 541, Newsom said. The single-digit ICU increase is an encouraging sign, he said.
...
Michigan reported the most deaths in a single day, raising total fatalities to 1,281, ranking third behind New York and New Jersey. "We are not out of the woods yet," Governor Gretchen Whitmer tweeted when announcing the deaths.

Louisiana reported a rise of 53 deaths, pushing the total to 755, while total cases increased by 968, to 19,251. More than 2,000 Louisianians in the hospital. The state's epicenter remains the New Orleans area.

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https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/491965-people-in-india-say-theyre-seeing-the-himalayas-for-first-time-in

Apr 9

People in India say they're seeing the Himalayas for first time in decades amid drop in air pollution

People in Punjab, India, say they're seeing parts of the Himalayas clearly for the first time in decades as the country's government has linked its coronavirus lockdown to a recent improvement in air quality.

A report released by the country's Central Pollution Control Board late last month said the nationwide curfew implemented on March 22 and the subsequent lockdown ordered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi two days later "resulted in significant improvement in air quality in the country, as revealed by data analysis and comparison of data for time before enforcement of restrictions."
As a result, according to CNN, some parts of the Himalayas can currently be seen from over 100 miles away.

One person in Punjab shared photos showing peaks of the mountain they said were captured from their rooftop, saying: "For the first time in almost 30 years could clearly see the Himalayas due to India's lockdown clearing air pollution."

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https://thehill.com/homenews/news/492351-coronavirus-can-travel-up-to-13-feet-study

Apr 11

Coronavirus can travel up to 13 feet

Further studies of air samples in hospital wards treating COVID-19 patients uncovered that the virus could travel up to 13 feet, more than twice the distance current social distancing guidelines mandate.

The investigation was conducted by Chinese researchers led by a team at the Academy of Military Medical Sciences in Beijing, who published their findings in Emerging Infectious Diseases, a journal of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, according to Yahoo.

The researchers who discovered traces of the disease at 13 feet of distance specified that the particles found were not inevitably infectious.

Samples were gathered from a COVID-19 ward at Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan, which housed a total of 24 patients between Feb. 19 and March 2.

They found that the virus was most heavily concentrated on the floors of the wards and said a potential cause could be due to gravity bringing the virus droplets to the ground.

"Half of the samples from the soles of the ICU medical staff shoes tested positive," the team wrote. "Therefore, the soles of medical staff shoes might function as carriers."

The research group also studied aerosol transmissions, or virus droplets that become suspended in the air for several hours.

They found that aerosols containing particles of the virus were primarily concentrated closer to the downstream from patients at up to 13 feet while some smaller quantities were found upstream, up to eight feet.

The study of coronavirus particles remaining in aerosols is controversial; a previous study from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) claiming the virus could travel anywhere from 23 to 27 feet was rebuked by Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease expert.

He called the MIT research “misleading," noting that it would take a "very, very robust, vigorous, achoo sneeze" for droplets to travel that far, adding that the research was "not practical."

The World Health Organization has also noted the risk for aerosolized transmission is not an outstanding threat for most people, according to the report.

U.S. health officials have told people to wear masks or cover their faces when out in public to minimize the chances of transmitting the virus through talking or breathing close to other individuals.

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https://www.vox.com/covid-19-coronavirus-us-response-trump/2020/4/12/21218126/why-some-churches-are-holding-in-person-easter-services-in-defiance-of-federal-guidelines

Apr 12 - Easter Sunday

A number of churches across America defy federal guidelines and hold in-person services

A number of churches across America are holding in-person services to celebrate Easter Sunday, despite federal guidelines calling for people to avoid public gatherings.

The issue of whether to hold in-person Easter services has revealed a split among top conservatives, with President Donald Trump encouraging Christians to worship from home while observing social distancing protocols, and members of the House Freedom Caucus arguing that restrictions on church services are an affront to First Amendment rights of freedom of religion and assembly.

While many churches are remaining closed as part of a nationwide effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, there are numerous reports of churches and even megachurches deciding to hold services.

In at least eight states, religious organizations have been deemed essential services, allowing them to be exempt from stay-at-home orders. While the majority of churches around the country have experimented with alternatives to conventional services — things like livestreamed prayers and drive-in services in parking lots — there have been clashes over restrictions on Easter Sunday, which would in normal circumstances lead to a huge boom in church attendance.

State and local officials have begun taking action to limit attendance at religious services, with mixed results. For example, the mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, issued an order prohibiting drive-in church services for Easter weekend, but a church sued the mayor and the city — and won a temporary restraining order from a federal judge who deemed the policy unconstitutional. US District Judge Justin Walker wrote in his order: “On Holy Thursday, an American mayor criminalized the communal celebration of Easter.”
In Kansas, state lawmakers overturned the governor’s executive order restricting religious gatherings to 10 people ahead of Easter, calling the order “a blatant violation of our fundamental rights.”

And other religious leaders have held services in violation of state orders.

The Life Tabernacle Church near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, expected a crowd of more than 2,000 on Easter Sunday despite a ban on gatherings of over 50 people in the state.

The church’s pastor, Rev. Tony Spell, said his faith would protect him and his attendees from falling ill. “God will shield us from all harm and sickness,” Spell told Reuters. “We are not afraid. We are called by God to stand against the Antichrist creeping into America’s borders.”

Spell made this proclamation despite having faced legal consequences for defying state restrictions in the past: He has already been charged with six misdemeanors for holding services...

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https://news.iheart.com/featured/coronavirus/content/2020-04-14-fda-gives-the-go-ahead-for-first-saliva-test-that-detects-coronavirus/?mid=381725&rid=98409133&sc=email&pname=newsletter&cid=NATIONAL&keyid=National%20iHeart%20Daily%20NewsTalk&campid=headline1_readmore

Apr 14

Saliva test developed to diagnose COVID-19

Researchers at Rutgers University have been given the go-ahead by the Food and Drug Administration for the first saliva test that can help diagnose COVID-19, a new approach that could expand testing options for Americans and reduce the risk of infection for healthcare workers.

The test, which will initially be available at hospitals and clinics associated with the school, was authorized by the FDA under emergency powers granted to the agency amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead of needing to take a nasal swab of a patient's nose or throat, the patient is given a small plastic tube, which they spit into several times. The patients hand the plastic tube sample back to the healthcare worker for processing.

“The impact of this approval is significant,” said Andrew Brooks, chief operating officer and director of technology development at RUCDR, who also is a professor in the School of Arts and Sciences Department of Genetics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. “It means we no longer have to put health care professionals at risk for infection by performing nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal collections. We can preserve precious personal protective equipment for use in patient care instead of testing. We can significantly increase the number of people tested each and every day as self-collection of saliva is more quick and scalable than swab collections. All of this combined will have a tremendous impact on testing in New Jersey and across the United States.”

The test's accuracy was measured by taking both saliva and swab samples from 60 patients. The samples from the nasal swab and saliva sample matched 100%, which paved the way for the test's approval.

The FDA says the saliva test should only be used "in a health care setting under the supervision of a trained healthcare provider."

https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/16/835748673/in-vietnam-there-have-been-fewer-than-300-covid-19-cases-and-no-deaths-heres-why

Apr 16

In Vietnam, there have been fewer than 300 COVID-19 cases and no deaths

People wearing face masks wait for free food being given away at a Happy Mart store in Hanoi on Thursday.
Nhac Nguyen/AFP via Getty Images

Vietnam shares a border with China, yet it has reported no deaths from COVID-19 and just 268 confirmed cases, when other Southeast Asian nations are reporting thousands.

Experts say experience dealing with prior pandemics, early implementation of aggressive social distancing policies, strong action from political leaders and the muscle of a one-party authoritarian state have helped Vietnam.

"They had political commitment early on at the highest level," says John MacArthur, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's country representative in neighboring Thailand. "And that political commitment went from central level all the way down to the hamlet level."

With experience gained from dealing with the 2003 SARS and 2009 H1N1 bird flu pandemics, Vietnam's government started organizing its response in January — as soon as reports began trickling in from Wuhan, China, where the virus is believed to have originated. The country quickly came up with a variety of tactics, including widespread quarantining and aggressive contact tracing. It has also won praise from the World Health Organization and the CDC for its transparency in dealing with the crisis.

Tens of thousands have been put in quarantine camps. By the end of March, Vietnam had banned all international and domestic flights. The government locked down the country on April 1. State-run media say the current social distancing and stay-at-home orders are to be extended for at least another week.

Those who break the rules in this one-party communist state are treated harshly. One man was jailed on a nine-month sentence for failing to wear a mask.

Streets normally buzzing with motorcycles and cars are almost empty in most large cities. As the economic toll of the lockdown becomes apparent, some entrepreneurs are stepping up to help. One has provided "rice ATMs" to dispense free rice to those who are out of work.

Some may still be skeptical of Vietnam's relatively low COVID-19 case numbers. The CDC's MacArthur is not.

"Our team up in Hanoi is working very, very closely with their Ministry of Health counterparts," he says. "The communications I've had with my Vietnam team is that at this point in time, [they] don't have any indication that those numbers are false."

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https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/04/17/death-toll-in-wuhan-epicenter-of-coronavirus-revised-by-50/

Photo credit Chinatopix via AP

Apr 17

Wuhan coronavirus death toll revised up by 50%

The tally of infection from coronavirus has jumped in Wuhan as China appears to be adjusting the grim toll at the epicenter of the virus that has swept across the globe, killing more than 149,000 people.

As of Friday, 2.2 million were infected from COVID-19 worldwide, according to a Johns Hopkins University map of the virus.

But, China reported Friday that the death toll in Wuhan is 50% higher than first reported.

The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Wuhan as of April 16 was “revised up by 325 to 50,333, and the number of fatalities up by 1,290 to 3,869,” according to China.org.

iThe dispatch out of Wuhan blamed the bad count on hospitals being overwhelmed early on and people never even making it to the ER.

“A surging number of patients at the early stage of the epidemic overwhelmed medical resources and the admission capacity of medical institutions. Some patients died at home,” the communist government’s statement reads.

They also say “hospitals were operating beyond their capacities” and recording deaths was not a top priority and “makeshift” hospitals quickly built to handle the pandemic were not linked to the “epidemic information network.”

The health update, dated Friday and credited to the Wuhan Municipal Headquarters for COVID-19 Epidemic Prevention and Control, ends with: “Our sincere condolences go to the families of those who deceased in the COVID-19 epidemic, and we express deep sorrow to the compatriots and medical workers who lost their lives in the epidemic.”

Donald Gregg, 92, formerly of the CIA and onetime ambassador to South Korea under President George H.W. Bush, told the Herald the Chinese are “great people” — but they are “doing their best to mask” just how bad they’ve been hit.

“China is not used to dealing with facts like this with such tremendous amount of interest from the outside world,” said Gregg, who has taught recently at Williams College and now lives in upstate New York.

“They don’t want to show the outside world how hurt they are,” he added ...

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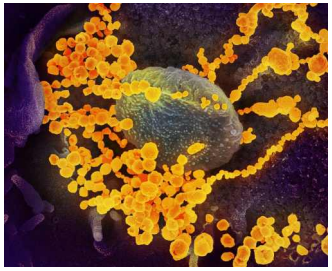
https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/antiviral-remdesivir-prevents-disease-progression-monkeys-covid-19



Apr 17

Antiviral remdesivir prevents disease progression in monkeys with COVID-19

Early treatment with the experimental antiviral drug remdesivir significantly reduced clinical disease and damage to the lungs of rhesus macaques infected with SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, according to National Institutes of Health scientists.

The study was designed to follow dosing and treatment procedures used for hospitalized COVID-19 patients being administered remdesivir in a large, multi-center, clinical trial led by NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The scientists posted the work(link is external) on the preprint server bioRxiv. The findings are not yet peer-reviewed and should not be considered clinical advice, but are being shared to assist the public health response to COVID-19. A study detailing the development of the rhesus macaque model of mild-to-moderate human disease, conducted by the same team of NIAID scientists, was posted to bioRxiv(link is external) on March 21.

The current study of remdesivir, a drug developed by Gilead Sciences Inc. and NIAID-supported investigators, involved two groups of six rhesus macaques. One group of monkeys received remdesivir and the other animals served as an untreated comparison group. Scientists infected both groups with SARS-CoV-2. Twelve hours later the treatment group received a dose of remdesivir intravenously, and then received a daily intravenous booster dose thereafter for the next six days. The scientists timed the initial treatment to occur shortly before the virus reached its highest level in the animals' lungs.

Twelve hours after the initial treatment, the scientists examined all animals and found the six treated animals in significantly better health than the untreated group, a trend that continued during the seven-day study. They report that one of the six treated animals showed mild breathing difficulty, whereas all six of the untreated animals showed rapid and difficult breathing. The amount of virus found in the lungs was significantly lower in the treatment group compared to the untreated group, and SARS-CoV-2 caused less damage to the lungs in treated animals than in untreated animals.

The investigators note that the data supports initiating remdesivir treatment in COVID-19 patients as early as possible to achieve maximum treatment effect. The authors, from NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Hamilton, Montana, also note that while remdesivir helped prevent pneumonia, it did not reduce virus shedding by the animals. "This finding is of great significance for patient management, where a clinical improvement should not be interpreted as a lack of infectiousness," they write.

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-19/sweden-says-controversial-covid-19-strategy-is-proving-effective

Apr 19

Sweden says controversial virus strategy proving effective

Sweden's unusual approach to fighting the coronavirus pandemic is starting to yield results, according to the country's top epidemiologist.

Anders Tegnell, the architect behind Sweden's relatively relaxed response to Covid-19, told local media the latest figures on infection rates and fatalities indicate the situation is starting to stabilize.

"We're on a sort of plateau," Tegnell told Swedish news agency TT.

Sweden has left its schools, gyms, cafes, bars and restaurants open throughout the spread of the pandemic. Instead, the government has urged citizens to act responsibly and follow social distancing guidelines.

The spread of Covid-19 across the globe is triggering different responses across national and even state borders, as authorities struggle to contain an outbreak about which much remains unknown.

It's unclear which strategy will ultimately prove most effective, and even experts in Sweden warn it's too early to draw conclusions. But given the huge economic damage caused by strict lockdowns, the Swedish approach has drawn considerable interest around the world.

Part of that approach relies on having access to one of the world's best-functioning health-care systems. At no stage did Sweden see a real shortage of medical equipment or hospital capacity, and tents set up as emergency care facilities around the country have mostly remained empty.

As of Sunday, Sweden had reported 1,540 deaths tied to Covid-19, an increase of 29 from Saturday. That's considerably more than in the rest of Scandinavia, but much less than in Italy, Spain and the U.K., both in absolute and relative terms.

Tegnell isn't the only high-level official in Sweden to claim the country may be over the worst.

"The trend we have seen in recent days, with a more flat curve -- where we have many new cases, but not a daily increase -- is stabilizing," Karin Tegmark Wisell, head of the microbiology department at Sweden's Public Health Authority, said on Friday. "We are seeing the same pattern for patients in intensive care."

Just two weeks ago, the picture was considerably bleaker, and Prime Minister Stefan Lofven suggested the government may need to review its approach amid the prospect of thousands of Swedish deaths. In particular, the failure to protect people in nursing homes has stood out as a clear weakness, which has contributed to higher death rates than in neighboring countries.

"The protection for people in elderly care should have been better," Lofven said last week. "We need to look closer at what has gone wrong."

Yet overall, Lofven's strategy has won the approval of Swedes, and his personal popularity has soared ...

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https://apnews.com/4f0a4ca93cc2fee94d386efb13db31a0

Apr 19

COVID-19 Pandemic is hurting illegal drug trade

Coronavirus is dealing a gut punch to the illegal drug trade, paralyzing economies, closing borders and **severing supply chains in China that traffickers rely on for the chemicals to make such profitable drugs as methamphetamine and fentanyl.**

One of the main suppliers that shut down is in Wuhan, the epicenter of the global outbreak.

Associated Press interviews with nearly two dozen law enforcement officials and trafficking experts found Mexican and Colombian cartels are still plying their trade as evidenced by recent drug seizures but the lockdowns that have turned cities into ghost towns are disrupting everything from production to transport to sales.

Along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border through which the vast majority of illegal drugs cross, the normally bustling vehicle traffic that smugglers use for cover has slowed to a trickle. Bars, nightclubs and motels across the country that are ordinarily fertile marketplaces for drug dealers have shuttered. And prices for drugs in short supply have soared to gouging levels.

“They are facing a supply problem and a demand problem,” said Alejandro Hope, a security analyst and former official with CISEN, the Mexican intelligence agency. “Once you get them to the market, who are you going to sell to?”

Virtually every illicit drug has been impacted, with supply chain disruptions at both the wholesale and retail level. Traffickers are stockpiling narcotics and cash along the border, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration even reports a decrease in money laundering and online drug sales on the so-called dark web.

“The godfathers of the cartels are scrambling,” said Phil Jordan, a former director of the DEA’s El Paso Intelligence Center.

Cocaine prices are up 20 percent or more in some cities. Heroin has become harder to find in Denver and Chicago, while supplies of fentanyl are falling in Houston and Philadelphia. In Los Angeles, the price of methamphetamine has more than doubled in recent weeks to $1,800 per pound.

“You have shortages but also some greedy bastards who see an opportunity to make more money,” said Jack Riley, the former deputy administrator of the DEA. “The bad guys frequently use situations that affect the national conscience to raise prices.”

Synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine and fentanyl have been among the most affected, in large part because they rely on precursor chemicals that Mexican cartels import from China, cook into drugs on an industrial scale and then ship to the U.S.

“This is something we would use as a lesson learned for us,” the head of the DEA, Uttam Dhillon, told AP. “If the disruption is that significant, we need to continue to work with our global partners to ensure that, once we come out of the pandemic, those precursor chemicals are not available to these drug-trafficking organizations.”

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/who-head-warns-worst-of-virus-is-still-ahead/ar-BB12VXT1?li=BBnb7Kz

Apr 20

WHO head warns worst of virus is still ahead

IGENEVA (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization has warned that “the worst is yet ahead of us” in the coronavirus outbreak, raising new alarm bells about the pandemic just as many countries are beginning to ease restrictive measures.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus didn’t specify exactly why he believes that the outbreak that has infected nearly 2.5 million people and killed over 166,000, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University, could get worse. Some people, though, have pointed to the likely future spread of the illness through Africa, where health systems are far less developed.

Tedros alluded to the so-called Spanish flu in 1918 as a reference for the coronavirus outbreak.

“It has a very dangerous combination and this is happening ... like the 1918 flu that killed up to 100 million people,” he told reporters in Geneva.

“But now we have technology, we can prevent that disaster, we can prevent that kind of crisis.”

“Trust us. The worst is yet ahead of us,” he said. “Let’s prevent this tragedy. It’s a virus that many people still don’t understand.”

The “stay at home” order went into effect on March 24 and was set to last until April 7. That order was extended to April 20, and on Friday, Holcomb said he would be extending the order to May 1.

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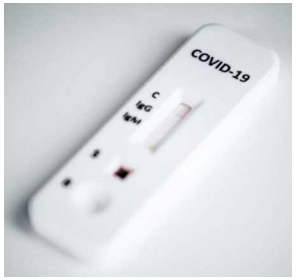
https://www.statnews.com/2020/04/20/everything-we-know-about-coronavirus-immunity-and-antibodies-and-plenty-we-still-dont/



Apr 20

Everything we know about coronavirus immunity and antibodies — and plenty we still don't

People who think they've been exposed to the novel coronavirus are clamoring for antibody tests — blood screens that can detect who has previously been infected and, the hope is, signal who is protected from another case of Covid-19.

But as the tests roll out, some experts are trying to inject a bit of restraint into the excitement that the results of these tests could, for example, clear people to get back to work. Some antibody tests have not been validated, they warn. Even those that have been can still provide false results. And an accurate positive test may be hard to interpret: the virus is so new that researchers cannot say for sure what sort of results will signal immunity or how long that armor will last.

They caution that policymakers may be making sweeping economic and social decisions — plans to reopen businesses or schools, for example — based on limited data, assumptions, and what's known about other viruses. President Trump last week unveiled a three-phased approach to reopen the country; he said some states that have seen declining case counts could start easing social distancing requirements immediately. And some authorities have raised the idea of granting "immunity passports" to people who recover from the virus to allow them to return to daily life without restrictions.

"Before we embark on huge policy decisions, like issuing immunity certificates to get people back to work, I think it's good that people are saying, 'Hold up, we don't know that much about immunity to this virus,'" said Angela Rasmussen, a Columbia University virologist.

To be clear, most experts do think an initial infection from the coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2, will grant people immunity to the virus for some amount of time. That is generally the case with acute infections from other viruses, including other coronaviruses.

With data limited, "sometimes you have to act on a historical basis," Anthony Fauci, the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a webcast with JAMA this month. "It's a reasonable assumption that this virus is not changing very much. If we get infected now and it comes back next February or March we think this person is going to be protected."

Still, the World Health Organization has stressed that the presumed immunity can only be proven as scientists study those who have recovered for longer periods. The agency is working on guidance for interpreting the results of antibody tests, also called serologic tests.

"Right now, we have no evidence that the use of a serologic test can show that an individual is immune or is protected from reinfection," the WHO's Maria Van Kerkhove said ...

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https://www.nbcnews.com/business/markets/oil-prices-tumble-lowest-level-1980s-n1187716

Apr 20

U.S. crude oil futures for May are lowest price in history

U.S. crude oil prices dropped by almost 300 percent to turn negative for the first time as plunging demand pushed storage facilities to their limits.

May delivery for the U.S. benchmark crude, West Texas Intermediate, sank to a new low of minus $37.63 a barrel by the close of the oil market Monday, a staggering level that essentially means producers would be paying buyers to take oil off their hands.

Oil set to be delivered in May was hit hardest, because that futures contract expires Tuesday. The June contract also fell, although by a far smaller amount, 18 percent.

Social distancing lockdowns across the world have slashed demand to almost zero as much of the world's industry and travel have ground to a halt. Even a historic production cut agreement between OPEC and its allies did not provide the momentum to stanch the surplus, as producing countries continue to pump oil ahead of the May 1 implementation.

In addition, tanks, ships and pipelines are almost full, complicating the calculus for many U.S. producers who want to hold on to their oil until the outbreak subsides and there is greater demand.

The oil market is the latest sector of the economy to sustain serious — although temporary — damage from the coronavirus pandemic. Ahead of the OPEC deal, prices had plunged to 1991 levels and were struggling to recover amid a paralysis of the global economy.

The energy economy is forcing U.S. companies to make tough decisions. They are struggling to stay afloat as falling prices make them less competitive, and they are laying off workers.

“Even if we get the COVID-19 shelter-in-place protocols lifted by April 30 and we start to see some pop in demand, you are going to have so much oil sitting in tanks that, regardless of production cuts, you are still looking at a massive glut of oil going into the third quarter,"

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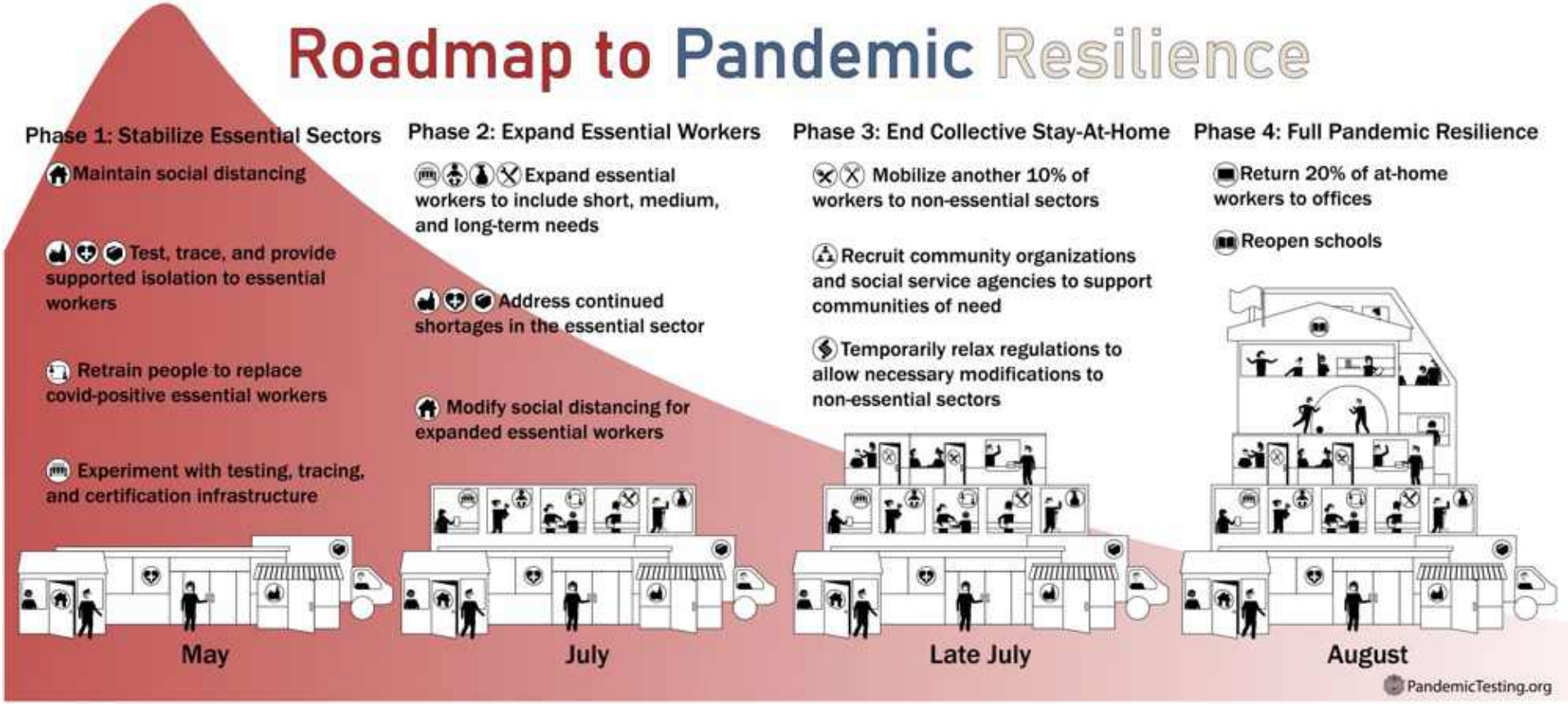
https://ethics.harvard.edu/Covid-Roadmap

Apr 20

Harvard publishes “Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience”

For complete report, select the live link at top of page



https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/929284

WebMD

Apr 23

COVID-19 can be more than just a respiratory disease

We have underestimated and misunderstood COVID-19 since it first appeared.

And as we learn more, it's clear that COVID-19 can be more than just a respiratory disease. It's joined the ranks of other "great imitators" — diseases that can look like almost any condition.

It can be a gastrointestinal disease causing only diarrhea and abdominal pain. It can cause symptoms that may be confused with a cold or the flu. It can cause pinkeye, a runny nose, loss of taste and smell, muscle aches, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, whole-body rashes, and areas of swelling and redness in just a few spots.

In a more severe disease, doctors have also reported people having heart rhythm problems, heart failure, kidney damage, confusion, headaches, seizures, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and fainting spells, along with new sugar control problems.

It's not just a fever and coughing, leading to shortness of breath, like everyone thought at first.

This makes it incredibly difficult to diagnose and even harder to treat.

"This is a disease progression we have never seen for any infection that I can think of, and I've been doing this for a couple of decades," says Joseph Vinetz, MD, an infectious disease specialist at Yale School of Medicine.

How It Invades

When viral particles land in our eyes, nose, or mouth, "spike proteins" on the virus connect with a specific receptor, known as ACE2, on the surface of our cells, allowing entry. ACE2 receptors make a great target because they are found in organs throughout our bodies. Once the virus enters, it turns the cell into a factory, making millions and millions of copies of itself — which can then be breathed or coughed out to infect others.

In order to evade early detection, the coronavirus uses multiple tools to prevent the infected cells from calling out for help. The virus snips off distress signal proteins that cells make when they are under attack. It also destroys antiviral commands inside the infected cell. This gives the virus much more time to make copies of itself and infect surrounding areas before it is identified as an invader. This is part of the reason why the virus spreads before immune responses, like fever, begin.

Direct Attack

Many with mild or no symptoms are able to fend off the virus before it gets worse. These people may have symptoms only in the upper airway, at the site where they were first infected. But when someone's body can't destroy the virus at its entry point, viral particles march deeper into the body. The virus seems to take a few paths from there, either setting up camp in the lungs, fighting its way into the digestive tract, or doing some combination of both ...

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https://apnews.com/01e148acd7226332d14e9ce350d8de16/gallery/c8691458d76d489d8a3f665741f30a91

A medical worker walks past people lined up at Gotham Health East New York, a COVID-19 testing center Thursday, April 23, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II)

Apr 23

Antibody survey shows wide exposure to virus in NY

NEW YORK (AP) — More evidence is emerging that far more New Yorkers have had the coronavirus than the number confirmed by lab tests, officials said Thursday.

A state survey of about 3,000 people found that nearly 14% had antibodies, suggesting they had been exposed to the virus, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said at his daily news briefing.

In New York City, the epicenter of the pandemic in the U.S., 21% of the people tested had antibodies.

Cuomo cautioned that the data was preliminary. The sample of people tested was small. Participants were hastily recruited at shopping centers and grocery stores, which meant they were healthy enough to be out in public.

But the governor said knowing how many people have antibodies, and who might possibly be immune to the virus, could potentially help set policy on when to reopen parts of the state.
Those investors had other news to consider. The United States Senate on Tuesday passed a bipartisan $484 billion coronavirus relief package that would replenish a depleted loan program for distressed small businesses and provide funds for hospitals, states and coronavirus testing.

“We’ll have a larger and larger sample. But I want to see snapshots of what is happening with that rate. Is it going up, is it flat, is it down? And it can really give us data to make decisions,” Cuomo said.

Earlier Thursday, New York City’s health commissioner said many as 1 million people in New York City may have been exposed to the coronavirus.

The New York study is the latest in a small wave of early attempts to try to better determine how widespread infections have been in certain geographic areas. A study in Santa Clara County, California, put the figure at somewhere around 3% to 4%. Another California study, in Los Angeles County, came up with roughly the same percentage.

Experts have described them as first attempts that offer flawed and very limited snapshots of what’s seen in certain places.

“I think we are beginning to get interesting little rays of light” into how widespread infections have been, but larger and more rigorous studies will be needed to get a better picture, said Stephen Morse, a Columbia University expert on the spread of diseases.

At least 263,000 people in New York state, including about 142,000 people in New York City, have tested positive for the coronavirus, but city Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot called those numbers “the tip of the iceberg.”...

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-24/deaths-in-u-s-top-50-000-europe-s-toll-slows-virus-update

Apr 24

Global death toll from the coronavirus passed 200,000

U.S. cases rose 4.5%, more than the average of the past week, as **the global death toll from the coronavirus passed 200,000**. Governor Andrew Cuomo said New York is on a steady retreat from the deadly peaks that pushed the state to 10% of the world's infections.

Fatalities slowed in the European Union's biggest nations as leaders plan to relax economy-crushing lockdown measures. Spain is ready to take further steps to ease its measures next week.

U.S. cases increased 4.5% from the same time Friday, to 926,442, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and Bloomberg News. The rise was above the average daily increase of 3.5% over the past week.

New York's new cases rose 10,553 compared with 8,130 on Friday, for a statewide total of 282,143, about 10% of all reported cases worldwide. The number of new deaths was 437, up from the 422 on Friday and the first increase after three days of decline, the health department reported.

New Jersey reported 3,457 new cases, for a total of 105,523. Cases have risen by less than 10% for 19 days.

Massachusetts had 174 deaths, raising its total to 2,730, with another 2,379 cases, bringing total infections to 53,348, the state Department of Public Health said. Pennsylvania reported 1,397 new cases, for a statewide total of 40,049. The state reported 1,537 deaths, up from 1,492 fatalities reported Friday.

Florida's fatalities reached 1,055, up from 1,012 a day earlier, and total cases climbed to 30,839 from 20,174 on Friday, the state Department of Health.

Ohio reported 21 new deaths, bringing its total to 711, with 418 new cases, for a total of 15,587.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

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https://thefederalist.com/2020/04/20/here-are-six-states-ending-shelter-in-place-orders-on-before-april-30/

Apr 24

6 States ending Shelter-In-Place (SIP) orders on or before Apr 30

Georgia
Georgia is the earliest state to reopen businesses. Gov. Brian Kemp announced businesses can reopen with minimum basic operations this Friday, April 24. These businesses include: gyms, bowling alleys, body art studios, hair salons, nail care, estheticians, and training schools.

Alabama
Alabama's stay-at-home order is also set to expire on April 30. Gov. Kay Ivey said she plans to follow Alabama's state task force recommendations. The first businesses to open on May 1 will be small retailers, restaurants, and other businesses who operate with protective measures in place.

Florida
Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida is reopening the state under the same guidelines as Alabama. However, on April 17, DeSantis opened the state's beaches. Floridians are allowed to enjoy their beaches so long as they abide by the state's social distancing guidelines.

Tennessee
In Tennessee, Gov. Bill Lee said his stay-at-home order will not be extended past April 30, and that some businesses around the state will begin reopening next week, although he has not specified which type of businesses are in the clear yet.

Texas
On April 17, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced state parks would reopen for day-use only on Monday, April 20. Stores that offer "retail to-go" can reopen as early as April 24. Abbott also announced the Strike Force to Open Texas, a team of nationally recognized medical experts and private and public leaders who will provide guidance to the governor on how to safely reopen Texas.

South Carolina
South Carolina's shelter-in-place order is set to expire April 27. Gov. Henry McMaster restored access to public beaches and some retailers, but cautioned people to follow all recommendations from public experts.

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stay-at-home-orders-states/

7 states that never issued an SIP:

Arkansas
Iowa
Nebraska
North Dakota
South Dakota
Utah
Wyoming

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https://www.sciencealert.com/oxford-university-has-just-launched-a-human-trial-of-a-potential-covid-19-vaccine

Apr 24

UK launches human trial of COVID-19 Vaccine

Oxford University is launching a human trial of a potential coronavirus vaccine, with the daunting aim of making a successful jab available to the public later this year.

Of the more than 100 research projects around the world to find a vaccine - described by the United Nations as the only route back to "normality" - seven are currently in clinical trials, according to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Such trials are already underway in China and the United States and are due to begin at the end of this month in Germany, where the federal vaccine authority gave the green light on Wednesday.

The British government strongly supports Oxford University's work, and the first human trials were to start on Thursday, Health Minister Matt Hancock said.

He hailed the "promising development", pointing out that it would normally take "years" to reach such a stage of vaccine development.

In its first phase, half of 1,112 volunteers will receive the potential vaccine against COVID-19, the other half a control vaccine to test its safety and efficacy.
....
[the] team hopes for an 80 percent success rate, and plans to produce one million doses by September, with the aim of making it widely available by the autumn if successful.

But the teams carrying out this research say on their website that this timetable is "highly ambitious" and could change.

The government's chief medical officer Chris Whitty acknowledged on Wednesday that the likelihood of getting a vaccine within the year was "incredibly small".

"If people are hoping it's suddenly going to move from where we are in lockdown to where suddenly into everything is gone, that is a wholly unrealistic expectation," he warned.

Financial gambleThe strategy of not waiting for each step to be completed before launching production is a financial "gamble", according to Nicola Stonehouse, professor of molecular virology at the University of Leeds.

But the current crisis makes it a necessary gamble, she told AFP.

The Oxford vaccine is based on a chimpanzee adenovirus, which is modified to produce proteins in human cells that are also produced by COVID-19.

It is hoped the vaccine will teach the body's immune system to then recognise the protein and help stop the coronavirus from entering human cells.

The adenovirus vaccine is known to develop a strong immune response with a single dose and is not a replicating virus, so cannot cause infection, making it safer for children, the elderly and patients with underlying diseases such as diabetes...

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https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/494640-cdc-adds-six-more-symptoms-for-coronavirus

Apr 25

CDC adds six more symptoms for coronavirus

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) added six new symptoms for the coronavirus to its website as officials grapple with gauging the illness's scope.

The new symptoms for the disease are chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell, the CDC said. The list already included fever, cough and shortness of breath as symptoms of the coronavirus, which has infected more than 905,000 people in the U.S. and killed nearly 52,000.

The CDC said that anyone who has trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in their chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face should seek immediate medical attention.

Other symptoms of the highly infectious virus include diarrhea, skin rash, runny nose, red eyes and fatigue. However, people are known to contract the virus and remain asymptomatic.

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-wuhan/china-says-all-coronavirus-patients-in-wuhan-have-now-been-discharged-idUSKCN228077

Apr 26

China says all coronavirus patients in Wuhan have now been discharged

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - The Chinese city of Wuhan, where the global coronavirus pandemic began, now has no remaining cases in its hospitals, a health official told reporters on Sunday..

The novel coronavirus is believed to have originated in a wet market in Wuhan and first emerged in December before spreading quickly worldwide. Some 2.83 million people have been reported to be infected globally and 197,872 have died, according to a Reuters tally.

“The latest news is that by April 26, the number of new coronavirus patients in Wuhan was at zero, thanks to the joint efforts of Wuhan and medical staff from around the country,” National Health Commission spokesman Mi Feng said at a briefing...

The whole of China reported fewer than 12 new coronavirus cases on Saturday. Social distancing restrictions are still in place, but are being gradually reduced, with almost 50,000 high school students returning to class in Beijing today.

Since the outbreak began, China has reported more than 83,000 cases and more than 4,600 deaths, according to the latest figures from Johns Hopkins University

Construction workers on the site of the Wuhan Greenland Center on 24 April 2020.
STR/AFP via Getty Images

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https://www.businessinsider.com/monkeys-given-new-oxford-vaccine-coronavirus-free-strong-exposure-encouraging-2020-4?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=sf-bi-main&fbclid=IwAR1B-mL9_4k7NM8TC5e5GPoOEdcw0mLsvS3YB0axjPwWzviZg6qqrDWwdbc

Apr 28

Experimental vaccine raising hopes

Six monkeys given a vaccine developed by the University of Oxford are said to be coronavirus-free 28 days after sustained exposure to the virus.

The result is a promising early sign for the vaccine, which is also undergoing human trials. A working human version, however, remains months away even in the best-case scenario.

The monkey experiment was carried out in late March by government scientists at the Rocky Mountain Laboratory in Hamilton, Montana, The New York Times reported Monday.

Six rhesus macaques received a vaccine produced by the Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group. They were then exposed to heavy levels of the coronavirus that were known to have previously sickened other monkeys. These monkeys suffered no ill effects, however, and remained healthy at least 28 days later, The Times said.

"The rhesus macaque is pretty much the closest thing we have to humans," Vincent Munster, the head of the Virus Ecology Unit at the laboratory, told The Times.

The Jenner Institute, working as part of the Oxford Vaccine Group, is leading the global race for a coronavirus vaccine. The UK government has pledged £20 million, or $25 million, to the trial.

The vaccine given to the rhesus macaques is called hAdOx1 nCoV-19. Human trials began Thursday and are expected to be finished in September. The process of developing a vaccine is long, and even having a usable product by September would be unusually fast.

A rhesus macaque monkey in Hong Kong on April 30, 2011
Ed Jones/AFP via Getty Images

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https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/929616

Apr 29

New York's Northwell Health Testing Potential Heartburn Treatment for COVID-19

Reuters) - When Dr. Kevin Tracey of Northwell Health's Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research got a call from a colleague who had been in Wuhan, China, seeing patients with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, in January, his curiosity was piqued.

Tracey said Dr. Michael Callahan, an infectious disease doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital told him Chinese physicians had observed patients with COVID seeming to have "better outcomes if they took famotidine as part of the normal treatment of their gastroesophageal reflux, or heartburn."

The heartburn drug famotidine, found in Pepcid AC, seemed an unlikely remedy to help in the fight against COVID-19, but now Tracey is leading a clinical trial that administers the medication intravenously to patients who have the virus.

Researchers at Alchem Laboratories screened famotidine and found the drug could possibly block the enzyme, or protease, that the virus needs to replicate, Tracey said.

Tracey is proceeding with caution but has enrolled 200 patients in the trial, which should have at least a cohort of 300 before researchers begin to study the data.
"The whole responsibility one has to accept in doing this kind of research, asking these kinds of questions, is first, do no harm. And second, use a clinical trial strategy and design that provides valuable data, not anecdotes, not stories," he said.

Doctors in China found by looking at more than 6,000 patient records, that patients on famotidine died at a rate of about 14%, versus the 27% who died who weren't on the heartburn medication, but Tracey stressed that "the data from China was retrospective, it was historic, looking at records and patient interviews. The only way to know if famotidine would be effective would be to give it to patients in a blinded randomized clinical trial, which is what we're doing now at Northwell in New York."

He said there was precedent and hope for using a common drug to fight disease.

"If you think of HIV, there is no HIV vaccine, but HIV can be quite effectively treated using drugs that target the HIV protease," Tracey said. "And so, if one wishes to hope and we all hope for the best, we can hope that a widely used, relatively safe drug, by accident, is a protease inhibitor for this virus. And then that could be very important. That could change the course of the disease."

Tracey said his team will know the outcome of the study in "weeks to months."

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https://journalrecord.com/2020/04/29/nowhere-to-go-oklahoma-cattle-industry-loses-600m-due-to-covid-19/

Apr 29

The closing of meat processing plants is affecting the US food supply chain

... Shutdowns and slowdowns at numerous plants have put kinks in the nation's complex food supply chain that will affect everyday consumers and inflict billions of dollars' worth of damages on industries vital to Oklahoma and the rest of the country.

...It might be fair to compare meat processing plants to dams. The arrival of a sirloin steak at a restaurant or of a pound of ground beef at a supermarket depends on a continuous, smooth flow of work at meat processing plants.

COVID-19 has interrupted the flow, causing delays in the slaughtering and rendering of hundreds of thousands of animals at dozens of plants across the country. According to the United Food and Commercial Workers union, an estimated 5,000 employees have been infected and at least 17 have died from the coronavirus. Plants have responded with deep cleanings, by outfitting workers with personal protective equipment and by spacing them farther apart. Recognizing that meat production facilities do, in fact, amount to critical infrastructure, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Tuesday invoking the Defense Production Act to keep them open.

... by early April the pandemic had already cost the country $13.6 billion. Losses in Oklahoma were estimated at about $600 million. The ag-economist said worker illness has been the major disrupter at plants, but kinks also have resulted from the shift in demand for products away from restaurants and more toward retail sales. Panic buying by consumers also has affected the availability of meat in grocery stores.

"It's certainly a mix (of factors leading to reduced availability and price fluctuations)," Peel said. "I'd say lack of product from a supply standpoint is the biggest. We just physically aren't producing as much of the products. We're seeing backlogs of cattle that can't be processed and we're adding to that total every day."

,,,

Processing disruptions also are affecting the pork and poultry industries. Facilities across the country normally process about half a million hogs daily, with maximum capacity of about 2.7 million per week. Last week, Lindsey said shutdowns or slowdowns at seven plants reduced production to about 1.99 million animals, leaving about 500,000 "with no place to go."

Poultry producers affected by the pandemic have faced the same tough circumstances. John Tyson, chairman of Tyson Foods, said in a statement this week that processing plant shutdowns and slowdowns have resulted in forced "depopulating" at some poultry production facilities.

"Farmers across the nation simply will not have anywhere to sell their livestock to be processed, when they could have fed the nation," Tyson said in the statement. "Millions of animals – chickens, pigs and cattle – will be depopulated because of the closure of our processing facilities. The food supply chain is breaking."

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https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/16/coronavirus-stay-home-orders-extended-190889

SIP expirations dates by state

Alabama: **April 30**

Alaska: **April 21**

Arizona: **April 30**

Arkansas: NONE

California: No set end date

Colorado: **April 26**

Connecticut: **May 20**

Delaware: **May 15** or until the "public health threat is eliminated."

District of Columbia: **May 15**

Florida: **April 30**. Gov. Ron DeSantis is considering re-opening schools in the state.

Georgia: **April 24**

Hawaii : **April 30**

Idaho: **April 30**

Illinois: **April 30**

Indiana: **May 1**

Iowa: NONE

Kansas: **May 3**

Kentucky: "Healthy at Home" indefinitely

Louisiana: **April 30**

Maine: "Stay Healthy at Home" **April 30**

Maryland: until further notice

Massachusetts: **May 4**

Michigan: **April 30**

Minnesota: **May 4**

Mississippi: **April 27**

Missouri: "Stay Home Missouri" **April 24**

Montana: **April 24**

Nebraska: NONE

Nevada: **April 30**

New Hampshire: **May 4**

New Jersey: No specific end date

New Mexico: **April 30**

New York: **May 15**

North Carolina: **April 29**

North Dakota: NONE

Ohio: **May 1**

Oklahoma: "Safer at Home" **May 6** for people over the age of 65 and other vulnerable residents

Oregon: Indefinitely - also coordinated with California and Washington

Pennsylvania: **April 30**

Rhode Island: **May 8**

South Carolina: **April 27**

South Dakota: NONE

Tennessee: **April 30**

Texas: **April 30**

Utah: NONE

Vermont: "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order **May 15**

Virginia: **June 10**

Washington: **May 4** but could be extended - coordinating with Oregon and California

West Virginia: Until further notice

Wisconsin: "Safer at Home" order **April 24**

Wyoming: NONE

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/30/opinion/coronavirus-covid-vaccine.html

Apr 30

How Long Will a Vaccine Really Take?

A vaccine would be the ultimate weapon against the coronavirus and the best route back to normal life. Officials like Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the top infectious disease expert on the Trump administration's coronavirus task force, estimate a vaccine could arrive in at least 12 to 18 months.

The grim truth behind this rosy forecast is that a vaccine probably won't arrive any time soon. Clinical trials almost never succeed. We've never released a coronavirus vaccine for humans before. Our record for developing an entirely new vaccine is at least four years — more time than the public or the economy can tolerate social-distancing orders.

But if there was any time to fast-track a vaccine, it is now. So Times Opinion asked vaccine experts how we could condense the timeline and get a vaccine in the next few months instead of years.

Normally, researchers need years to secure funding, get approvals and study results piece by piece. But these are not normal times.

There are already at least 254 therapies and 95 vaccines related to Covid-19 being explored.

"If you want to make that 18-month timeframe, one way to do that is put as many horses in the race as you can," said Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine.
Despite the unprecedented push for a vaccine, researchers caution that less than 10 percent of drugs that enter clinical trials are ever approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

The rest fail in one way or another: They are not effective, don't perform better than existing drugs or have too many side effects.

Fortunately, we already have a head start on the first phase of vaccine development: research. The outbreaks of SARS and MERS, which are also caused by coronaviruses, spurred lots of research. SARS and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, are roughly 80 percent identical, and both use so-called spike proteins to grab onto a specific receptor found on cells in human lungs. This helps explain how scientists developed a test for Covid-19 so quickly.

There's a cost to moving so quickly, however. The potential Covid-19 vaccines now in the pipeline might be more likely to fail because of the swift march through the research phase, said Robert van Exan, a cell biologist who has worked in the vaccine industry for decades. He predicts we won't see a vaccine approved until at least 2021 or 2022, and even then, "this is very optimistic and of relatively low probability."

And yet, he said, this kind of fast-tracking is "worth the try — maybe we will get lucky." ...

Use live link at top of page to access interactive charts and the read the article in its entirety.

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/01/us/grim-reaper-florida-beaches-trnd/index.html

May 1

A man dressed as the Grim Reaper is haunting Florida beaches

Most Floridians hitting the newly reopened beaches are trading stay-at-home sweatpants for shorts and swimsuits.

But when he heads out, Daniel Uhlfelder dons a raggedy black robe, conceals his face with a black cloth and wields his scythe.

Uhlfelder, an attorney, is haunting Florida beaches dressed as the Grim Reaper to protest their reopening, which he believes is premature.

It's a macabre plea to beachgoers to stay home.

Uhlfelder is a staunch advocate for public beach access in the state, even butting heads with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, whose Florida Panhandle home is parked on a private beach. But allowing anyone on the beach during the pandemic is a mistake, he said -- one that could endanger the community.

"We aren't at the point now where we have enough testing, enough data, enough preparation for what's going to be coming to our state from all over the world from this pandemic," the lawyer told CNN.

Scythe in hand, he traveled to beaches around Walton County, Florida, that have reopened ahead of the state's planned May 4 reopening. "Phase One" of the reopening will allow restaurants and retailers to open at 25% capacity. Bars, salons and gyms will stay closed for now.

The beaches he visited Friday were "very crowded," he said. "I know how beautiful and attractive our beaches are. But if we don't take measures to control things, this virus is going to get really, really out of control," he warned.

Photo provided by Daniel Uhlfelder

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https://www.wired.com/story/inside-the-early-days-of-chinas-coronavirus-coverup/

May 1

Inside the early days of China's coronavirus coverup

By Shawn Yuan: a Beijing-based freelance journalist and photographer, who travels between the Middle East and China to report on human rights and politics

LATE ON THE night of February 2, as her insomnia kicked in, a Beijing woman whom I'll call Yue took out her phone and religiously clicked open WeChat and Weibo. Over the past two fitful weeks, the two Chinese social media platforms had offered practically her only windows into the "purgatory," as she called it, of Wuhan.

At this point, according to official estimates, the novel coronavirus had infected just over 14,000 people in the world—and nearly all of them were in the central Chinese city where Yue had attended university and lived for four years. A number of her friends there had already caught the mysterious virus.

An inveterate news junkie, Yue hadn't been able to look away from the ghastly updates pouring out of Wuhan, which—interspersed with a dissonant bombardment of posts praising the Chinese government's iron grip on the outbreak—kept hitting her in an unrelentingly personal way. Her mental health was fraying, and she was "disappointed in humanity," as she later put it.

That night, just when Yue was about to log off and try to sleep, she saw the following sentence pop up on her WeChat Moments feed, the rough equivalent of Facebook's News Feed: "I never thought in my lifetime I'd see dead bodies lying around without being collected and patients seeking medical help but having no place to get treatment."

Yue thought that she had become desensitized, but this post made her fists clench: It was written by Xiao Hui, a journalist friend of hers who was reporting on the ground for Caixin, a prominent Chinese news outlet. Yue trusted her.

She read on. "On January 22, on my second day reporting in Wuhan, I knew this was China's Chernobyl," Xiao Hui wrote. "These days I rarely pick up phone calls from outside of Wuhan or chat with friends and family, because nothing can express what I have seen here."

Unable to contain her anger, Yue took a screenshot of Xiao's post and immediately posted it on her WeChat Moments. "Look what is happening in Wuhan!" she wrote. Then she finally drifted off.

The next morning, when she opened WeChat, a single message appeared: Her account had been suspended for having "spread malicious rumors" and she would not be able to unblock it. She knew at once that her late-night post had stepped on a censorship landmine.

What she couldn't have realized, though, was that she had posted her screenshot at what seems to have been a turning point in China's handling of the epidemic: Over the previous two weeks, the government had allowed what felt like an uncharacteristic degree of openness in the flow of information out of Wuhan. But now the state was embarking on a campaign of censorship and suppression that would be remarkable even by the standards of the Chinese Communist Party...

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https://www.forbes.com/sites/carlieporterfield/2020/05/02/mississippi-slows-reopening-after-coronavirus-spike-while-texas-and-other-states-move-forward/#1ba9094d2fae

May 2

Mississippi Slows Reopening After Coronavirus Spike —While Texas And Other States Move Forward

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves was set to announce that he would allow more businesses to reopen—and join other state governors who have rolled back stay-at-home orders—but after a jump in cases and deaths in his state Friday, he announced a delay.

"Things can change quickly. We have to stay flexible. Today, I was prepared to announce further reopenings. That was the plan and I was excited to get more of our people back to work," Reeves said Friday. "This was a large enough change to make me take a step back… and I have come to the conclusion that I must hold on for now." However, Reeves stressed the importance of reopening businesses to help the tanked economy. "We have to get businesses back and we have to get back to normal life. There are still a few industries that are forced to be closed, and I absolutely hate that. It eats me alive every day," he said.

On Friday, Mississippi had counted a total of 281 confirmed coronavirus deaths and 7,212 patients who have tested positive. Mississippi has faced its own set of challenges during the pandemic, as the most impoverished state in the U.S., where many residents were already struggling with food insecurity and a lack of accessible healthcare. There have also been disturbing reports of coronavirus disproportionately hurting black Mississippians. According to NPR, African-Americans account for more than 60% of coronavirus deaths in Mississippi, despite only making up about 40% of the state's population.

KEY FACTS

- Mississippi saw its highest daily count of new confirmed coronavirus cases and deaths Friday, with the state health department announcing 20 additional deaths and 397 new cases, although officials noted the number could be caused by lagging test results.
- The figures gave Reeves enough pause to announce he would hold off easing Mississippi's "Safer at Home" order he put into place a week ago, that itself was a rollback of the state's previous shelter-in-place order.
- Under the order, some businesses, like retail shops, are allowed to open with limits on capacity, while medically vulnerable people are still required to stay home and gyms, cinemas and hair and nail salons remain shut.
- The order is set to expire May 11, and Reeves said he will wait at least through the weekend before he gives the go-ahead for more business to reopen.
- Reeves' backtrack is a stark contrast to Texas, where Gov. Greg Abbott pushed ahead with partially opening businesses Friday, despite the state seeing the worst three-day run of coronavirus deaths since the pandemic began.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/many-lockdowns-ease-but-russia-india-uk-still-struggling/ar-BB13wEfx

May 3

Many lockdowns ease but Russia, India, UK still struggling

ROME (AP) — From the United States to Europe to Asia, the easing of some coronavirus lockdowns brought millions out of their homes to enjoy the outdoors and warm spring temperatures. Yet the global pandemic is still slicing through the defenses of other nations, causing infections and deaths to march relentlessly higher.

India on Sunday reported more than 2,600 infections, its biggest single-day jump, and new coronavirus cases in Russia exceed 10,000 for the first time. The confirmed virus death toll in Britain was creeping up near that of Italy, the epicenter of Europe's outbreak, even though the U.K. population is younger than Italy's and Britain had more time than Italy to prepare before the pandemic hit.

There was also worrying news from Afghanistan, where nearly a third tested positive in a random test of 500 people in Kabul, the capital city.

China, which reported two only new cases, is seeing a surge in visitors to newly reopened tourist spots after domestic travel restrictions were relaxed ahead of a five-day holiday that runs through Tuesday.

Nearly 1.7 million people visited Beijing parks on the first two days of the holiday, and Shanghai's main tourist spots welcomed more than 1 million visitors, according to Chinese media. Many spots limited daily visitors to 30% of capacity or less to keep some social distancing in place.

Italians are counting down the hours until Monday, when parks and public gardens were re-opening nationwide for strolling, jogging or bike riding. But with sunshine and warm temperatures across the country, many were outside in force Sunday, walking down streets and chatting on sidewalks. Many had masks, but in Rome, some lowered them to talk with friends or neighbors.

Despite the easing, Italians will still have to stay a meter apart, picnics are not allowed and playgrounds will remain closed. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has warned that if the rate of contagion starts rising again, such freedoms will be curtailed.

In Spain, many ventured out this weekend for the first time since its lockdown began on March 14.

“I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape,” runner Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure to reveal how the country will leave the lockdown that began March 23. The restrictions are due to last at least until through Thursday, but with hundreds of deaths still being reported daily, it's unclear how the country can safely loosen the restrictions. Britain over the last two days reported double the number of deaths that both Spain and Italy reported.

While Johnson has said Britain is past the peak of its coronavirus outbreak, his Conservative government is facing sharp criticism as it becomes clear that Britain will have one of the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the world. British medical workers have also denounced shortage of protective equipment....

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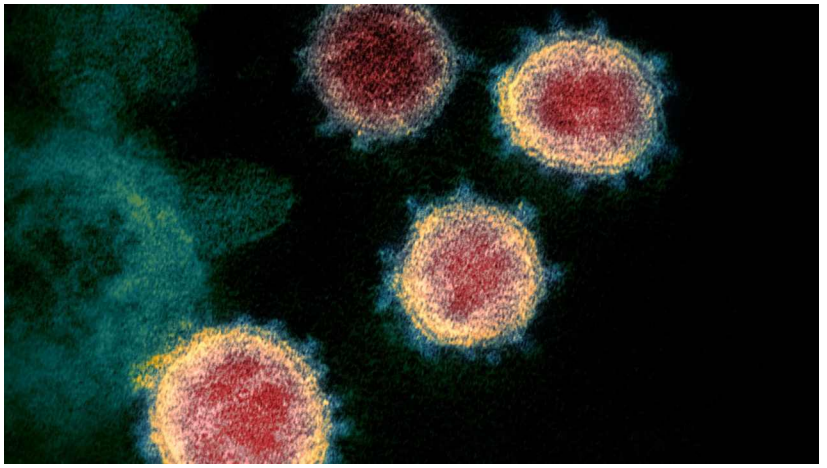
https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-scientists-hail-groundbreaking-discovery-of-antibody-which-prevents-infection-11982809

May 4

Scientists discover antibody that blocks virus from infecting cells



Building on research into the SARS coronavirus, scientists from Utrecht University in the Netherlands, as well as the Erasmus Medical Centre and the company Harbour BioMed (HBM), have identified a potential method of neutralising COVID-19.

They discovered that an antibody which prevents the SARS virus from infecting human cells could also block the novel coronavirus from infecting human cells too, according a peer reviewed study published on Monday in the journal Nature Communications.

Testing their collection of antibodies on cultured human cells, researchers discovered one which binds to a specific part which is present in both SARS and the virus causing COVID-19.

The discovery could offer an initial step towards developing a fully-human antibody to treat or prevent the disease, which has infected more then 3.5 million people worldwide, and led to more than 247,000 deaths.

The neutralising antibody "has potential to alter the course of infection in the infected host, support virus clearance or protect an uninfected individual that is exposed to the virus," said Dr Berend-Jan Bosch, co-lead author on the study.

Dr Frank Grosveld, the study's other co-lead author, said the discovery provided "a strong foundation for additional research characterise this antibody and begin development as a potential COVID-19 treatment".

"The antibody used in this work is 'fully human', allowing development to proceed more rapidly and reducing the potential for immune-related side effects," he added.

The fully-human antibody is different from conventional therapeutic antibodies, which are often first developed in other species before being "humanised" so they can be transmitted to people.

It was developed using Harbour BioMed's H2L2 transgenic mouse technology - effectively a mouse which has been genetically engineered to contain human genes, enabling researchers to develop "human" antibodies without testing them on living people.

"This is groundbreaking research," said Dr Jingsong Wang, the chief executive of HBM.

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https://apnews.com/238af56283754cd19d1966ff1681f5ae

May 4

FDA cracks down on sellers of inaccurate antibody tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. regulators Monday pulled back a decision that allowed scores of coronavirus blood tests to hit the market without first providing proof that they worked.

The Food and Drug Administration said it took the action because some sellers have made false claims about the tests and their accuracy. Companies will now have to show their tests work or risk having them pulled from the market.

Under pressure to increase testing options, the FDA in March essentially allowed companies to begin selling tests as long as they notified the agency of their plans and provided disclaimers, including that they were not FDA approved. The policy was intended to allow “flexibility” needed to quickly ramp up production, officials said.

“However, flexibility never meant we would allow fraud,” Dr. Anand Shah, an FDA deputy commissioner, said in a statement. “We unfortunately see unscrupulous actors marketing fraudulent test kits and using the pandemic as an opportunity to take advantage of Americans.”

Blood tests are different from the nasal swab tests currently used to diagnose active COVID-19 infections. Instead, the tests look for blood proteins called antibodies, which the body produces days or weeks after fighting an infection. Most use a finger-prick of blood on a test strip.
The revised policy follows weeks of criticism from doctors, lab specialists and members of Congress who said the FDA’s lack of oversight created a Wild West of unregulated tests.

The agency acknowledged Monday that there have been problems with deceptive, false marketing among the 160 tests that have been launched in the U.S. Some companies have claimed their tests can be used at home, although FDA has not allowed that use. Others make unsubstantiated claims about their accuracy. Some U.S. hospitals and local governments have reported buying tests that turned out to be inaccurate or frauds.

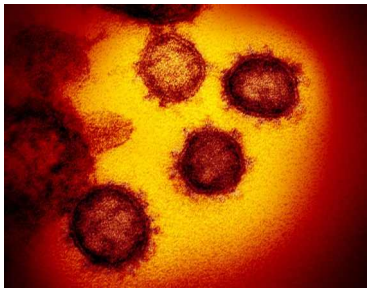
So far, the FDA has granted authorization to 12 antibody tests, meaning their methods, materials and accuracy passed muster with agency regulators. Companies with test kits currently on the market without FDA authorization will now be required to submit formal applications to regulators within 10 business days. Companies that launch at a later date will have 10 days to turn over their applications after validating their tests.

Health officials in the U.S. and around the world have suggested the tests could be helpful in identifying people who have previously had the virus — with or without getting sick — and developed some immunity to it. But researchers haven’t yet been able to answer key questions that are essential to their practical use: what level of antibodies does it take to be immune and how long does that protection last?

“We’re spending a lot of time and resources on something ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-05-05/mutant-coronavirus-has-emerged-more-contagious-than-original



An image from an electron microscope shows SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Scientists say this version of the coronavirus has mutated and become morecontagious. (Associated Press)

May 5

A mutant coronavirus has emerged, even more contagious than the original, study says

Scientists have identified a new strain of the coronavirus that has become dominant worldwide and appears to be more contagious than the versions that spread in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new study led by scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The new strain appeared in February in Europe, migrated quickly to the East Coast of the United States and has been the dominant strain across the world since mid-March, the scientists wrote.

In addition to spreading faster, it may make people vulnerable to a second infection after a first bout with the disease, the report warned.

The 33-page report was posted Thursday on BioRxiv, a website that researchers use to share their work before it is peer reviewed, an effort to speed up collaborations with scientists working on COVID-19 vaccines or treatments. That research has been largely based on the genetic sequence of earlier strains and might not be effective against the new one.

The mutation identified in the new report affects the now infamous spikes on the exterior of the coronavirus, which allow it to enter human respiratory cells. The report's authors said they felt an "urgent need for an early warning" so that vaccines and drugs under development around the world will be effective against the mutated strain.

Wherever the new strain appeared, it quickly infected far more people than the earlier strains that came out of Wuhan, China, and within weeks it was the only strain that was prevalent in some nations, according to the report. The new strain's dominance over its predecessors demonstrates that it is more infectious, according to the report, though exactly why is not yet known.

The coronavirus, known to scientists as SARS-CoV-2, has infected more than 3.5 million people around the world and caused more than 250,000 COVID-19 deaths since its discovery late last year.

The report was based on a computational analysis of more than 6,000 coronavirus sequences from around the world, collected by the Global Initiative for Sharing All Influenza Data, a public-private organization in Germany. Time and again, the analysis found the new version was transitioning to become dominant.

The Los Alamos team, assisted by scientists at Duke University and the University of Sheffield in England, identified 14 mutations. Those mutations occurred among the nearly 30,000 base pairs of RNA that other scientists say make up the coronavirus's genome. The report authors focused on a mutation called D614G, which is responsible for the change in the virus' spikes.

"The story is worrying, as we see a mutated form of the ...

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/05/pfizer-begins-human-testing-for-experimental-coronavirus-vaccine-in-the-us.html

May 5

Pfizer begins human testing for experimental coronavirus vaccine in the US

Pfizer said Tuesday it has begun testing an experimental vaccine to combat the coronavirus in the United States.

The U.S.-based pharmaceutical giant, which is working alongside German drugmaker BioNTech, said the first human participants in the United States have been dosed with the potential vaccine, BNT162. They began human trials of the experimental vaccine late last month in Germany.
...
The experimental vaccine contains genetic material called messenger RNA, or mRNA. The mRNA is a genetic code that tells cells what to build — in this case, an antigen that may induce an immune response for the virus.

The trial will test the experimental vaccine on adults ages 18 to 55 in the first stage before moving on to older groups, the company said, adding it hopes to test up to 360 people.

There are no FDA-approved therapies to treat Covid-19, and drugmakers are racing to produce a vaccine, which U.S. health officials say is expected to take at least 12 to 18 months.

The effort by Pfizer and BioNTech is one of several working on a potential vaccine to prevent Covid-19, which has sickened more than 3.5 million people worldwide and has killed at least 247,752 as of Monday night, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. There were more than 100 vaccines in development globally as of April 30, according to the World Health Organization, with at least eight vaccine candidates already in human trials.

Hopes to get a vaccine to market are high, but scientists are setting expectations low for how quickly it can happen. Developing, testing and reviewing any potential vaccine is a long, complex and expensive endeavor that could take years, global health experts say.

Biotech firm Moderna, in partnership with the National Institutes of Health, began the first human trial testing for a potential vaccine in March.

Johnson & Johnson said it is aiming to produce 600 million to 900 million doses of its potential coronavirus vaccine by the end of the first quarter of 2021 if human trials scheduled to begin in September go as planned.

Pfizer hopes to produce “millions” of vaccines by the end of this year, the company’s chief scientific officer, Dr. Mikael Dolsten, told CNBC last month. The company said Tuesday it expects to increase to “hundreds of millions” of doses next year.

Sites currently dosing participants include NYU Grossman School of Medicine and the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Pfizer said. The University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester Regional Health and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center will “begin enrollment shortly,” the company said.

Upon regulatory approval, Pfizer and BioNTech will work jointly to commercialize the vaccine worldwide.

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https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/05/06/opinion/coronavirus-us-reopen.html?smid=em-share

use live link to access interactive chart

May 6

Is It Safer to Visit a Coffee Shop or a Gym?

As states begin to reopen, Americans are looking at any trip outside through the lens of contagion. Is it safe to go back to Starbucks? What about the gym? Nail salons are out of the question, right?

The country faces an ugly trade-off. Keep the economy closed and prolong the economic misery. Or open up the economy and risk a resurgence of Covid-19, undoing the gains earned through weeks of social isolation.

We believe there's another option.

Some businesses, like some people, are "super-spreaders." Through the lens of contagion, a yoga class, a busy corner store or a crowded neighborhood bar may look a lot like a wet market in China.

Cellphone data can't tell us everything. For example, businesses in low-income neighborhoods with fewer smartphones may appear to have less foot traffic. We looked into this, and to date, we have not found any appreciable bias in the measures we are using.

The anonymized location pings also don't give us any insight into how customers interacted or how many surfaces they touched. And it's tricky to determine whether people were inside a building or moving around outdoors, where air can move freely, and infection risk may be lower.

To overcome some of these limitations, we asked people to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how often they interacted with people or touched shared surfaces at various businesses, as well as how much activity in different sectors occurs indoors.

These numbers help us flag risky industries, like beauty and nail salons, that our other metrics didn't. These businesses should be particularly attentive to maintaining social-distancing measures.

The variation in risk between different types of businesses was surprising. People spend twice as much time at electronics stores as they do at lawn and garden stores. A display of new phones and gadgets is an invitation to mill around; you don't linger over fertilizer. Similarly, we found that people spend nearly three times as much time searching through the racks at a Salvation Army as they do scanning the shelves at a Dollar General.

Another reason for differences is how concentrated people are: The same number of customers spaced out evenly over the day poses less risk than if they all arrive in a few short windows of time.

Even within a sector, there is tremendous variation. Consider two similar restaurants: Denny's and the Original Pancake House. Both serve a similar number of customers every week, who stay for a similar length of time. But customers at the Original Pancake House are far more concentrated (at breakfast, of course), producing a far higher risk of customers getting crowded into the same space at the same time.

The existence of super-spreader businesses might seem ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/us/new-york-city-coronavirus-outbreak.html?smid=em-share

May 7

Travel from New York City seeded wave of U.S. Outbreaks

New York City's coronavirus outbreak grew so large by early March that the city became the primary source of new infections in the United States, new research reveals, as thousands of infected people traveled from the city and seeded outbreaks around the country.

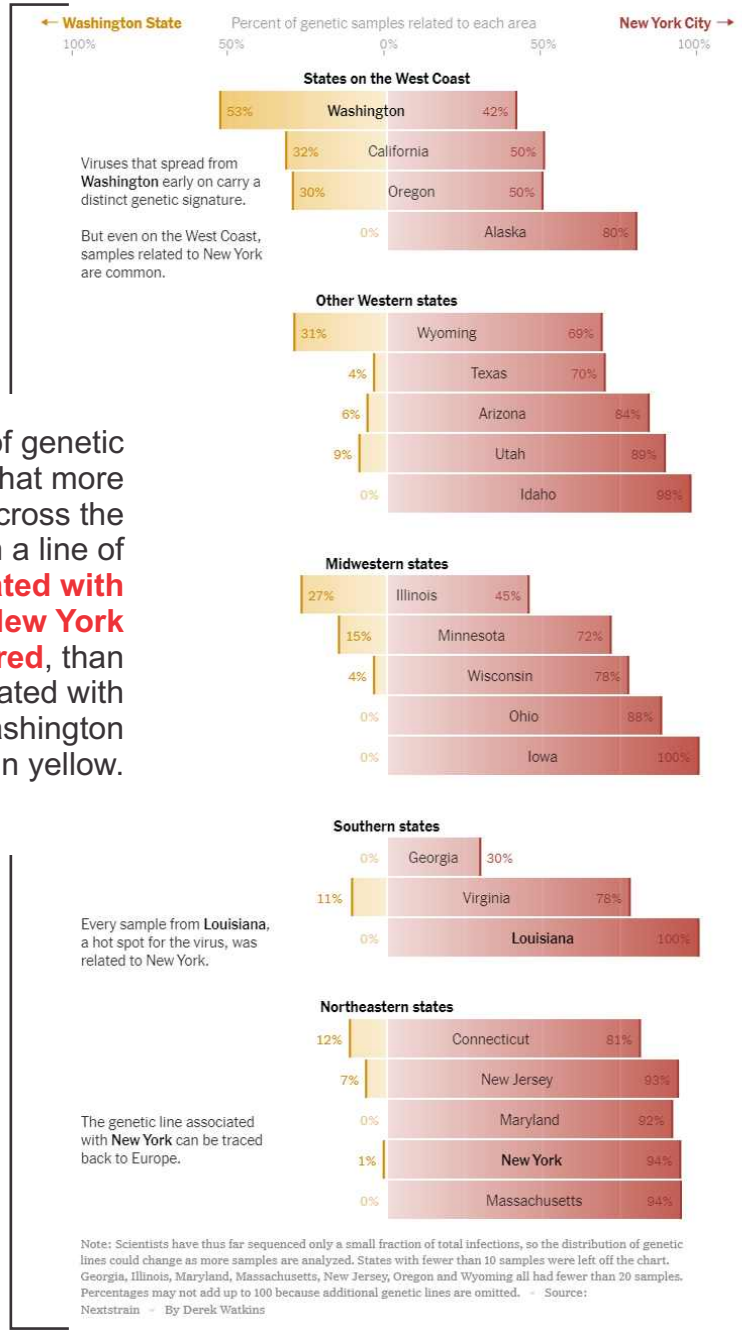
..

The research indicates that a wave of infections swept from New York City through much of the country before the city began setting social distancing limits to stop the growth. That helped to fuel outbreaks in Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and as far away as the West Coast.

The findings are drawn from geneticists' tracking signature mutations of the virus, travel histories of infected people and models of the outbreak by infectious disease experts.

"We now have enough data to feel pretty confident that New York was the primary gateway for the rest of the country," said Nathan Grubaugh, an epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health...

Early analysis of genetic samples indicates that more infections across the country came from a line of the virus **associated with the outbreak in New York City, shown in red**, than from a line associated with the outbreak in Washington State, shown in yellow.



Return to Timeline

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/07/blood-thinners-coronavirus-clots/

Subscription required to access full article

May 7

Blood thinners show promise for boosting the survival chances of the sickest covid patients

Treating coronavirus patients with blood thinners could help boost their prospects for survival, according to preliminary findings from physicians at New York City's largest hospital system that offer another clue about treating the deadly condition.

The results of an analysis of 2,733 patients, published Wednesday in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, are part of a growing body of information about what has worked and what has not during a desperate few months in which doctors have tried dozens of treatments to save those dying of covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Valentin Fuster, a physician in chief at Mount Sinai Hospital and one of the study's authors, said in an interview that the observations are based only on a review of medical records and that more rigorous, randomized studies are needed to draw broader conclusions, but that the results are promising.

"My opinion is cautious, but I must tell you I think this is going to help," he said. "This is the opening of the door for what drugs to use and what questions to answer."

A mysterious blood-clotting complication is killing coronavirus patients

Since March, when the pandemic hit Europe and the United States, **doctors have been reporting mysterious blood clots, which can be gel-like or even semisolid, in a significant subset of coronavirus patients. Autopsies of patients who died of respiratory arrest have shown that some had unusual microclots in their lungs** rather than the typical damage expected. And last month, doctors reported in the New England Journal of Medicine on five unusual cases of covid-19-positive people in their 30s and 40s experiencing large strokes.

The Mount Sinai study focused on hospitalized patients treated at its five branches from March 14 through April 11. Among patients who were not on ventilators, those treated with blood thinners died at similar rates to those who did not get blood thinners. But they lived longer — a median of 21 days compared to 14 days.

For patients on ventilators, the difference was more significant. About 63 percent of patients who did not receive the medications died compared with 29 percent who received the treatment.

Another critical finding of the study is that giving blood thinners to these patients appears to be relatively safe. There was not a significant difference in the most dangerous side effect of anticoagulants — bleeding — in those who were on the drugs vs. those who were not.

As a result of the analysis, Fuster said, the hospital system changed its treatment protocols several days ago to begin giving patients with covid-19 higher doses of blood thinners.

Deepak Bhatt, a professor at Harvard Medical School who specializes in interventional cardiology, called the paper "a very important study" with the blood issues in covid-19 patients having evolved from just a suspicion to a well-recognized complication of the virus. "What we are figuring now is what do we do now that we know" in terms of treatments, he said.

Thomas W. Wakefield, head of vascular surgery for ...

https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/07/sweden-coronavirus-chief-scientist-admits-lessons-have-been-learned.html

May 7

Sweden's chief scientist admits lessons have been learned over no-lockdown policy

Sweden's decision to avoid a strict lockdown like its European neighbors drew global attention and was not without controversy.

But now the country is past the peak of infections, its chief epidemiologist says, and there are few actions he would have done differently — apart from how elderly care homes were prepared for the outbreak.

"I don't think anybody who is really thinking that much about this, is really sure about any strategy, because we're all doing something that nobody did before," Anders Tegnell, Sweden's state epidemiologist who has led the country's coronavirus response, told CNBC Thursday.

"On the other hand, it looks like it's going to work out. **We're clearly past the peak in Stockholm and our health care (system) has been able to handle it, we have extra beds in the hospitals and everybody has been treated that needs to be treated, even non-Covid patients have been able to get treatment."**

He said Sweden's experience had shown that "we can keep our schools open." "That has not caused any major problems at all — it has not caused any problems that we can see. We can keep our society reasonably open, without huge effects."

Unlike its Scandinavian neighbors in Norway, Denmark and Finland, Sweden went its own way as the coronavirus pandemic manifested itself in Europe in late February and early March (though new studies show it could have been circulating in the continent in late 2019).

While the countries around it closed borders, schools, bars and businesses and imposed strict social-distancing measures, in contrast, Sweden's government — acting on advice from its Public Health Agency and Anders Tegnell, as well as a group of other experts — opted for mostly advisory measures.

Tegnell said that the number of admissions to Sweden's hospitals is "clearly falling," as well as the number of deaths. As of Thursday, Sweden has 23,918 confirmed cases of the virus and has recorded 2,941 deaths, with over half the deaths occurring in elderly care homes. Sweden conducts around 30,000 coronavirus tests per week.

"Of course, there is a huge regret over the fatalities that we've had but we're not really clear how that could have been avoided. We know that these (elderly care home) settings are very vulnerable in this kind of situation and we're not sure that doing something different would make a huge difference to that," Tegnell said.

Asked if Sweden would follow the same policy in any future outbreak, he answered "to a great extent, yes."

"Now we know things that we could do better, for sure, but on the whole I think we would go down the same route," although he conceded that more work could have been done to prevent outbreaks in Sweden's care homes.

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https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/u-s-economy-shed-record-20-5-million-jobs-last-n1202696

May 8

Unemployment rate is highest level since the Great Depression

The U.S. economy lost an unprecedented 20.5 million jobs in April, shattering all previous records and hitting the highest level since the Great Depression.

The unemployment rate soared to 14.7 percent, up from 4.4 percent in March after months at a half-century low, according to the monthly employment report, released Friday by the Department of Labor.

In just over a month, the coronavirus has wiped out all job gains since the Great Recession and brought the country's decade-long record economic growth streak to an abrupt halt.

“This is the biggest and most acute shock that we’ve seen in post-war history,” said Michelle Meyer, head of U.S. economics at Bank of America.

April's staggering jobless total is more than 10 times that of the previous unemployment record of 1.96 million, set in September 1945, when American soldiers returned home after World War II. **The new unemployment rate is the worst since the height of the Great Depression, when it hit 24.9 percent.**

The economy has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, with stores and businesses shut down for weeks, in order to maintain social distancing and prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Millions of workers have been laid off, put on furlough, or made to work from home.

Since mid-March, 33.5 million people have filed for initial unemployment claims, with 22.6 million seeking ongoing benefits — by far surpassing the recessionary peak of 6.6 million.

“If we thought the worst we’d ever see with economic data would be during the financial crisis and Great Recession, the virus proved us wrong," said Mark Hamrick, senior economic analyst at Bankrate.

President Donald Trump has pushed for a swift turnaround after weeks of lockdowns, saying he believes the economy will "transition into greatness" in the third quarter.

However, as the country slowly reopens, the economy is not expected to simply bounce back. Many customers remain hesitant about returning to restaurants and bars, watching movies, or attending sporting events.

And despite trillions of dollars in emergency relief from the government, multiple rounds of crisis intervention from the Federal Reserve, and fiscal stimulus such as the Paycheck Protection Program, economists warn that many businesses will not survive. Those who have taken PPP loans are funded for only eight weeks, after which time they may need to make further cutbacks — and employees who were furloughed may become permanent layoffs.

Major retailers such as Neiman Marcus and J.Crew have already filed for bankruptcy, with many more skipping rent payments in order to preserve their business.

Yet some economists say the historic April jobs report does not even capture the full picture ...

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https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/national/coronavirus/grit-and-red-wine-famous-war-photographer-beats-virus-at-97

May 8

Grit and red wine: Famous war photographer beats virus at 97

NEW YORK (AP) — A celebrated wartime photographer who survived a devastating childhood and the Battle of Normandy is now getting over a bout with COVID-19.

Ninety-seven-year-old Tony Vaccaro attributes his longevity to blind luck, red wine and determination.

As an American combat infantryman in World War II, he stowed a camera and captured close to 8,000 photographs.
Bottom line
In addition to blocked seats and enhanced cleaning measures, mandatory face masks should offer an important layer of protection for travelers and airline staff. Still, with stay-at-home orders in place in many U.S. states, individuals should only travel if necessary. If you do need to fly, be sure to check out our detailed guide for more on what to expect during booking, at the airport and onboard.

He later became a celebrity photographer for magazines such as Look and Life.

His subjects included Sophia Loren, John F. Kennedy and Pablo Picasso.

Vaccaro lives in New York City and says he feels like he could go anywhere on Earth and survive it.

Photo by: Manolo Salas/AP

In this recent but undated photo of Tony Vaccaro. Amid the bleakness of the pandemic, some veterans still know how to win that 2020 war too — spurious comparison or not. Vaccaro, 97, was thrown into WWII with the 83rd Infantry division which fought, like Charles Shay, in Normandy, and then came to Schmetz's doorstep for the Battle of the Bulge.

On top of his military gear, he also carried a camera, and became a fashion and celebrity photographer after the war. COVID-19 caught up with him last month. Like everything bad life threw at him, he shook it off, attributing his survival to plain "fortune."

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/us/coronavirus-american-samoa.html

May 8

A place in the U.S. With No COVID-19? Look to American Samoa

The coronavirus death toll in the United States is climbing past 70,000, with thousands of new cases every day. But there is still one part of the country without a single confirmed case, much less a fatality: American Samoa, a palm-fringed Polynesian archipelago that has sealed itself off for nearly two months from the outside world.

Other U.S. islands lost their early battles to keep the infection out. But American Samoa's success so far has been no accident, public health officials say. The territory moved swiftly to halt nearly all incoming flights, rapidly boosted testing ability and took advantage of social distancing strategies that had already been adopted in response to a measles outbreak at the end of last year.

The enduring trauma of the 1918 influenza pandemic, which left American Samoa relatively unscathed but wiped out a fifth of the population of neighboring independent Samoa, has also influenced aggressive anti-contagion moves at each stage of the crisis.

"Life in our bubble is somewhat unique compared to the rest of the world," said Bishop Peter Brown, leader of the Roman Catholic church in American Samoa. Church services were quickly shut down when the coronavirus began its spread across the United States, he said.

Schools had been preparing to emerge from a measles closure in effect from December through early March when a "continuing" public health emergency was declared, effective on March 23.

"Apart from that, life is pretty normal, but supplies are somewhat sparse with shipping restricted," Bishop Brown said. He added that many American Samoans were anxiously following the surging death toll on the mainland. "They need the help more than us," he said.

The 55,000 people in the territory have been allowed to go to bars, nightclubs and restaurants, albeit in smaller numbers over the past month, with a limit of 10 customers at a time. Civil servants are working part time but have not stopped going into offices. The largest private employer, a tuna cannery with more than 2,000 workers, has continued to hum along.
...
The territorial government ... formed a coronavirus task force in March, introducing a variety of moderate social distancing measures in addition to the church and school closures. For instance, public gatherings in bingo halls and theaters were suspended, and the territorial correctional facility was closed for visitation.

At the time, anxiety was running high over the potential for the virus to devastate American Samoa. Large parts of the population have conditions that could heighten the risk of dying from Covid-19, such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

Moreover, the territory has a shortage of medical workers and only one hospital, the Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Center, with the capacity to treat about 10 coronavirus patients at a time.food once a week from Hawaii...

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-antibody-test-questions-answers/

May 8

Should you get an antibody test?

The Food and Drug Administration has granted emergency authorization to a dozen coronavirus antibody tests, and more than 200 others are currently on the market. One authorized company, Roche, claims its test is 100% accurate at finding coronavirus antibodies in the blood and 99.8% accurate at ruling them out.

Many people who got sick in recent months but didn't get tested for COVID-19 have been left wondering whether they had the coronavirus. Many others who didn't get sick could have also been infected with the virus and not even known it. People in both groups are now looking to antibody tests for possible answers.

What are antibodies? And how accurate are the tests?

Antibodies are proteins the body makes to attack a virus. If somebody has a certain antibody it could mean that they were infected in the past — whether they knew it or not. Dr. Shoshana Ungerleider, an internal medicine physician at Sutter Health in San Francisco told CBSN that having specific antibodies "means you've been exposed to that virus, or you've had a vaccine for it."

However, according to CBS News medical contributor Dr. David Agus, many antibody tests on the market right now are "advertising claims that make no sense." He said that too little is known about the coronavirus to rely on the results of most of the current antibody tests.

Tests with higher rates of false positive results could mistakenly lead people to believe they have antibodies when they really don't. False negatives could lead people to believe they don't have antibodies when they actually do.

"Aside from this latest FDA-approved antibody test that we're hearing about that is highly accurate, I should also point out that we don't even know if most of the other hundred or so tests that are out there on the market are even close to being that accurate," Underleider said.

The FDA on Monday said it will start requiring companies making coronavirus antibody tests to apply for authorization by the agency within 10 days of releasing their products.

"We unfortunately see unscrupulous actors marketing fraudulent test kits and using the pandemic as an opportunity to take advantage of Americans' anxiety," the FDA said in a statement.

Do antibodies mean you're immune?

Even if a test can accurately detect antibodies, Agus said people who carry them cannot rest assured they are safe from the virus. That's because having the antibody does not necessarily mean you are immune to the virus.

According to Agus, the body creates many antibodies to fight infection, but not all those antibodies will neutralize the virus — some simply "hang on," he said. "Until we have the immunity component, for the individual person (an antibody test) doesn't make sense." ...

"There is no reason to get a test at the present time unless you're part of an epidemiologic study, [or] your company wants to know how many people potentially have been exposed...

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https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2020/may/10/new-datshows-high-traffic-numbers-georgineigh/522641/

May 10

New data shows high traffic numbers in Georgia from neighboring states following reopening

New data shows high traffic numbers in Georgia from neighboring states following reopening.

Certain businesses were allowed to reopen in Georgia starting April 24. The week after, data shows a daily average of 546,159 people traveled there from other states.

That number included 62,440 more daily trips than in the week before the reopenings.

The majority of those drivers — 92% — came from Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina and Florida.
...
Georgia is a state to keep an eye on, especially after a new COVID-19 model from Georgia Tech projected increases thousands of cases and deaths in the state by mid-August.
...

https://www.augustachronicle.com/news/20200510/may-10-georgia-tops-34000-covid-19-cases

6,000 Georgians have been hospitalized with the coronavirus and diagnoses continue to rise.

The Georgia Department of Public Health reported 952 new cases and three additional deaths Sunday, bringing the state's count up to 33,540 cases and 1,405 deaths.

Of the 6,001 patients hospitalized, 1,412 have been admitted into an intensive care unit.

Three new cases were reported in Richmond County to now 447 since the pandemic began, four cases in Columbia County to total 183 and four cases in Burke County to bring its total to 107. McDuffie County added one case to now 51 while Warren County dropped one case for the second day in a row to now 15 positive cases.

No additional deaths were reported for area counties and the toll remains at 31.

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https://thepointsguy.com/news/masks-required-to-fly-us-airlines/

May 11

US based airlines' rules become effective

Without any specific requirements from the federal government, U.S.-based airlines are developing their own policies ...

Alaska
All passengers are required to wear masks. The airline will have masks available for passengers who forget theirs at home.

American
All passengers will be required to wear a face covering onboard all American Airlines flights.The airline will begin issuing sanitizing wipes and masks to travelers as well

Delta
"Face coverings will be required starting in the check-in lobby and across Delta touchpoints including Delta Sky Clubs, boarding gate areas, jet bridges and on board the aircraft for the duration of the flight – except during meal service." Face masks will be available upon request at ticket counters, gates and onboard flights.

Frontier
Frontier customers have been required to wear masks onboard all flights beginning May 8, as an expansion of the carrier's policy for flight crews, which went into effect on April 13. Unlike with American and Delta, Frontier won't be making face masks available to customers — they'll need to bring their own.

Hawaiian
Hawaiian Airlines has been requiring all passengers to wear face coverings since May 8, joining a previous requirement for crew members.

The airline will also be creating more personal space at check-in, boarding and on flights. ...[M]iddle seats [will not be booked] to provide more personal space on board, and [they] will continue to use electrostatic spraying with hospital-grade disinfectants to clean and sanitize cabins.

JetBlue
All JetBlue crew members and passengers are required to cover their nose and mouth, with the exception of small children who are unable to wear a face covering.

Southwest
All Southwest employees will be required to wear face masks when interacting with customers, while customers will be required to wear masks as of May 11. Face masks and sanitizing wipes will be available upon request.

Spirit
Passengers and customer-facing employees will be required to wear masks or face coverings. According to the airline, "guests will be expected to bring their own face coverings and will be required to wear them both at the airport and throughout the flight."

United
All passengers must cover their faces, and the airline will provide masks to travelers free of charge. Additionally, face coverings will be mandatory for all United employees onboard an aircraft, joining a previous requirement for flight attendants, which went into effect on Apr. 24.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/white-house-report-shows-coronavirus-rates-spiking-in-heartland/ar-BB13Wi0a?li=BBnb7Kz

May 11

White House report shows coronavirus rates spiking in heartland

Coronavirus infection rates are spiking to new highs in several metropolitan areas and smaller communities across the country, according to undisclosed data the White House's pandemic task force is using to track rates of infection, which was obtained by NBC News.

The top 10 areas saw surges of 72.4 percent or greater over a seven-day period compared to the prior week, according to a set of tables produced for the task force by its Data and Analytics unit. **They include Nashville, Tennessee; Des Moines, Iowa; Amarillo, Texas; and — atop the list with a 650 percent increase — Central City, Kentucky.**

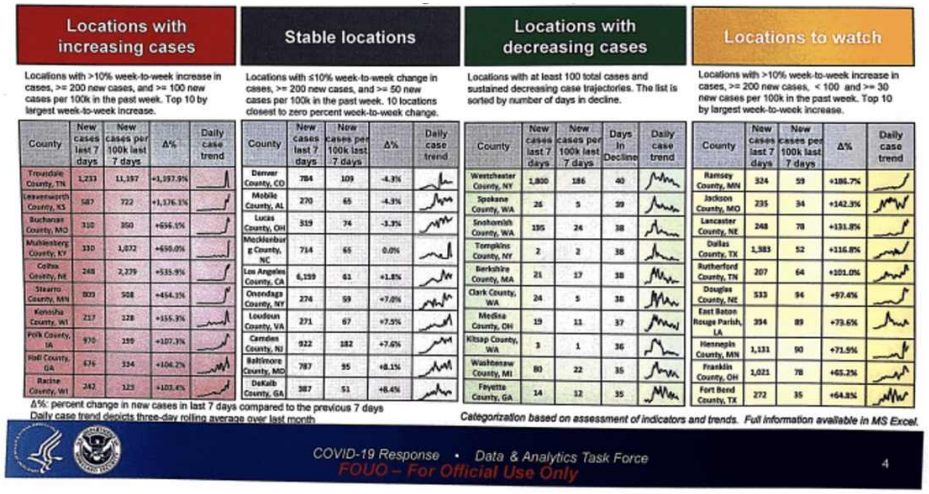
On a separate list of **"locations to watch,"** which didn't meet the precise criteria for the first set: **Charlotte, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus, Ohio; and Phoenix, Arizona.** The rate of new cases in Charlotte and Kansas City represented an increase of more than 200 percent over the prior week, and other tables included in the data show clusters in neighboring counties that don't form a geographic area on their own, like Wisconsin's Kenosha and Racine counties, which neighbor each other between Chicago and Milwaukee.

So far, more than 80,000 people in the U.S. have died because of the coronavirus, and the rate of new cases overall has not yet subsided. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that there were 23,792 new cases on May 10 — lower than the number for each of the previous four days but more than on May 4 and May 5.

The spiking infection rates suggest that the pandemic is spreading quickly outside major coastal population centers that were early hot spots, while governors of some of the states that are home to new hot spots are following Trump's advice to relax stay-at-home restrictions.

Missouri, Kentucky, Alabama, Iowa, Nebraska and Tennessee, for example, have no stay-at-home orders , according to a task force map. [does not match our research exactly - see page 147]

In other states where restrictions are being put in place or repealed at the local level, some counties are experiencing surges. **Dallas and Fort Bend counties in Texas, where decisions are made locally, are on a "locations to watch" list because they have seen an increase in the number of cases of 116.8 percent and 64.8 percent, respectively.**



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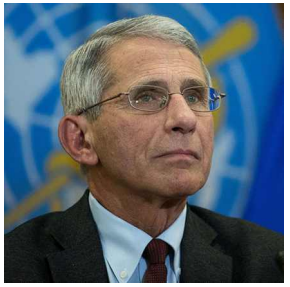
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/12/fauci-testimony-senate-coronavirus/?pwapi_token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJjb29raWVuYW1lIjoid3BfY3J0aWQiLCJpc3MiOiJDYXJ0YSIsImNvb2tpZXZhbHVlIjoiNWVhMDQ0MTNhZTdlOGEwYWIxM2M4MTMzIiwidGFnIjoiNWViYjA0NTRmZTFmZjY1NGMyZGIyMTcwIiwidXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2FzaGluZ3RvbnBvc3QuY29tL3BvbGl0aWNzL2lwMjAvMDUvMTIvZmF1Y2ktdGVzdGltb255LXNlbmF0ZS1jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy8_dXRtX2NhbXBhaWduPXdwX3RvX3lvdXJfaGVhbHRoJnV0bV9tZWRpdW09ZW1haWwmdXRtX3NvdXJjZT1uZXdzbGV0dGVyJndwaXNyYz1ubF90eWgmd3Btaz0xIn0.DbrQp6ubWSl0Xeuz51cTiYUnmm1PiU8MmDkprqVQOzo&utm_campaign=wp_to_your_health&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_tyh&wpmk=1

May 12

Reopening U.S. too quickly could lead to avoidable ‘suffering and death’



Getty Images

... [5 takeaways from Dr. Anthony S. Fauci’s testimony

In his first congressional testimony since President Trump declared the coronavirus a national emergency on March 13, Fauci bluntly laid out the dangers of ignoring federal reopening guidelines.

“If some areas, cities, states or what-have-you, jump over those various checkpoints and prematurely open up without having the capability of being able to respond effectively and efficiently, my concern is that we will start to see little spikes that might turn into outbreaks,” said Fauci, director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. “I have been very clear in my message — to try, to the best extent possible, to go by the guidelines, which have been very well thought-out and very well-delineated.”

Giroir, who oversees the U.S. testing strategy, told senators the U.S. could be performing up to 50 million tests a month by September — but that would still amount to fewer than the 2 million to 3 million tests a day that experts have said is needed to ensure that people returning to work are infection-free.

The health officials also warned that a surge of cases in the fall could be especially challenging, when a coronavirus outbreak could coincide with flu season — in contrast to the president’s statements that the fall would not be worse. Redfield said the U.S. would need a five-to-10-fold increase in its capability to conduct contact tracing by the fall to identify all the known contacts of someone who tested positive for the virus in order to prevent an outbreak. He warned that individuals needed to remain vigilant in practicing social distancing measures for the next several months.

Fauci at one point contradicted statements made last week by Trump, when the president proclaimed the virus would disappear in coming months even without a vaccine.

“This is going to go away without a vaccine,” Trump said Friday, adding there could be “flare-ups,” including in the fall, but that covid-19 would go away regardless.

“That is just not going to happen,” Fauci said of the notion the virus would disappear on its own. “It’s a highly transmissible virus. It is likely there will be virus somewhere on this planet that will likely get back to us.”

The hearing often became combative, with Democrats criticizing Trump’s response to the pandemic and even Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) scolding Giroir at one point for politicizing testing numbers. Romney said Giroir ...

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https://oklahoman.com/article/5662193/coronavirus-in-oklahoma-coalition-launches-first-of-its-kind-initiative?utm_source=SFMC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Oklahoman%20breaking-news%202020-05-1220:11:14&utm_content=GTDT_OKC&utm_term=051220

May 12

Coalition launches first-of-its-kind initiative in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City is being eyed as a potential model for a nationwide roll-out of testing and guidance by some of the country's most respected disease experts on how best to reopen the country and reduce risks of a second wave of COVID-19 infection.

The coalition, consisting of local corporate executives and researchers as well as experts from top institutions including Harvard and Duke, is focused on creating a surplus of tests and samples to delve into how many asymptomatic cases have spread and the search for an antidote to the virus.

Coordinators locally include Dr. Jason Sanders, Provost of the OU Health Sciences Center; Dr. Stephen Prescott, president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation; and business executive and investor Christian Kanady.

Dubbed the "START Coalition" (Smart Testing and Analysis to Return Tomorrow), the growing list of participants is hoping to lessen the virus' threat until a vaccine is created and to also come up with long-term preventative measures while also leading to a cure.

"We will be the first city that would understand the true reach of the epidemic," Kanady said. "We would know who has it, we would know how widespread it is with cluster testing. The goal here is to know more data than in any other city and that is due to the elaborate ecosystem we have."

The COVID-19 virus is continuing to spread throughout the country even as states are reopening restaurants, shops and other public spaces to restart the economy. Confirmed cases in Oklahoma total 4,732 with 119 added on Tuesday while the death count is at 278, an increase of four since yesterday.

The United States virus count is at 1.3 million testing positive and more than 80,000 dead.

The reopenings are happening in several states, including Oklahoma, despite warnings from Dr. Anthony Fauci who told U.S. Senators Tuesday the states that do not follow guidelines and open too quickly are risking a resurgence of suffering.

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https://www.kmov.com/news/inflammatory-syndrome-in-children-potentially-connected-to-covid-st-louis/article_09e28f68-9531-11ea-93d8-87a0e7c5e9ba.html

May 13

Mystery illness seen in children could be connected to COVID-19

ST. LOUIS (KMOV.com) -- The CDC is alerting doctors to be on the lookout for a dangerous inflammatory syndrome in children that could be linked to the coronavirus, and St. Louis Children's Hospital is investigating a few local cases with similar symptoms.

Pediatricians at Boston Children's Hospital are calling this mysterious illness the Pediatric Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome Potentially Associated with COVID-19.

The syndrome was first reported in New York and more states began reporting similar diagnoses this week.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

News 4 talked to Dr. Jason Newland, a pediatric professor at Washington University School of Medicine and an infectious disease physician at St. Louis Children's Hospital. Newland said cases at Children's Hospital have all been teenagers who have recovered.

"These children...had some fever and then they get low blood pressures. Their hearts looked inflamed and have rash," Newland said.
The doctor said the symptoms are **similar to another syndrome called Kawasaki disease,** which affects infants and young children. It causes inflammation in blood vessels.

Newland said the **main symptom** of the syndrome potentially connected to COVID-19 in children is a **prolonged fever of over 101 degrees.**
...

Most children are recovering from this syndrome but there have been exceptions in the New York area. Governor Andrew Cuomo said the state was investigating 100 possible cases and that three children died last week. Those children were a 5-year-old boy, a 7-year-old boy and an 18-year-old girl.

Newland said that is where this syndrome differs from Kawasaki disease which mostly affects younger children.

"We're hearing a lot of these stories about this inflammatory syndrome and they're scary," the doctor said. "I can understand people out there being scared. It's rare and children do well overall with COVID-19."

Newland said information is constantly changing, and that the medical community is waiting to learn more information, especially from New York, as they investigate this syndrome in children.

[This syndrome is now being called "MIS-C"]

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/wisconsin-supreme-court-strikes-down-wisconsins-stay-at-home-order-that-closed-businesses-to-limit-spread-of-coronavirus/ar-BB142QHZ?li=BBnbfcL

May 14

Wisconsin Supreme Court strikes down Wisconsin's stay-at-home order that closed businesses to limit spread of coronavirus

MADISON - The Wisconsin Supreme Court has struck down Gov. Tony Evers' order shutting down daily life to limit the spread of coronavirus — **marking the first time a statewide order of its kind has been knocked down by a court of last resort.**

The state's highest court sided with Republican lawmakers Wednesday in a decision that curbed the power of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' administration to act unilaterally during public health emergencies.

The 4-3 decision was written by four of the court's conservatives — Chief Justice Patience Roggensack and Justices Rebecca Bradley, Daniel Kelly and Annette Ziegler.

The court's fifth conservative, Brian Hagedorn, wrote a dissent joined by the court's two liberals, Ann Walsh Bradley and Rebecca Dallet.

The ruling immediately lifts all restrictions on businesses and gatherings imposed by the administration's order but keeps in place the closure of schools until fall. It comes after Evers had already begun lifting some restrictions because the spread of the virus has slowed for now.

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https://www.forbes.com/sites/carlieporterfield/2020/05/14/us-makes-up-nearly-a-third-of-300000-coronavirus-deaths-worldwide/#7b76e0842c43

May 14

Coronavirus deaths hit 300,000 worldwide Almost 1/3 from the U.S.

The worldwide count reached 300,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths Thursday afternoon, with the U.S. death toll making up almost a third of the global tally with nearly 85,000 deaths as some states continue lift stay-at-home orders.

According to a Johns Hopkins University tally, the U.S. had counted for nearly 85,000 of those deaths, and more than 1.4 million cases, the leading nation by far in terms of confirmed coronavirus deaths and positive tests.

New York City is the most affected area in the country and is the global center of the pandemic, with almost more than 15,000 confirmed deaths and a further 5,057 probable deaths that were likely caused by the virus in the five boroughs alone.

U.S. states have still continued with reopening—Wednesday night, Wisconsin bars welcomed back patrons without masks, social distancing or capacity restrictions nearly immediately after the statewide stay-at-home order was struck down by the state's highest court, as South Florida officials announced on Thursday plans to roll back coronavirus restrictions starting next week.

Following the U.S. in the highest death total is the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and then France, but Brazil is quickly catching up as Latin America looks to be the next hot spot for viral outbreaks.

Worldwide, more than 4.4 million people have tested positive for coronavirus as of Thursday, according to Johns Hopkins University. However, experts believe the true number of infections, along with the death toll, is likely much higher. On Wednesday, officials with the World Health Organization said that even if a coronavirus vaccine is developed—which could be a year away, at best—the virus may still not be eliminated completely and could continue to circulate within communities. Many experts are expecting a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic to hit, possibly in autumn.

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https://oklahoman.com/article/5662374/ok-to-return-to-bars-playgrounds-mayor-says?utm_source=SFMC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Oklahoman%20breaking-news%202020-05-1400:00:46&utm_content=GTDT_OKC&utm_term=051420

May 15

Mayor David Holt has released Oklahoma City's latest COVID-19 emergency order, allowing bars to reopen and lifting the 10-person limit on social gatherings

The "Phase 2" reopening order applies the rules on indoor restaurant dining to bars, requiring sanitizing, 6-foot spacing of tables, and masks and/or plexiglass barriers for servers. A 50% capacity limit is set on outdoor patios.

Public venues including the downtown Chesapeake Energy Arena, Civic Center Music Hall and Bricktown Ballpark are cleared to open at managers' discretion. City playgrounds are reopened, but the two MAPS 3 senior health and wellness centers will remain closed.

Holt said the latest public health data supports "Phase 2" reopening, citing a "downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses and COVID-like syndromic cases ... and a downward trajectory of positive COVID tests as a percent of total tests" in the past 14 days.

Those standards are among the "gating criteria" issued by the White House for the phased unwinding of pandemic emergency orders.

Holt began easing city restrictions intended to slow the spread of coronavirus two weeks ago. The first emergency orders had been issued in mid-March, within days of confirmation the coronavirus was spreading locally.

The latest orders extend precautionary measures for businesses, churches and public facilities, but place decisions on whether to be open in private hands.

"Everything is open. That's the spirit of Phase 2," Holt said in an interview Thursday afternoon. "It's their choice now."

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https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/us/states-reopen-coronavirus-trnd/

May 15

Stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders around country have been lifted in almost every state and some restrictions on businesses and public places have been eased

Expanded testing, tracking contacts of people who had the virus, improved treatment options and vaccine development are important factors for states staying or exapnding their reopenings, health experts say.

Click on the live link at the top of this page to go to CNN's interactive chart that allows you to jump to information on each state.

Note: Oklahoma has now moved into Phase 2 so bars, playgrounds and public venues are now allowed to open.

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/05/15/113-year-old-spanish-woman-overcomes-coronavirus-infection/24315281/

May 15

113-year-old Spanish woman is believed to be the world's oldest living COVID-19 survivor

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — A 113-year-old Spanish woman says she is in good health after having overcome infection by the new coronavirus.

Maria Branyas said she "feels good." She avoided developing severe COVID-19 symptoms and had her latest test come back negative. Her daughter told Spanish news agency EFE that her mother, who **was born in the United States, tested positive for the virus in April.**

"As far as my health, I feel good, with the little issues everyone has as we get older, but I feel fine," Branyas told EFE this week from her nursing home where several residents have fallen ill and died from the new virus.

Local media say at least 17 residents of her nursing home are suspected to have died after developing symptoms associated with COVID-19. On March 27, Branyas' social media account run by her children said that "unfortunately the virus has entered our residence."

Branyas was born in San Francisco on March 4, 1907 after her family emigrated to Mexico and then the U.S., as her children recount in a Twitter account run in her name called "Super Catalan Grandmother."

After living for some years in New Orleans where her father founded a magazine, she returned to Spain's northeastern Catalonia region where she lives in the town of Olot.

Branyas still has memories of crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a boat during World War I, as she related to Catalan news agency ACN on her birthday in March.

"Because of the war, Germany was still attacking in the north, and there was no way of going through the Nordic seas, so you had to go further south, via Cuba and the Azores," she said.

Despite her poor hearing and sight, Branyas said she was aware of the pandemic that has claimed over 27,000 lives in Spain.

"It is a tragedy," she said, "since only a few people seem to know where it came from, how it got here and why."

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https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/business/biotech/story/2020-05-15/sorrento-therapeutics-says-antibody-shows-early-promise-in-fighting-covid-19

May 15

Biotech company has found an antibody that blocks the novel coronavirus in the lab

Sorrento Therapeutics of San Diego said Friday that an antibody it has been developing proved highly effective in blocking the novel coronavirus in laboratory experiments — a possible first step in the creation of a drug cocktail to battle COVID-19.

The antibody, known as STI-1499, performed well even though it was used at a concentration 10- to 100-fold lower than antibodies used to treat other diseases, the company said.

STI-1499 is one of more than a billion antibodies that Sorrento Therapeutics has been examining in an effort to find an effective treatment against a virus that has killed more than 85,000 people in the U.S.

Even the most optimistic timelines estimate that it will take a year or two to have a COVID-19 vaccine. In the meantime, Sorrento Therapeutics believes antibodies could be an important stopgap. These Y-shaped immune proteins latch onto the surface of a virus and, if they grip tightly enough at just the right spot, block infection.

“What we’re trying to achieve is to provide assurance to the public that you have something that’s going to protect you, and protect you immediately,” said Henry Ji, chairman and CEO of Sorrento.

The recent finding, based on measuring infection of cells in the lab, will need to be confirmed in animal studies. The company plans to test whether STI-1499 prevents infection in monkeys and possibly ferrets — two species that are susceptible to the virus. **If all goes well, Sorrento Therapeutics could begin testing the antibody in clinical trials of severe COVID-19 patients by mid-July**, Ji says.

Sorrento thinks STI-1499 could work both as a stand-alone treatment or as part of an antibody cocktail that targets three different parts of the virus. The hope is that it would be harder for the coronavirus to develop resistance to three antibodies than to one; drugs used against cancer and HIV are often delivered as combinations for this reason.

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https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/05/15/sailors-on-sidelined-carrier-get-virus-for-second-time/

May 15

5 US sailors test positive for coronavirus a second time

... The resurgence of the virus in the five sailors on the USS Theodore Roosevelt underscores the befuddling behavior of the highly contagious virus and raises questions about how troops that test positive can be reintegrated into the military, particularly on ships.

All five sailors had previously tested positive and had gone through at least two weeks of isolation. As part of the process, they all had to test negative twice in a row, with the tests separated by at least a day or two before they were allowed to go back to the ship.

The Roosevelt has been at port in Guam since late March after the outbreak of the virus was discovered. More than 4,000 of the 4,800 crew members have gone ashore since then for quarantine or isolation. Earlier this month hundreds of sailors began returning to the ship, in coordinated waves, to get ready to set sail again.

In a statement Friday, the Navy said that, while onboard, the five sailors self-monitored and adhered to strict social distancing protocols.

“These five Sailors developed influenza-like illness symptoms and did the right thing reporting to medical for evaluation,” the Navy said, adding that they were immediately removed from the ship and put back in isolation. A small number of other sailors who were in contact with them were also taken off the ship.

Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said the outbreak has been a learning process.
“This is a very stubborn, infectious disease,” he told Pentagon reporters during a briefing on Friday. He said that because of the Navy’s quick action, medical crew were notified right away and determined who might have also been exposed and got them all off the ship.

As of Thursday, more than 2,900 sailors have reboarded the ship, and about 25% of the more than 1,000 who had tested positive have now recovered, according to the Navy.

One U.S. official familiar with the situation on the ship said commanders don’t know why this is happening but suggested **it could be related to questions about testing accuracy.** The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said that screening has been intensified on the ship. And, anyone who exhibits any flu-like symptoms at all is being tested and removed.

The sailors have been tested using the nasal swab. And in some cases the infection can be at such a low level that it is not detected by the test. It’s not clear whether cases like these are actual relapses, or if people tested negative without really being completely clear of the virus.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/us/coronavirus-united-states.html

May 16

Coronavirus cases slow in US, but the big picture remains tenuous

... **With more than two-thirds of states significantly relaxing restrictions on how Americans can move about over the last few weeks, an uptick in cases is widely predicted.**

Months after the virus began spreading, only about 3 percent of the population has been tested for it, leaving its true scale and path unknown even as it continues to sicken and kill people at alarming rates. More than 20,000 new cases are identified on most days. And almost every day this past week, more than 1,000 Americans died from the virus.

“We’re seeing a decline; undoubtedly, that is something good to see,” Jeffrey Shaman, an epidemiologist at Columbia University, said. “But what we are also seeing is a lot of places right on the edge of controlling the disease.”

The slowing of new cases is a stark change from two weeks ago, when coronavirus cases were stuck on a stubborn plateau nationally and case numbers were rising in many states. As of Friday, new cases were decreasing in 19 states and increasing in three, while staying mostly the same in the rest, according to a database maintained by The New York Times.

Encouraging signs have emerged in some of the hardest-hit places.

In New Orleans, where hundreds of new cases were being identified each day in early April, fewer than 50 have been announced daily in the last three weeks. In the Detroit area, which saw exponential case growth beginning in late March, numbers have fallen sharply. And in Cass County, Ind., where a meatpacking outbreak sickened at least 900 people, only a handful of cases have been reported most days this past week.

Even as many large cities saw their cases drop, increasing infections continue to be reported in parts of rural America. Some communities that have been fighting to get outbreaks under control finally appear to have succeeded, but have little idea how long it will last.

In Sioux Falls, S.D., where the virus sickened more than 1,000 people at a Smithfield pork processing plant, the outbreak appears to be slowing, Mayor Paul TenHaken said. More than 4,000 Smithfield employees, their family members and close contacts, were recently tested.

Yet the mayor fears that his city’s progress could be temporary. On Monday, the plant will begin slaughtering hogs again. Hundreds of employees will be back together at work.

“I’ll be honest, it makes me nervous,” Mr. TenHaken said. “We’ve seen how a zero-case facility can become a 1,000-case facility.”

Epidemiologists pointed to one overarching reason for the decline in new cases: the success of widespread social distancing.

Americans began to change their behavior in March, and it has undoubtedly helped control the spread of the coronavirus. Between mid-March, when public officials began to close schools and some workplaces, and late April, when the restrictions were lifted or eased in many states, **43.8 percent of the nation’s residents stayed home**, according to cellphone data analyzed by The Times.

The major clusters of cases that have arisen have been almost exclusively in three settings without effective social distancing: nursing homes, correctional facilities and food-processing plants.

... according to one estimate by a research team led by economists at Yale University. Without government orders to stay at home, 10 million more people in the United States would have been infected with the virus by the end of April, suggested a paper published this past week in the journal Health Affairs...

https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/new-evidence-in-race-to-find-frances-covid-19-patient-zero/ar-BB1491hC?li=BBnb7Kz

May 16

New evidence in race to find France's COVID-19 'patient zero'

PARIS — French doctors may have made a breakthrough in the race to establish where and when the coronavirus pandemic first hit Europe, by establishing that the virus may have been in France much earlier than anyone thought.

A team of researchers in the city of Colmar in northeastern France announced in a release last week that it had **identified two X-rays, from Nov. 16 and Nov. 18, showing symptoms consistent with the novel coronavirus.** NBC News has exclusively obtained these scans.

...

The news comes a week after a separate team of scientists in Paris established that a patient had the coronavirus Dec. 27, so far the earliest known case in Europe.

...

"We can only manage the future if we understand the past," said Dr. Michel Schmitt of Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Colmar, who led the new research. "Today, we clearly do not understand this outbreak."

Under Schmitt's leadership, his radiology department has spent the last few weeks poring over thousands of chest X-rays from late 2019.

...

"This fits a pattern we're seeing with coronavirus — especially early coronavirus infection where you're seeing some abnormalities in some parts of the lungs but not abnormalities everywhere," he said. In many cases patients in that condition "have been just fine.

"Schmitt, who cautions against making conclusions from his early results, led his team in examining almost 2,500 chest X-rays taken from Nov. 1, 2019, to April, looking for patterns. As well as the two suspected cases in mid-November, they identified 12 in December and 16 in January. After that, the numbers tick up dramatically.

If the virus arrived in the fall of 2019, rather than appear in February and explode across the country throughout March as has been assumed, the public health implications are vast.

"This could completely change the government's management strategy," Schmitt added.

...

In Colmar, Schmitt said he is just beginning and his team will now look back to scans from October. The more information they have now, the more prepared they'll be for a possible second wave.

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https://www.click2houston.com/news/texas/2020/05/17/texas-reports-highest-one-day-total-of-new-coronavirus-cases/

May 17

Texas reports highest one-day total of new coronavirus cases

Texas reported 1,801 more cases of the new coronavirus Saturday, the highest one-day total since the pandemic began.

More than 700 new cases were reported in the Amarillo area, where meatpacking plants have been identified as a cluster of infections.

Potter County reported 618 new cases on Saturday bringing its total to 2,080, while neighboring Randall County reported 116 new cases for a total of 593.

Moore County*, which has the highest rate of cases per 1,000 residents in Texas, added 4 new cases on Saturday. In total, the three counties accounted for 738 of the new cases reported on Saturday.

The state also reported 32,479 new tests Saturday — the third-highest increase since Texas began reporting coronavirus test counts.

The highest daily total was 49,259 new tests May 13. As of May 16, at least 678,471 tests have been conducted.

Harris County has reported the most cases, 9,050, followed by Dallas County, which has reported 7,036 cases. See maps of the latest case numbers for each county and case rates per 1,000 residents. Over 85% of the state's 254 counties have reported at least one case.
The state reported 33 additional deaths on Saturday, bringing the statewide total to 1,305 — an increase of about 3% from Friday. Harris County reported six additional deaths, bringing its total to 199 deaths, more than any other county.

As of Saturday, 1,791 patients are known to be hospitalized in Texas. That's an increase of 75 patients from Friday. — Carla Astudillo and Juan Pablo Garnham

* Dumas Texas is located in Moore County.

Dumas' largest employer is JBS & Tannery, a beef slaughtering and hide processing plant that has over 3,200 full time employees

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-is-battling-coronavirus-across-11-time-zones-but-moscow-and-the-regions-are-worlds-apart/ar-BB14bUBA?li=BBnb7Kz

May 17

Russia now second in world for confirmed coronavirus cases

... According to Johns Hopkins University, the country now ranks second in the world for confirmed coronavirus cases.

The Russian capital has been the hardest hit. Of Russia's total of 272,043 confirmed cases, around half -- 138,969 -- are in Moscow, according to the country's coronavirus headquarters. But the virus is now spreading across Russia's regions, an enormous landmass that covers 11 time zones and includes some of the country's most remote and impoverished places.
...
According to official statistics, the pandemic has reached all of Russia's constituent parts, from the Kaliningrad exclave between Poland and Lithuania to the remote Chukotka autonomous okrug, across the Bering Strait from Alaska. Russia's regions are also starting to report their own numbers, sometimes showing a disparity between the nationally published statistics on mortality and infections published on the stopcoronavirus.rf portal and on local government websites.
...

Russian Vice-Premier Tatiana Golikova told Russian news outlets this week that the Russian government has not manipulated statistics, but Russia's mortality figures have become a political football. **Observers have noted the comparatively low overall number of deaths in Russia -- a total that currently stands at 2,418, according to the country's coronavirus headquarters -- even as the country takes second place in the world for the number of confirmed cases, behind the United States.**

In Moscow, health officials hit back at media reports that it was underreporting COVID-19 fatalities, saying its data was "absolutely open." But the city's health department also **acknowledged that it only counts deaths that were found through post-mortem autopsy to have been caused directly by coronavirus complications.**

And the capital is proceeding with caution. Earlier this week, Putin announced a gradual easing of restrictions around the country, at the discretion of local leadership. But Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin subsequently made clear he was in no rush to end lockdown.

"Premature removal of restrictions carries a real risk of a second pandemic," he said in a statement Thursday. "Unjustified delays will also hit people in the strongest way."

Sobyanin, in many respects, has been the public face of Russia's fight with coronavirus, as Putin shelters at his residence of Novo-Ogaryovo.

As cases began to pick up pace in April Moscow authorities opened a new coronavirus hospital, built in around a month. And Sobyanin's government oversaw the introduction of electronic passes to enforce lockdown measures, controversial measures ahead of the rest of the country. The city is also launching a large coronavirus screening program that will be free to the public.

Moscow, in many ways, is better equipped to deal with the crisis than Russia's less well-off regions. It has a concentration of wealth and budgetary resources that is the envy of the rest of the country.
...

One doesn't have to travel far outside of Moscow to see the disparities in living standards and the decrepitude of the healthcare system.

A viral YouTube video recently posted by the popular Russian journalist Irina Shikhman showed a visit to the town of Ivanteyevka, a town just over 10 miles outside the city limits of Moscow of a local clinic as it receives a delivery of personal protective equipment. As Shikhman begins the formal interview, a masked doctor says she had "no complaints" about the supplies and had enough personnel to handle patients.

But the images in the video, which has had more than 3,327,000 views, shows the peeling paint and poorly lit interior of the facility, and underscores the shocking condition of Russia's provincial healthcare ...

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/17/business/japan-recession-coronavirus.html

May 18

Japan falls into a recession

Japan fell into a recession for the first time since 2015, as its already weakened economy was dragged down by the coronavirus's impact on businesses at home and abroad.

The world's third-largest economy after the United States and China shrank by an annualized rate of 3.4 percent in the first three months of the year, the country's government said on Monday.

That makes it the largest economy to officially enter a recession, often defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth, in the coronavirus era. **Other major economies around the world are set to follow, joining Japan as well as Germany and France in recession**, as efforts to contain the outbreak ripple around the globe. The experiences of **China, where the outbreak first emerged in December and January, suggest recovery will be long and difficult.**

...

Businesses had already been staggering before the coronavirus hit.

Consumer spending dropped after the Japanese government in October increased a tax on consumption to 10 percent from 8 percent, a move that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration said would help pay down the national debt — the highest among developed nations — and fund the growing demand for social services as the country's workers age.

Days later, a typhoon slammed into the country's main island, inflicting enormous damage and further driving down economic activity.

Even before that, Japanese export numbers had fallen steadily all last year on slowing global demand and the fallout from the U.S.-China trade war.

The situation has only worsened this year. The outbreak crushed Japan's exports, forced it to postpone the Olympics and then put the country on a soft lockdown as it joined other nations scrambling to stop the coronavirus.

"The emergency declaration stopped people from going out, leading to a substantial decline in consumption," said Kentaro Arita, a senior economist at the Mizuho Research Institute, a think tank in Tokyo. Now, he said, "it is going to be impossible to avoid an impact on the scale of the global financial crisis or even worse."

...

On the health front, the efforts seem to have paid off. Cases rose briefly before receding. The country's health system never became overwhelmed. The total number of deaths attributed to the outbreak was under 750 as of Sunday, far lower than in other major developed nations...

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/scientists-in-china-believe-new-drug-can-stop-pandemic-without-vaccine/ar-BB14hvD5?li=BBnb7Kz

May 19

Scientists in China believe new drug can stop pandemic 'without vaccine'

... A drug being tested by scientists at China's prestigious Peking University could not only **shorten the recovery time for those infected, but even offer short-term immunity from the virus,** researchers say.

Sunney Xie, director of the university's Beijing Advanced Innovation Center for Genomics, told AFP that the drug has been successful at the animal testing stage.

"When we injected neutralising antibodies into infected mice, after five days the viral load was reduced by a factor of 2,500," said Xie.

"That means this potential drug has (a) therapeutic effect."

The drug **uses neutralising antibodies -- produced by the human immune system to prevent the virus infecting cells** -- which Xie's team isolated from the blood of 60 recovered patients.

A study on the team's research, published Sunday in the scientific journal Cell, suggests that using the antibodies provides a potential "cure" for the disease and shortens recovery time.

Xie said his team had been working "day and night" searching for the antibody.

"Our expertise is single-cell genomics rather than immunology or virology. When we realised that the single-cell genomic approach can effectively find the neutralising antibody we were thrilled."

He added that the **drug should be ready for use later this year** and in time for any potential winter outbreak of the virus, which has infected 4.8 million people around the world and killed more than 315,000.

"Planning for the **clinical trial is underway**," said Xie, adding it will be **carried out in Australia and other countries since cases have dwindled in China**, offering fewer human guinea pigs for testing.

...

More than 100 vaccines for COVID-19 are in the works globally, but as the process of vaccine development is more demanding, Xie is hoping that the new drug could be a faster and more efficient way to stop the global march of the coronavirus.

"We would be able to stop the pandemic with an effective drug, even without a vaccine," he said.

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https://www.healthline.com/health-news/trump-is-taking-hydroxychloroquine-why-experts-think-this-is-a-bad-idea

May 19

Trump is taking Hydroxychloroquine: Why Experts say you shouldn't

...So far, though, no clinical trials have shown that this drug, or the related chloroquine, work against COVID-19.
...
However, the FDA issued an emergency use authorizationTrusted in March for these drugs. This allows physicians to administer them to people with severe COVID-19

Dr. Charles C. Bailey, medical director for infection prevention at St. Joseph Hospital and Mission Hospital in Orange County, California, says right now there's not enough clinical evidence to formally recommend hydroxychloroquine as a COVID-19 treatment.

However, he says some physicians believe that the drug may "prevent the development of symptomatic COVID-19 following exposure, as well as [offer benefit to] patients once they do become symptomatic."

The White House memo from Conley alluded to Trump's personal valet testing positive 2 weeks ago for the new coronavirus. This may be why Trump started taking hydroxychloroquine.

But Bailey says this kind of prophylactic use of a medication is best done for a brief period, while the exposure risk is still present. Ongoing use can lead to problems.

"Its use over an extended, open-ended time period is not ideal, and should not be used as a substitute for other measures to prevent infection," Bailey said.

These measures include physical distancing, handwashing, and, if it's ever available, a vaccine.

Trump, though, has been an early supporter of hydroxychloroquine, tweeting about it in March.

But some of his medical advisers, including the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci, cautioned early on against recommending the drug without clinical studies to back it up.

A lot of the "evidence" for hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine has been anecdotal, or from laboratory testing or small clinical studies.

However, more recent studies suggest that the drugs may not be beneficial for COVID-19.

Two observational studies showed that the drugs didn't reduce the need for a ventilator or the risk of dying. One studyTrusted Source was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association and the other study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Several clinical trialsTrusted Source of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are underway, which should provide us with a better idea of whether the drugs work.

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https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid19-reinfection-immune-response

May 19

New data suggest people aren't getting reinfected with the coronavirus

People who test positive again for the coronavirus, despite having already recovered COVID-19, aren't being reinfected, a new study finds.

Reports of patients discharged from hospitals in South Korea testing positive after their apparent recovery had raised concerns that people could get infected by the virus in the short term more than once or that the infection could come back. But diagnostic tests for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 rely on detecting the virus's genetic material (SN: 4/17/20). A positive result does not indicate whether a person is shedding viruses capable of infecting cells — which would signal an active infection.

Now, a May 19 report from the Korean Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that samples from "reinfected" patients don't have infectious viruses. The finding hints that the diagnostic tests are picking up on the genetic material from noninfectious or dead viruses. That lack of infectious virus particles means these people aren't currently infected and can't transmit the coronavirus to others, the researchers say.

"It's good news," says Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at Columbia University. "It appears people are not being reinfected, and this virus is not reactivating."

In the study, researchers tried to isolate infectious coronaviruses from samples taken from 108 people who retested positive. All of those samples tested negative. When the scientists examined 23 of those patients for antibodies against the coronavirus, almost all had neutralizing antibodies that can stop the virus from getting into cells (SN: 4/28/20). That immune response may protect a person from getting reinfected, at least in the short term.

The team also tracked down 790 contacts of 285 people who retested positive. Of those contacts, 27 tested positive for the coronavirus. Twenty-four of those were cases that officials had previously confirmed. Officials also identified three new cases, all of whom either had contact with the Shincheonji religious group — which was hit particularly hard in the early days of the pandemic — or a confirmed case in their family. No new cases appeared to stem from repeat positive patients, a sign those patients aren't contagious.

Now, **"we can largely stop worrying about reinfection and address the next big questions," Rasmussen says. "How protective are immune responses in recovered patients, and how long does immunity last?"**

Return to Timeline

May 20

Are the coronavirus numbers being reported accurate?

CDC

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/cdc-releases-detailed-guidance-on-reopening-that-had-previously-been-shelved-by-white-house/ar-BB14klW9?li=BBnb7Kz

... Specifically, [Dr.] Birx believes the way the CDC gathers data on the coronavirus is antiquated, causing inaccurate and delayed numbers on both virus cases and deaths.

Georgia

http://www.joeydevilla.com/2020/05/17/georgia-department-of-healths-master-class-on-misinforming-with-statistics/

... Gov. Brian Kemp's office issued an apology after a Georgia Public Health Department chart wrongly reported a downward trend in #coronavirus cases. The error was at least the third in as many weeks

Florida

https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2020/05/08/whats-in-the-censored-florida-medical-examiners-database-of-covid-19-deaths/

... since at least April 20, the Florida Department of Health has blocked the Medical Examiners Commission from releasing their own detailed spreadsheet of the COVID-19 dead. On Wednesday, the state released the medical examiners' spreadsheet but redacted the narratives and cause of death entries.

Overview

https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/86127

COVID-19 deaths continue to rise across the country, but states are still debating exactly how to count virus-related fatalities ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.statnews.com/feature/coronavirus/drugs-vaccines-tracker/

May 21

14 vaccines and 20 new drugs in development. In addition, 31 drugs approved for treatment of other illnesses are being tested to treat COVID-19

Vaccines and New Drugs

In the months since the novel coronavirus rose from a regional crisis to a global threat, drug makers large and small have scrambled to advance their best ideas for thwarting a pandemic.

Some are taking a cue from older antivirals. Some are tapping tried-and-true technologies, and others are pressing forward with futuristic approaches to human medicine.

For a list of the 14 vaccines and 20 new drugs select the live link at the top of this page.

Repurposed Drugs

Drugmakers have scoured their existing drug portfolios for possibilities. And they've found more than a few.

For a list of the 31 repurposed drugs select the link below.

https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/drugmakers-look-to-repurposed-meds-as-possible-therapies-for-covid-19-list

Return to Timeline

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality

May 22

Mortality Analyses by Johns Hopkins University & Medicine

How does mortality differ across countries?

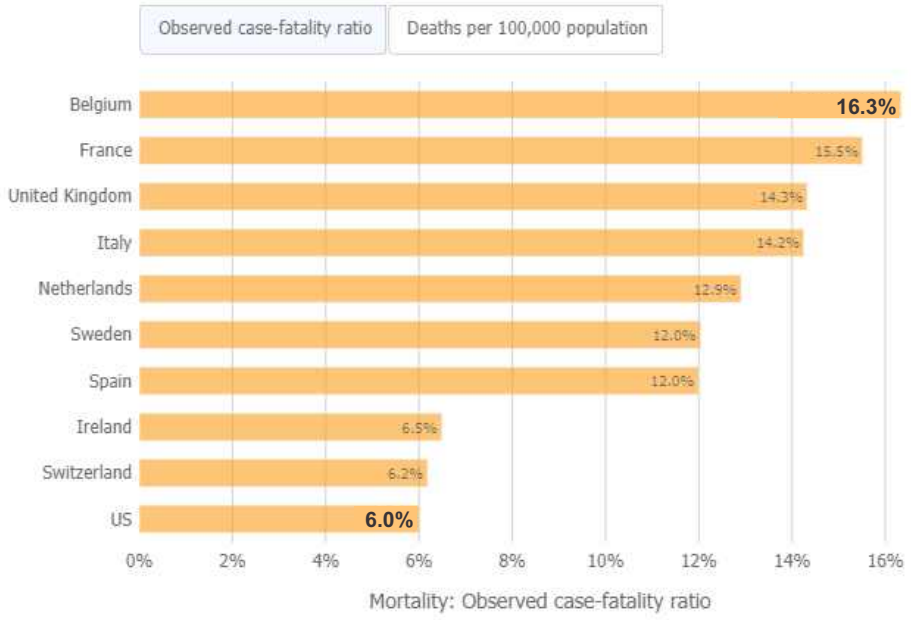
One of the most important ways to measure the burden of COVID-19 is mortality. Countries throughout the world have reported very different case fatality ratios – the number of deaths divided by the number of confirmed cases. **Differences in mortality numbers can be caused by:**

- **Differences in the number of people tested: With more testing, more people with milder cases are identified. This lowers the case-fatality ratio.**
- **Demographics: For example, mortality tends to be higher in older populations.**
- **Characteristics of the healthcare system: For example, mortality may rise as hospitals become overwhelmed and have fewer resources.**
- Other factors, many of which remain unknown.

for more information, select the live link at top of page

Mortality in the most affected countries

For the 10 countries most affected...the bars in the chart below show the number of deaths per 100 confirmed cases (observed case-fatality ratio). These countries have the most deaths proportionally to their COVID-19 cases, not necessarily the most deaths overall.



Last updated on Friday, May 22, 2020 at 05:06 AM EDT

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/05/22/even-where-virus-accelerates-lockdowns-are-cracking-open/24388925/

May 22

Even where virus accelerates, lockdowns are cracking open

NEW DELHI (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic accelerated across Latin America, Russia and the Indian subcontinent on Friday even as curves flattened and reopening was underway in much of Europe, Asia and the United States.

Many governments — even those where the virus is still on the rise — say they have to shift their focus to saving jobs that are vanishing as quickly as the disease can spread. In the United States and China, the world's two largest economies, unemployment is soaring.

The Federal Reserve chairman has estimated that up to one American in four could be jobless, while in China analysts estimate around a third of the urban workforce is unemployed.

But the virus is roaring through countries ill-equipped to handle the pandemic, which many **scientists fear will seed the embers of a second global wave.**

India saw its biggest single-day spike since the pandemic began, and Pakistan and Russia recorded their highest death tolls. Most new Indian cases are in Bihar, where thousands returned home from jobs in the cities. For over a month, some walked among crowds for hundreds of miles.

Latin America's two most populous nations — Mexico and Brazil — have reported record counts of new cases and deaths almost daily this week, fueling criticism of their presidents, who have slow-walked shutdowns in attempts to limit economic damage.

Cases were rising and intensive-care units were also swamped in Peru, Chile and Ecuador — countries lauded for imposing early and aggressive business shutdowns and quarantines.

Brazil reported more than 20,000 deaths and 300,000 confirmed cases Thursday night — **the third worst-hit country in the world in terms of infection by official counts.** Experts consider both numbers undercounts due to widespread lack of testing.

[Mexico] is now reporting more than 400 deaths a day, and new infections still haven't peaked.

Russian health officials registered 150 deaths in 24 hours, for a total of 3,249. Many outside Russia have suggested the country is manipulating its statistics to show a comparatively low death rate. The total confirmed number of cases exceeded 326,000 on Friday.

The governor of the German region of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, suggested that his country could bring in Russian patients, as it has those from European Union countries as a gesture of "solidarity."

China announced it would give local governments 2 trillion yuan ($280 billion) to help undo the damage from shutdowns imposed to curb the spread of the virus that first appeared in the city of Wuhan in late 2019 and has now infected at least 5.1 million people worldwide, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/hertz-files-for-bankruptcy-after-rental-car-demand-vanishes/ar-BB14tWhS?li=BBnb7Kz

May 22

Hertz files for bankruptcy after rental-car demand vanishes

(Bloomberg) -- Hertz Global Holdings Inc., the car-rental company founded with a dozen Ford Model Ts over a century ago, filed for bankruptcy late Friday after sweeping travel restrictions and the global economic collapse destroyed demand for its vehicles.

The Chapter 11 filing in Delaware allows Hertz to keep operating while it devises a plan to pay creditors and turn around the business. **The second-largest U.S car-rental-car company does not need debtor-in-possession financing for now, according to a person familiar with the matter, because it has more than $1 billion cash on hand.**

Hertz's court petition listed about $25.8 billion in assets and $24.4 billion of debts, and its biggest creditors include IBM Corp. and Lyft Inc. After the coronavirus pandemic decimated revenue, the car renter sought relief from lenders and a bailout from the U.S. Treasury Department. But while it managed to negotiate a short-term reprieve from creditors, it wasn't able to work out longer-term agreements.

Analysts have warned of ramifications for the broader auto industry from a Hertz bankruptcy. The company has a fleet of about 400,000 cars in the U.S. that are not subject to repurchase agreements with vehicle manufacturers and could be liquidated, Michael Ward, an analyst at Benchmark Co., wrote in a report last week.

"The risk for the auto sector occurs if the creditors of the debt that is secured by the vehicles decides to liquidate the fleet to repay the bonds," Ward wrote on May 14. The impact those sales may have on used-car prices could be minimized by the sale of those vehicles taking place over the course of several months, he said.

Hertz said it has enough cash for now to support **its operations, which include Hertz, Dollar, Thrifty, Firefly, Hertz Car Sales, and Donlen.** But it might need to raise more, perhaps through added borrowings while the bankruptcy process moves forward.

The Chapter 11 proceedings involve the company's U.S. and Canadian subsidiaries and don't include its international operations in Europe, Australia or New Zealand.

"Hertz may have little choice but to scale down its operations and sell assets to pay down its significant secured debt," Joseph Acosta, a partner in the bankruptcy practice at the law firm Dorsey & Whitney, said in an email. "Hopefully, the restructuring expenses will not bury the company in the process."

The company began laying off workers to preserve cash in March as emergency measures to contain the virus halted business and leisure travel. Hertz disclosed on April 29 that it had missed substantial lease payments related to its rental cars.

While all travel-related companies have been hurt by the pandemic, a big part of what's weighed on Hertz is its strategy of owning or leasing a large portion of its fleet outright instead of acquiring them through buyback agreements with manufacturers. Hertz typically responds to falling demand by selling cars from its fleet, so it has been hit especially hard by the drop in prices at used-car auctions.

White & Case LLP is the company's legal adviser, Moelis & Co. is the investment banker, and FTI Consulting Inc. is providing financial advice. Billionaire investor Carl Icahn holds a 39% equity stake.

Hertz, originally known as Rent-a-Car Inc., was founded in Chicago in 1918. It was operating 12,400 locations worldwide as of February.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/22/us/coronavirus-memorial-day-weekend.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

May 23

Memorial Day Weekend begins

... Many traditional Memorial Day events have been canceled or replaced with socially distant formats. Elected officials and event organizers are struggling to bring back as much normalcy as possible without jeopardizing public health. The results have been hopeful, maddening and bewildering. But many Americans are pressing on, and trying to preserve what is important while letting go of what is not.

A Memorial Day parade from **Vidalia, La.**, to the Natchez National Cemetery in Mississippi has roots going back to 1867. But instead of marching this time, people will **motorcade in masks and gloves to let veterans know "that they have not been forgotten,"** said Laura Ann Jackson, co-chair of the parade.
...
Although the **Memorial Day ceremony in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.**, is still on, organizers are begging the public not to come. Instead of filling 500 chairs, the solemn event honoring fallen veterans will be **livestreamed into residents' homes.**
...
In **Massachusetts**, beaches will be allowed to reopen for swimming on Memorial Day, but **volleyball is banned and sunbathers must place their towels 12 feet apart.** In **New York City**, Mayor Bill de Blasio opted to keep the city's **beaches closed** over the weekend and even threatened to cordon them off with fencing, prompting elected officials on **Long Island** to try to ward off a flood of would-be beachgoers from the city by **restricting access to local residents.**

In **California**, where tens of thousands have flocked to beaches in recent weeks, Gov. Gavin Newsom had announced that he was shutting beaches down to protect public health, but then backtracked and allowed them to **open for "active use," which does not include lounging on beach towels.**

Mayor Will O'Neill of **Newport Beach, Calif.**, said the city was **unlikely to fine or arrest sunbathers on his city's seven-mile stretch of beach.**
...

But across the country, many of the normal opportunities for fellowship and summer fun have been canceled or transformed beyond recognition.

On **Lake Champlain in upstate New York, the cabins at Camp Dudley will be empty this summer for the first time since 1885.** In neighboring **Vermont**, **campgrounds** will be allowed to open, but only **at 25 percent capacity**.
...

Both the **Yarmouth Clam Festival and the Rockland Lobster Festival have been canceled in Maine** ...

Perhaps nowhere has the decision about how to handle Memorial Day weekend caused more angst and heartbreak than in **Ironton, Ohio**, an Appalachian town of 11,000 people that holds the holiday parade at the core of its identity.

The town has hosted a parade every year since 1868, and lays claim to being the site of the nation's oldest continuous Memorial Day observance. Tens of thousands of people flock there every year, forming crowds that can get 10 people deep.

But this year, Gov. Mike DeWine asked local officials to adhere to social-distancing guidelines that make hosting a normal parade impossible. Members of the parade committee in Ironton agonized. They did not want to be the first in 152 years to cancel.

The parade will go on, they decided, but the number of vehicles on the route will be cut back drastically. Instead of marching, participants will stay inside their vehicles. The crowd has been asked to stay on porches or watch online.
...
Mr. Lucas predicted that a few renegades might come to town ...

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/22/americas/brazil-coronavirus-cases/index.html

May 23

Brazil now has the second-highest number of coronavirus cases in the world

Brazil has become the country with the second most coronavirus cases worldwide after the United States. The country's health ministry reported 20,803 new cases on Friday, bringing the total to 330,890 confirmed cases.

Brazil's cases have surpassed the number in Russia, where health officials more recently reported 326,448 cases.

More than 1.5 million cases have been reported in the US, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Last week, Sao Paulo's mayor warned that its health system could be overwhelmed very soon if residents don't follow social distancing guidelines. Officials in the city of 12 million have declared a five-day holiday in a bid to get residents to stay home.

But President Jair Bolsonaro continues to dismiss the threat of the virus, saying quarantines and lockdowns could have a worse impact on Brazil's economy.

https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-brazil-becomes-second-worst-hit-country-as-regions-debate-easing-lock-down-11993207

...However, states and cities across Brazil are debating whether to loosen restrictive measures.

The mayor of Rio de Janeiro said he wanted to gradually reopen non-essential shops in the next few days.
Advertisement

In Sao Paulo, the worst-hit city, footage showed rows of graves at the Formosa Cemetery as it struggled to keep up with demand as officials reconsidered its previously announced plans to reopen commerce.
...
Infections have also risen in Peru, Chile and Ecuador - countries which imposed early and aggressive business shutdowns and quarantines.

Colombia reported its biggest daily increase on Friday, with 801 new confirmed cases and 30 deaths. The country has been locked down for nearly two months, with nearly 20,000 people being diagnosed with the virus to date.

The true number of cases and deaths across Latin America is likely higher than the figures suggest, as the region has been slow to ramp up testing.

Meanwhile, coronavirus cases have continued to fall in much of Asia, with China - where the outbreak began - reporting no new confirmed cases.

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-pandemic-has-already-altered-how-tens-of-millions-of-americans-can-cast-their-ballots-this-year/2020/05/23/0e3c3bf8-9532-11ea-91d7-cf4423d47683_story.html

May 23

The pandemic has already altered how tens of millions of Americans can cast their ballots this year

... **nearly 30 states have changed rules or practices for this year's primaries or the general election in response to the public health threat posed by covid-19**, according to a tally by The Washington Post. **The new policies affect roughly 86.6 million registered voters — including more than 40 million people who now have the temporary right to cast an absentee ballot because of the virus.**

...

This year, more than 168 million of the nation's nearly 198 million registered voters are eligible to vote absentee in either midyear contests or the general election.

In the fall, the country could see a huge surge in mail voting compared with 2016, when more than 33 million ballots were cast absentee or sent in by mail for the general election, about 24 percent of the vote, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

The swift changes have forced local election administrators to overhaul their operations to prepare for a surge in absentee voting.

That's also the case in **34 states that already do not require an excuse to vote absentee or by mail**, where officials are bracing for millions more voters to embrace that option than in past elections.

In **Pennsylvania**, **voters had submitted approximately 1.6 million applications for mail-in and absentee ballots for the June 2 primaries as of this past week**, a figure Secretary of the Commonwealth Kathy Boockvar called "off the charts."

And **in Georgia, almost 1.5 million people have requested absentee ballots for the June 9 primary as of this past week,** a dramatic increase over previous elections. State officials estimate that as many as half of voters will cast absentee ballots — compared with just 5 to 7 percent in a typical election.

The pressure on local election clerks is now intense in states such as **Iowa,** where Republican Secretary of State Paul Pate announced in March that **active registered voters would receive absentee ballot request forms in the mail ahead of the June 2 congressional primaries.**

...

In New Hampshire, people concerned about contracting the coronavirus will be allowed to cast absentee ballots, a decision affecting roughly 875,000 registered voters. **Connecticut and Michigan will send absentee ballot applications to about 8.7 million voters in those two states.**

And in **California, more than 20 million voters will receive actual absentee ballots in the mail...**

[In Texas] State law limits absentee voting to people who are age 65 or older, traveling, in jail or disabled. [But the Democratic party chair says] that a "A Texan who wants to exercise his fundamental constitutional right to vote should be able to do it by mail" ...

Earlier this month, a federal judge granted the Democratic Party's request for a temporary injunction, saying the state's restrictions are unconstitutional.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals temporarily stayed the lower court's ruling Wednesday after Paxton appealed. The case could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/05/kawasaki-stroke-why-coronavirus-weirdest-symptoms-are-only-emerging-now-cvd/

May 24

Inflamed brains, toe rashes, strokes: Why COVID-19's weirdest symptoms are only emerging now

An infection can inflict serious damage inside your body in many different ways, and COVID-19 seems to use just about all of them. The coronavirus primarily attacks the lungs, which can cause pneumonia or even respiratory failure, and in one of every five patients, it also leads to multiple organ failure.

Yet, as the pandemic continues to ravage the world, case reports have emerged of more unusual damage ranging from hundreds of tiny blood clots to strokes in young people, and even mysterious inflammatory responses, such as full-body rashes in children and the red lesions that have come to be known unofficially as COVID toe.

Although these conditions seem strange and scary, they have been seen in viral medicine even before the advent of COVID-19, and, to some degree, they are to be expected. Every human body is unique, so a disease that strikes millions of people will yield some oddities. What exactly is going on in these cases, and how common are they? Here's what we know—and what the scientific community still needs to find out to treat these unusual cases.

COVID-19 starts as a respiratory disease. The virus invades cells in the nose, throat, and lungs and starts to replicate, causing flu-like symptoms that can progress to pneumonia and even punch holes in your lungs, leaving permanent scars. For many patients, that's the worst of it.

But for others, the immune system inexplicably goes haywire and their bodies release proteins called cytokines ...A cytokine storm can damage the liver or kidneys and result in multi-organ failure. [Following on emerging symptoms:] ...

.

Heart infections

...

Mysterious blood clotting

...

Unexpected strokes

...

Inflamed Brains

...

COVID toe

...

[R]esearchers say, we should stay focused on maintaining the now standard practices to protect ourselves from COVID-19, including **wearing masks outside, meticulous handwashing, and careful social distancing. "That's going to be the answer,"** Agus says, "whether this turns into one syndrome or four syndromes."

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/draconian-house-arrest-coronavirus-lockdowns-prompt-raft-of-lawsuits-against-states/ar-BB14yz0j?li=BBnb7Kz

May 25

Lockdowns prompt raft of lawsuits against states

... **More than 1,300 state and federal lawsuits have been filed over COVID-19, including 240 dealing with civil rights, as of Friday**, according to Hunton Andrews Kurth, a law firm tracking the cases. USA TODAY reviewed more than 80 lawsuits that often dealt with conditions at prisons and nursing homes, voting rights, and university tuition. USA TODAY focused on legal challenges to restrictions such as stay-at-home orders and business closures, and also whether abortion or church services can be limited during the pandemic, to gauge which orders were being challenged and how states were responding.

The eventual rulings could redefine the balance between state police powers and constitutional rights that advocates contend are too important to sacrifice even temporarily. Abortions are time sensitive. Buyers want guns during times of crisis. And parishioners seek solace at church. Other lawsuits test whether rules go beyond legislative authorities by requiring people to isolate themselves, stay apart in public and wear masks.

“I tend to think there will be some new law made only because there are new scenarios that courts haven’t encountered before," said Polly Price, a law professor at Emory University. “What they’re balancing is the scientific basis for a particular measure and the state’s need for it, in the face of uncertainty, to protect the public health."
...
As officials grapple with restrictions, individuals and their businesses have challenged rules they contend are unfair or unworkable. Christopher Atchison, a professor emeritus at the University of Iowa's Department of Health Management and Policy, said the **50 state "laboratories of democracy" respond differently as they gauge how infectious a virus is and how to combat it.**

“You wind up with a cauldron of different ingredients that result in the tensions that you get about what Wisconsin might be doing or Iowa might be doing,” Atchison said.

Maine's state nickname is Vacationland, but tourism businesses have argued they've lost significant reservations because of Gov. Janet Mills. She initially ordered lodgings closed as non-essential and continues to require people visiting or returning from other states to spend 14 days in quarantine before venturing out.

Her reopening plan allowed Mainers to enjoy campgrounds starting Memorial Day weekend, but anticipates the quarantine rule remaining until August. Several businesses filed at least two federal lawsuits challenging the quarantine rule.

“Who’s going to want to come up here to sit in their camper and not being allowed to leave?” asked Kevin Richard, a lawyer for Bayley’s Camping Resort and Little Ossippee Campground. “It’s really confusing for our campgrounds.”

In Illinois, Poopy’s bills itself as the biggest destination for bikers in the state and markets a 1-pound burger called the “big poop.” But the owners, Kevin and Peggy Promenschenkel, said they could go out of business if a federal court doesn't block ...

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https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/2562261/

use live link to access the interactive chart showing daily charts from Jan 1 - May 24, 2020

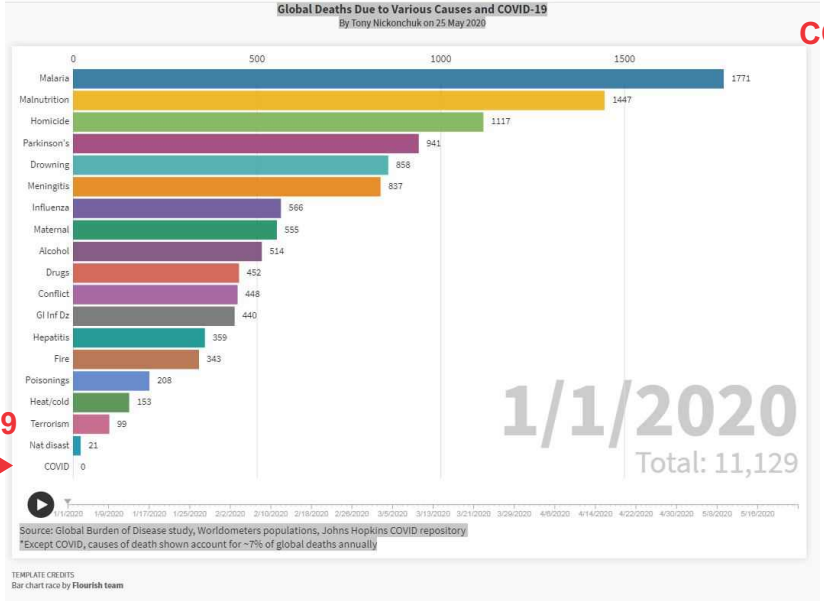
May 25

Global Deaths Due to Various Causes and COVID-19

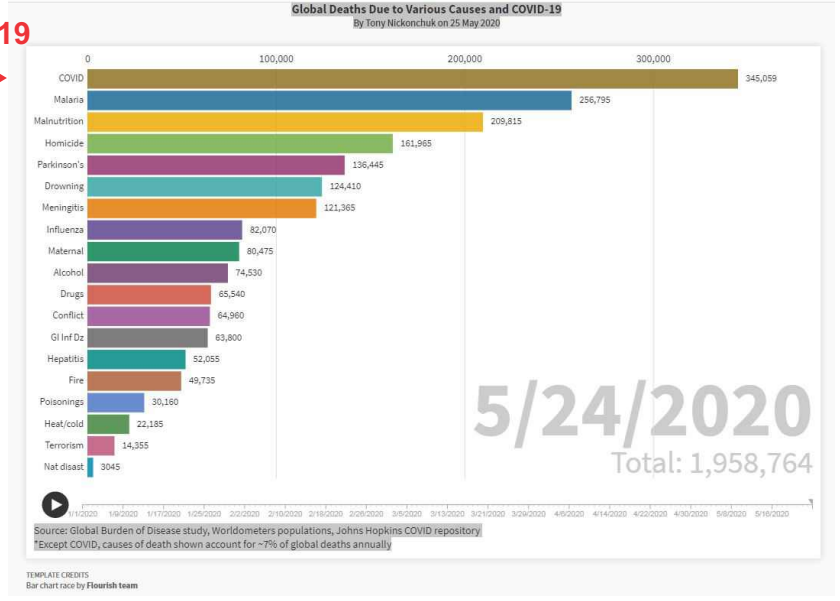
By Tony Nickonchuk

Source: Global Burden of Disease study,
Worldometers populations,
Johns Hopkins COVID repository
*Except COVID, causes of death shown account for ~7% of global deaths annually

COVID-19



COVID-19



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https://projects.propublica.org/reopening-america/

use live link to see charting for each state

May 26

States Are Reopening: See How Coronavirus Cases Rise or Fall

Many states are lifting stay-at-home orders and other restrictions on social and business activity that were put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19. Questions linger, however, about whether some states meet criteria set by public health experts and the federal government for doing so. Experts are keeping a close eye on whether states that have reopened are seeing an uptick in cases or a worsening in other key metrics.

To give people context on state reopenings, and what happens afterward, we are tracking metrics derived from a set of guidelines published by the White House for states to achieve before loosening restrictions. Even if these criteria are met, without a vaccine, reopening may cause an increase in cases. What's more, some states may meet all of the criteria and still have a high infection rate.

Sources: The COVID Tracking Project, National Governors Association, CDC COVID-19 Module, CDC FluView

Notes: Exact restrictions and rules for each state vary considerably, and counties or even cities may have their own rules in place. It has recently become clear that some states are combining different types of tests, which may make their positive test numbers appear better than they would otherwise. Here are more details on the five metrics we chose:

Positive tests per 100K people: A seven-day moving average of the number of positive tests, adjusted for population. We show an arrow representing the trend over the last two weeks. This metric comes from White House guidelines, and the data is updated daily.

Percentage of tests that are positive: A seven-day moving average of the percentage of total tests that are positive. We show an arrow representing the trend over the last two weeks. This metric comes from White House guidelines, and the data is updated daily.

Tests per 100K people per day: A seven-day moving average of the number of total tests, adjusted for population. We show a goal of 100 tests per 100,000 people per day. That number is taken from statements by the White House suggesting 30 tests per 1,000 people per month as a target. While there have been several targets put forward by both the White House and public health experts for what would make a sufficient number of tests, our metric takes the White House's 30 tests per 1,000 people per month target and uses it to derive a minimum daily goal. This data is updated daily.

ICU bed availability: The percentage of intensive care beds in the state's hospitals that are available. The White House's guidelines say that states should be able to "treat patients without crisis care." We've chosen to use ICU bed availability to track this criteria. We show a goal of 30% availability, which is taken from the target set by New York state. This data comes from a subset of facilities in each state that report this information to the CDC, and it is updated daily.

Hospital visits for flu-like illness: The percentage of patient visits to health care providers for influenza-like illness. We show an arrow representing the trend over the last two weeks. This metric comes from White House guidelines. The data comes from a subset of facilities in each state that report this information to the CDC and is updated weekly.

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https://graphics.reuters.com/HEALTH-CORONAVIRUS/USA-TRENDS/dgkvlgkrkpb/index.html

use live link to see charting for each state and toggle between both scales offered.

May 26

Where U.S. coronavirus cases are on the rise

Twenty U.S. states reported an increase in new cases of COVID-19 for the week ended May 24, up from 13 states in the prior week, as the death toll from the novel coronavirus approaches 100,000, according to a Reuters analysis.
...

Nationally, new cases of COVID-19 fell 0.8% for the week ended May 24, compared with a decline of 8% in the prior week. All 50 states have now at least partially reopened, raising fears among some health officials of a second wave of outbreaks. The increase in cases could also be due to more testing.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended states wait for their daily number of new COVID-19 cases to fall for 14 days before easing social distancing restrictions.

As of May 24, 15 states had met that criteria, up from 13 in the prior week, according to the Reuters analysis. **Washington state, where the U.S. outbreak started, has the longest streak with cases falling for eight weeks in a row, followed by Hawaii at seven weeks and Pennsylvania and New York at six weeks.**

Washington state posted the biggest drop in cases, down over 50%, followed by Kentucky, where new cases fell nearly 30%. New York saw new cases drop 23%, according to the Reuters analysis.

Texas saw new cases fall 15% after they rose 22% in the prior week.

Where cases increased the most in the last week

Among states with at least 5,000 total cases for week ending Sunday, May 24

State	Total cases	Per 100K	New cases	1-week change
South Carolina	10,096	196	1,435	+42.4%
Alabama	14,327	292	2,556	+28.2%
Missouri	11,988	195	1,199	+26.9%
North Carolina	23,222	221	4,710	+25.7%
Maryland	46,313	766	7,509	+20.8%
Colorado	23,964	416	2,331	+20.8%
Georgia	42,838	404	5,137	+20.6%
Nevada	7,770	252	913	+20.3%
Wisconsin	15,277	262	2,734	+17.6%
Utah	8,392	262	1,154	+16.9%
Arkansas	5,922	196	1,163	+14.9%
Tennessee	20,145	295	2,757	+14.7%
Kansas	8,958	308	1,072	+14.3%
California	92,710	235	13,871	+14.1%
Minnesota	20,573	365	4,905	+11.6%
Mississippi	13,252	445	1,956	+9.0%
Florida	50,867	237	5,279	+5.7%
Ohio	31,911	273	3,988	+3.8%
Oklahoma	6,037	153	727	+0.8%
New Jersey	154,154	1,736	7,820	+0.2%

snapshot as of 5/24/2020

Return to Timeline

https://abcnews.go.com/Health/coronavirus-updates-covid-19-cases-us-health-care/story?id=70897864

May 27

Global death toll crosses 350,000

The worldwide number of lives lost in the coronavirus pandemic has now surpassed 350,000, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Nearly a third of those deaths have been reported in the United States, the hardest-hit country, where the toll is fast approaching 100,000.

The United Kingdom has the second-highest number of fatalities from COVID-19.
...

COVID-19 cases among US health care workers top 62,000

More than 62,000 doctors, nurses and other health care professionals in the United States have contracted the novel coronavirus and at least 291 have died, according to data released Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The true numbers may be much higher, as less than a quarter of the more than 1.3 million people whose data the CDC analyzed disclosed whether they worked in the health care industry. Moreover, out of the estimated 62,344 cases of COVID-19 among health care personnel in the country, death status was only available for about 57%.

The number of reported COVID-19 cases in the profession was at 9,282 just six weeks ago. At that time, the median age of infected workers was 42 and nearly three-quarters were women.

Although most weren't hospitalized for the disease, severe outcomes -- including death -- were reported among all age groups. That information was not made available in the CDC's latest report.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/winstar-world-casino-and-resort-other-chickasaw-nation-owned-casinos-to-reopen-wednesday/ar-BB14vyZm?ocid=hplocalnews

May 27

Chickasaw Nation-owned casinos to reopen

Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby announced Saturday that WinStar World Casino and Resort **will open at 25% capacity** at 8 a.m. Wednesday.

Guests and employees will be required to wear face masks at all times within the casino and resort near the Oklahoma-Texas border. **Casinos will close daily from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for cleaning and disinfecting, and restaurants will have reduced seating capacity to maintain 6 feet of distance between each seated group of guests**, officials said.

"We have a responsibility to ensure our facilities remain safe places for our employees and patrons as we reopen," Anoatubby said in a news release. "Therefore, our leadership team has developed a comprehensive plan with numerous levels of protection in place to protect the health of our employees and patrons. **We continue closely monitoring the data and consulting health professionals in an effort to maintain the most effective containment measures available and minimize any possibility of resurgence."**

Anoatubby said preparations for reopening the casino and resort began weeks ago. Those preparations include **employee testing, alterations to facilities and employee training to ensure enhanced disinfecting protocols and safety procedures** are implemented effectively.

"The health and well-being of our employees and patrons remained top of mind as we developed and worked through our extensive reopening plan," Chickasaw Nation Commerce Secretary Bill Lance said. "We have conducted initial testing and screening on all employees, vendors and partners. Also, **employees will undergo a screening protocol daily before reporting to work, and we will continue employee testing every two weeks using commonly accepted scientific methods for population sampling."**

In addition to employee testing and screening, the gaming **facilities will implement responsible distance policies and enhanced protocols and limit casino gaming floors to 25% of capacity.** The news release states casino p**ersonnel will also check the temperatures of all patrons entering each facility and will deny entry to people with a confirmed temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher.**

Along with WinStar World Casino and Resort, Chickasaw Nation officials said The Artesian Casino, Treasure Valley Casino, SaltCreek Casino, Chisholm Trail Casino and Newcastle Casino will open at 25% capacity Wednesday. The exact time for the opening of those casinos will be announced on the facility's social media pages.

Return to Timeline

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/26/americans-with-depression-anxiety-pandemic/?arc404=true&pwapi_token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJjb29raWVuYW1lIjoid3BfY3J0aWQiLCJpc3MiOiJDYXJ0YSIsImNvb2tpZXZhbHVlIjoiNWVhMDQ0MTNhZTdlOGEwYWIxM2M4MTMzIiwidGFnIjoid3BfdG

May 28

A third of Americans now show signs of clinical anxiety or depression

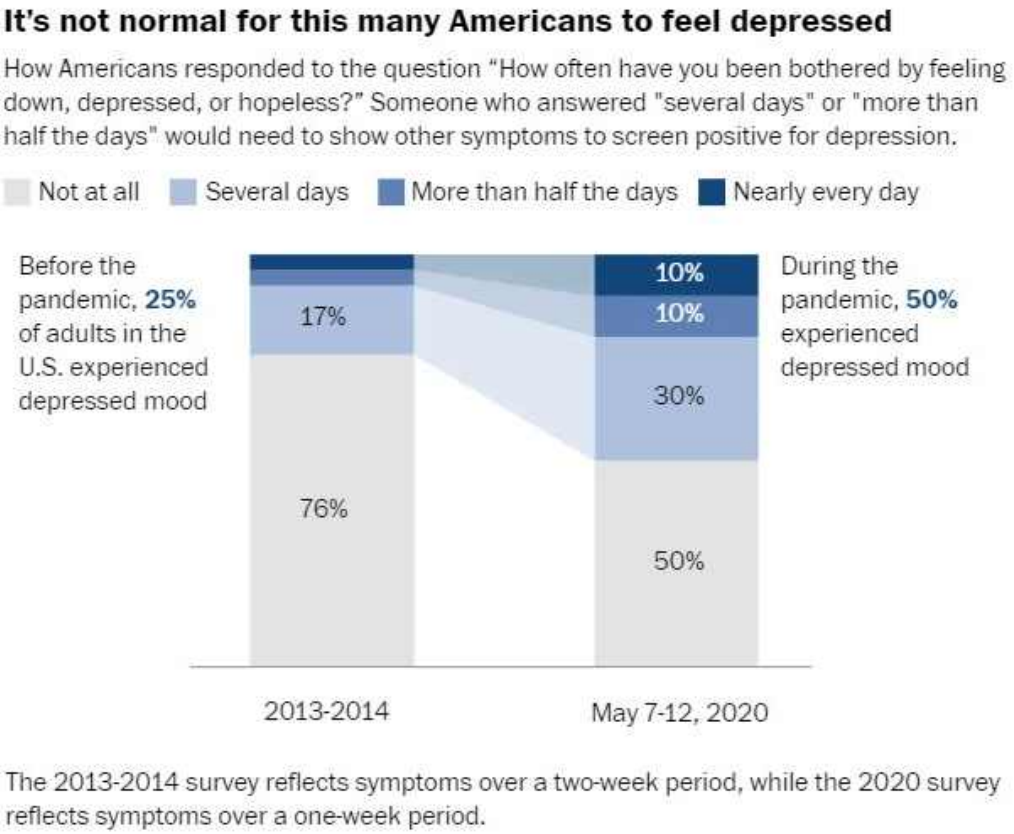
... The troubling statistics were released last week in a tranche of data from the Census Bureau. The agency launched an emergency weekly survey of U.S. households at the end of April to measure the pandemic's effects on employment, housing, finances, education and health. In the most recent data release, 1 million households were contacted between May 7 and 12, and more than 42,000 responded.

Buried within that 20-minute survey, U.S. officials included four questions taken nearly word-for-word from a form used by doctors to screen patients for depression and anxiety. Those answers provide a real-time window into the country's collective mental health after three months of fear, isolation, soaring unemployment and continuing uncertainty.

...

Some groups have been hit harder than others. **Rates of anxiety and depression were far higher among younger adults, women and the poor.** The worse scores in young adults were especially notable, given that the virus has been more likely to kill the elderly or leave them critically ill.

Those results reflect a deepening of existing trends: rising depression, stress and suicide among young adults. "It's been a problem many have been studying with no clear answers — whether it's social media or the way this generation was reared or just a greater willingness to talk about their problems," ...



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https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/27/coronavirus-update-us/#link-KW2G6DET2RBNRGGD6LKZCNULTM

May 28

France stops use of hydroxychloroquine in hospitals, joining Italy, Belgium and the WHO

The French government Wednesday told doctors to stop using hydroxychloroquine as a covid-19 treatment in hospitals, joining Italy, Belgium and the World Health Organization in halting use or studies of the anti-malaria drug after researchers found it could cause severe harm to patients.

...France released a national public-health advisory that said using the drug was no longer advised and noted that there was no "sufficiently robust" study that supported "the efficacy" of hydroxychloroquine in treating coronavirus patients.

The WHO announced Monday it was suspending its hydroxychloroquine trial in light of safety concerns. The organization has repeatedly recommended the drug not be used outside of controlled clinical trials.

The Lancet, a leading British medical journal, found in a recent study that covid-19 patients who took the anti-malaria drug were more likely to die or experience irregular heartbeats.

In the initial rush to crush the virus, hydroxychloroquine emerged as a hopeful contender. "The drug had been shown to have strong antiviral properties in cell cultures, was widely available and was thought to be rather benign in terms of side effects," reported The Washington Post's Ariana Eunjung Cha and Laurie McGinley. But on Wednesday, **Anthony S. Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, spoke out against Trump's support of the drug.**

"The scientific data is really quite evident now about the lack of efficacy," Fauci said on CNN. He did not, however, call for a ban on its use.

SOURCE: © GEORGE FREY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/fda-gives-go-ahead-for-trial-of-experimental-covid-19-drug/ar-BB14Ikgt?li=BBnb7Kz

May 28

FDA gives go ahead for trial of experimental COVID-19 drug

...In its trial **named Vangard, U.S.-based biopharmaceutical firm PhaseBio will see if a drug called PB1046 is safe and effective in COVID-19 patients who are at high risk of rapidly deteriorating and developing acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARSD).** The life-threatening syndrome happens when the lungs fail to provide enough oxygen to the vital organs. Generally, these patients are admitted to intensive care units and hooked up to ventilators.
...
Doctors will give participants PB1046 once a week via an injection. **The drug contains a type of molecule found in the body which, among other things, is known to have anti-inflammatory and anti-scarring properties, as well as the ability to open the airways.**

In addition, the molecule, called vasoactive intestinal peptide, has been shown to regulate proteins which can be involved in cytokine storms, where the immune system dangerously overreacts. This condition is characteristic of COVID-19 patients with ARDS, according to PhaseBio.

Usually, vasoactive intestinal peptide only lasts for about two minutes in the human body. But PhaseBio were able to extend its half-life to days so it can be given to patients once a week.

The company hopes to enroll 210 patients at 20 sites across the U.S. and start the double-blind, parallel group, randomized trial by the end of June. **It is aims to report results by late fall. The team will be looking to see if the drug can help patients survive and avoid respiratory failure, by targeting specific receptors in the cardiovascular, pulmonary and immune systems.**

PhaseBio, which specializes in drugs for heart and lung conditions, submitted an investigational new drug application for PB1046 to the FDA under a program aimed at speeding up drug development for COVID-19. The firm announced it was given clearance on Wednesday.

The team were already investigating the potential of PB1046 in patients with high blood pressure in lung arteries. It has also been given to more than 70 patients with high blood pressure or a history of cardiovascular disease, and found to have no serious side effects to date.

"Physicians are in desperate need of new options to treat COVID-19 patients facing rapid deterioration of lung function and before progressing to a ventilator," John Lee, chief medical officer at PhaseBio, said in a statement.

"The impact of the pandemic on the global healthcare system has been overwhelming during the past few months and the importance of new treatment options that could help reduce this burden cannot be overstated."

He said the prognosis for people with COVID-19 and acute respiratory distress syndrome, who end up needing ventilation is "exceptionally poor."

"Early mitigation by PB1046 of the effects of inflammatory cytokines that can cause acute lung injury, is a promising strategy that could prevent patients from declining to the point where they require mechanical ventilation and help alleviate the strain on critical care infrastructure that we're witnessing," Lee said.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/bing-covid-19-tracker-5-29-2020-642-am-indias-figures-low/ar-BB14L71S?li=BBnb7Kz

May 29

Bing's tracker shows US is 31% of the world's reported COVID-19 cases

According to the Bing COVID-19 Tracker, the number of global cases has reached 5,803,416. Active cases rose by 59,369 to 3,044,378 and are 53% of the total of confirmed cases worldwide. Recovered cases totaled 2,399,247, which is up 49,649. The total active case growth rate topped the recovered case growth rate, a poor sign, at least for a day.

Global fatal cases have hit 359,791, up 4,216, which fortunately is a decrease in the rate of new deaths compared to the day before. They are now 6.2% of the world's confirmed case total. At the current rate, global deaths could reach 400,000 in less than two weeks.

Total COVID-19 confirmed cases in the United States have reached 1,758,422, which is 31% of the world's total. Active cases in America numbered 1,276,939, higher by 14,797, and recovered cases were 378,566, up 6,611 from yesterday. The active case increase is over two times that of recovered cases.

Fatal cases in America reached 102,917, a gain of 1,155 in a day. They are 29% of the world's total fatalities and 6% of U.S. confirmed cases. On March 31, the White House forecast deaths would hit between 100,000 and 240,000 before early August. At the current rate of growth, the figure will be near the middle of that range.

Mississippi and Alabama largely had been spared high COVID-19 case and death counts. That has started to change.

Total confirmed cases in Mississippi hit 14,372, and active cases are at 13,679, or 305 higher than a day ago. That increase is nearly as high as hard-hit Michigan, where active cases rose 368 to 50,642. Coronavirus fatalities in Mississippi grew by 23 to 693, while Michigan's death count rose by 38 to 5,372.

Alabama has 16,530 confirmed cases. The number of its active cases hit 15,939, which is higher by 490. Deaths totaled 591, an increase of eight.

Experts believe the Alabama increase is due to the "reopening" of the state. An increase in testing may be another reason.

Mississippi's increase in cases is also tied to the state opening up. Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the state's health officer, said, "Every county is one wild weekend from falling off the cliff."

The experiences in Mississippi and Alabama will lead to more debate about how quickly states should ease restrictions on social distancing.

India's Extremely Low Case Count

India is the second-largest nation in the world as ranked by population, at 1,326,093,247. However, it ranks only 10th in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases at 166,113. Just 4,713 deaths have been reported, and with a gain of 173 in a day, the count is not rising quickly.

India's increase in cases and deaths are on a sharp rise, according to the nation's health care leaders. The raw numbers do not entirely support that for a nation of its size. India may entirely reopen its economy within two days. If that happens, there are worries that cases and deaths will spike much higher.

India's low figures also raise the question of whether a nation as vast and crowded in its largest cities can keep an accurate count of COVID-19 figures.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/the-pandemic-isnt-over-but-america-sure-seems-over-it/ar-BB14KY2O?li=BBnb7Kz

May 30

The pandemic isn’t over. But America sure seems over it.

We’re over it. The masks, the kids, the Lysol. Over it. The tragic hair, the diminished hygiene, the endless construction next door, the Zoom meetings from hell, the mind games with the unemployment office, the celibacy, the short tempers and long evenings, the looking forward to the mail, the feeling guilty about the mail carrier working double time, the corporate compassion pushing products we didn’t need even before the world went funky and febrile.
...

If you meet a pandemic head-on in a hospital, it can look like everything. It can look like we won’t be over it for a while. A few weeks ago, at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., a nurse named Marlena Pellegrino donned her protective gear to check on a 100-year-old covid-19 patient, who had been alone in a room for too long because of a staffing shortage.

“I’m blue,” the old woman, who had dementia, told Pellegrino.

At first, Pellegrino thought she was being literal. Blue? Her lips? Skin? A lack of oxygen? Just cold? The woman clarified that she was lonely.

“That was like a knife in my heart,” Pellegrino says. Even in her fog and confusion, the woman was communicating the hard truth of the pandemic: that many people are suffering, and dying, alone. And just because we can’t see them doesn’t mean we should be over it.

“People out in these states at water parks and beaches and boardwalks without masks on, gathering 200 people in a pool — to nurses, that’s like, ‘What do these people not understand?’ ” says Pellegrino, walking in a park Thursday in Worcester, Mass., before her 3-to-midnight shift at St. Vincent. “This is about protecting community, protecting society. People are just discarding what is still a major health-care crisis. A **pandemic means we need to be safeguarding one another. We’re going to be needing to protect ourselves for months — if not years — to come.”**
...
Protesters in state capitols have been over it for a while. Last weekend a woman in Sacramento was so over it that she held a sign conveying her yearning for movie-theater popcorn. A man in Lansing was so over it that he held a sign May 14 that said, “I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees.” Now the rest of the country is beginning to grant their wishes. Disney World is hoping to begin a phased reopening July 11. In Las Vegas, the Bellagio and MGM Grand will reopen Thursday.
...
Reality means grappling with the idea that the coronavirus might stalk us for years, even if scientists come up with a vaccine. Reality means wondering how much more we can take. Who wouldn’t want to be over it? Beats being under it.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/george-floyd-protests-live-updates-anger-floods-cities-across-the-us-pentagon-could-order-military-police-to-minneapolis-report-says/ar-BB14NBhq?li=BBnb7Kz

May 30

Anger floods cities across the US

Across the country protesters took to the streets for a fourth day to express their anger over the death of George Floyd, a black man who died after a Minneapolis police officer kept his knee pressed into his neck for more than eight minutes.

In scenes both peaceful and violent across the nation, thousands of protesters chanted “No justice, no peace” and “Say his name. George Floyd.” They hoisted signs reading: “He said I can’t breathe. Justice for George.”

Derek Michael Chauvin was arrested Friday in Minneapolis on charges of third-degree murder and manslaughter in connection with Floyd's death.

Saturday morning, after 72 hours of unrest in Minneapolis, Gov. Tim Walz described the protest scenes as a "military operation."

"This is not about George’s death. This is not about inequities that were real. This is about chaos being caused,” Walz said.

Fires, looting and destruction were not isolated to Minneapolis. In Detroit, one person attending a protest was shot to death. Atlanta saw the CNN Center attacked and its mayor pleaded for calm.

© Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY
A person watches an area of Minneapolis burn on Friday, May 29, as protests swept the city.

https://www.nasa.gov/specials/dm2/

Most of the people in the command center were wearing masks!

May 30

NASA and SpaceX launch is successful and is scheduled to rendezvous with International Space Station in 19 hours

https://www.npr.org/2020/05/30/864514995/spacex-and-nasa-try-once-more-to-launch-astronauts

NASA astronauts are heading to space from U.S. soil for the first time in nine years aboard SpaceX's Dragon capsule, the maiden crewed flight of the innovative spacecraft.

The mission, which is sending Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken to the International Space Station, is a bold new venture for the space agency's plan to allow commercial companies to take its astronauts into low-Earth orbit.

The duo left a fiery plume behind at Kennedy Space Center's pad 39A at 3:22 p.m. ET as they rode SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket toward a rendezvous with the station in about 19 hours time. On Wednesday, storms and a tornado warning upended a launch attempt, with the veteran space shuttle astronauts suited up and strapped into the Dragon before the mission was scrubbed.

Similar weather concerns dogged Saturday's launch and nearly forced a second delay, but NASA and SpaceX decided early Saturday that conditions were trending in the right direction. As the countdown narrowed, the weather continued to improve.

The Falcon 9 booster separated and guided itself to a successful landing on a drone ship stationed in the Atlantic. Crew Dragon separated from the rocket at 3:35 p.m. ET and entered orbit.

"It was incredible. Appreciate the great ride to space," Hurley told flight controllers as the spacecraft reached orbit.

The mission marks the first time NASA has sent astronauts into space since the end of the shuttle program in 2011, after it relied for nearly a decade on Russian Soyuz rockets to get them there. It is also a first for SpaceX, which has ambitions of someday taking paying customers zooming around the Earth.
...

Hurley, 53, and Behnken, 49 will put the bell-shaped Dragon through its paces on the way to the station. Dragon, which on the surface resembles an updated Apollo-era command module, sports a sleek interior and oversized touchscreen controls. It's SpaceX Falcon 9 booster which has been used successfully dozens of times to put satellites and space-station cargo into orbit.

The Dragon-Falcon 9 configuration is a far cry from the winged space shuttle, but the SpaceX capsule has considerable safety advantages. Unlike the shuttle, it sits on top of the rocket, therefore avoiding debris that can fall off during launch — a problem that doomed the space shuttle Columbia in a 2003 launch. The position also makes it easy to eject the capsule if the rocket itself runs into trouble.

That's not to say that SpaceX hasn't had safety issues over the years. In 2015, one of its uncrewed rockets exploded on the way to the space station. Even so, SpaceX has enjoyed a good track record in its eight years of flying cargo to the space station.

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/31/george-floyd-protests-live-updates/

May 31

A night of fire and fury across America as protests intensify

A day of widespread protests devolved into a night of fire and fury across the nation as tensions boiled over in dozens of American cities. Police cars and government buildings were set aflame, windows were shattered, stores were ransacked, monuments were vandalized and authorities in riot gear fired pepper pellets, tear gas and rubber bullets at demonstrators who had amassed to protest the death of George Floyd, a black man killed at the hands of police.

Curfews were enacted in more than two dozen cities and the National Guard was summoned in at least 12 states and the District of Columbia as officials pleaded for peace. But mayhem convulsed the country, leaving scores of police officers and protesters injured and parts of America smoldering.

Here are some significant developments:

- **Thousands gathered in London's Trafalgar Square in support of U.S. demonstrators**, according to the Associated Press.

- Some of President Trump's allies are urging him to address the nation about the intensifying unrest. Trump's presumptive Democratic rival, former vice president Joe Biden, released his own statement condemning the violence that followed the in-custody death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

- The unrest spread to cities large and small, including Ferguson, Mo., which was rocked by violent protests in 2014 after a white police officer shot and killed a young black man, Michael Brown.

- Federal buildings in the nation's capital were vandalized, and clashes erupted for a second day between Secret Service agents and demonstrators outside the White House.

- The mayor of Richmond said a curfew will be imposed starting Sunday night after protesters targeted the city's symbols of history — a scene repeated in Charleston, S.C.; Raleigh, N.C.; and other Southern cities.

- California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) declared a state of emergency and deployed the National Guard to Los Angeles as violent demonstrations raged. Mayor Eric Garcetti initially resisted asking for Guard troops because he did not want to evoke memories of the 1992 Rodney King riots, but conditions continued to deteriorate in the city.

- Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez slammed New York Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) for saying he would not "blame" New York City policy officers who appeared to have driven their vehicle into a throng of protesters.

- Target said it was temporarily closing 175 of its stores across 13 states, including in Minnesota, where the retail giant is headquartered.

- Saturday's protests came one day after fired Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was charged with third-degree murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death. Chauvin, who is white, was captured on video pressing his knee onto Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes.

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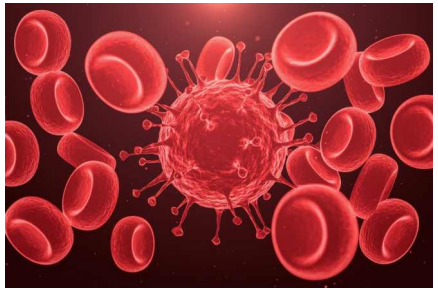
https://elemental.medium.com/coronavirus-may-be-a-blood-vessel-disease-which-explains-everything-2c4032481ab2

Image: MR.Cole_Photographer/ Getty Images



June 1

Coronavirus may be a blood vessel disease

In April, blood clots emerged as one of the many mysterious symptoms attributed to Covid-19, a disease that had initially been thought to largely affect the lungs in the form of pneumonia. Quickly after came reports of young people dying due to **coronavirus-related strokes**. Next it was Covid toes — **painful red or purple digits.**

What do all of these symptoms have in common? An impairment in blood circulation. Add in the fact that 40% of deaths from Covid-19 are related to cardiovascular complications, and the disease starts to look like a vascular infection instead of a purely respiratory one.

Months into the pandemic, there is now a **growing body of evidence to support the theory that the novel coronavirus can infect blood vessels, which could explain not only the high prevalence of blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks, but also provide an answer for the diverse set of head-to-toe symptoms that have emerged.**

“All these Covid-associated complications were a mystery. We see blood clotting, we see kidney damage, we see inflammation of the heart, we see stroke, we see encephalitis [swelling of the brain],” says William Li, MD, president of the Angiogenesis Foundation. “A whole myriad of seemingly unconnected phenomena that you do not normally see with SARS or H1N1 or, frankly, most infectious diseases.”

“If you start to put all of the data together that’s emerging, it turns out that **this virus is probably a vasculotropic virus**, meaning that it affects the [blood vessels]...

An infection of the blood vessels would explain many of the weird tendencies of the novel coronavirus, like the high rates of blood clots. Endothelial cells help regulate clot formation by sending out proteins that turn the coagulation system on or off. The cells also help ensure that blood flows smoothly and doesn’t get caught on any rough edges on the blood vessel walls.

...

Blood vessel damage could also explain why people with pre-existing conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease are at a higher risk for severe complications from a virus that’s supposed to just infect the lungs. All of those diseases cause endothelial cell dysfunction, and the additional damage and inflammation in the blood vessels caused by the infection could push them over the edge and cause serious problems.

...

“What we’re saying is that maybe the best antiviral therapy is not actually an antiviral therapy. **The best therapy might actually be a drug that stabilizes the vascular endothelial.** We’re building a drastically different concept.”

https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/06/02/russia-coronavirus-cases-rise-past-420k-as-deaths-surpass-5k-a69710

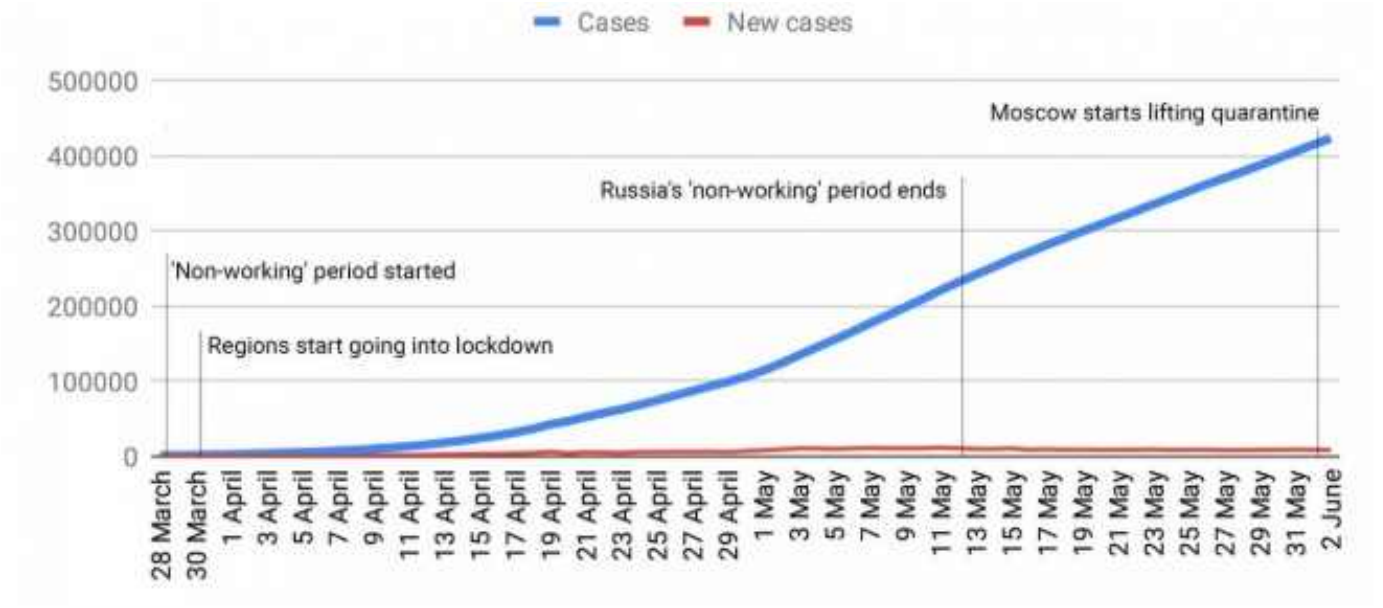
June 2

Russia coronavirus cases rise past 420,000 Deaths surpass 5,000

... **Over the past 24 hours 182 people have died, bringing the total toll to 5,037 — a rate considerably lower than in many other countries hit hard by the pandemic.**
...
Officials say Russia's high virus count is the result of mass testing and that a steady decline in new infections and its low fatality numbers mean the country can begin to return to normal.

Yet critics have cast doubt on the numbers, accusing the authorities of under-reporting deaths and threatening a new wave of infections by lifting restrictions.
...
Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's pandemic with around half of the country's total cases, on Monday eased a nine-week lockdown allowing shops to reopen and residents to leave their homes for short walks.

Putin was scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Tuesday to discuss proposals to restart an economy badly hit by lockdown measures and a sharp fall in oil prices.



The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Russia as of June 2.

MT

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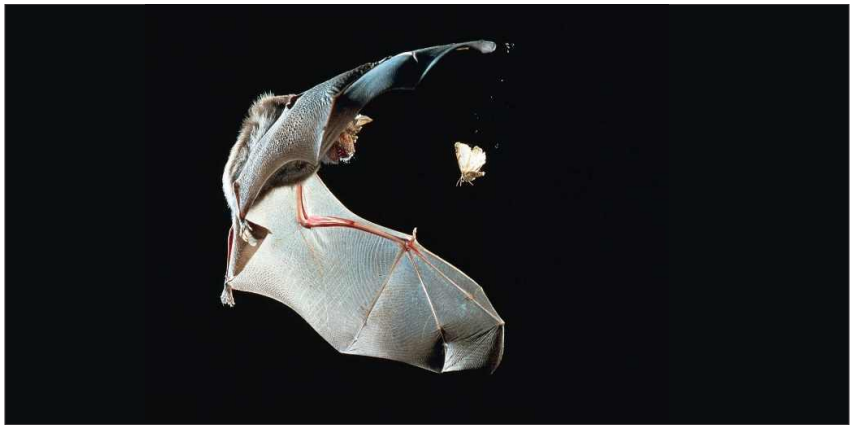
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/science/coronavirus-bats-wuhan.html?algo=identity&fellback=false&imp_id=994697697&action=click&module=Science%20%20Technology&pgtype=Homepage

June 3

U.S. and Chinese Scientists trace evolution of coronaviruses in bats



An international team of scientists, including a prominent researcher at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, has analyzed all known coronaviruses in Chinese bats and **used genetic analysis to trace the likely origin of the novel coronavirus to horseshoe bats.**

In their report, posted online Sunday, they also point to the great variety of these viruses in southern and southwestern China and urge closer monitoring of bat viruses in the area and greater efforts to change human behavior as ways of decreasing the chances of future pandemics.

The research was supported by a U.S. grant to EcoHealth Alliance, a New York-based nonprofit, that was recently canceled by the National Institutes of Health. The grant, for more than $3 million, was well on its way to renewal, and the sudden reversal prompted an outcry in the scientific community.

Thirty-one U.S. scientific societies signed a letter of protest on May 20 to the N.I.H., and 77 Nobel laureates sent another letter to the N.I.H. and the Department of Health and Human Services seeking an investigation of the grant denial. The Nobelists said the cancellation appeared to be based on politics rather than a consideration of scientific merit.

...

The researchers, mostly Chinese and American, conducted an exhaustive search for and analysis of coronaviruses in bats, with an eye to identifying hot spots for potential spillovers of these viruses into humans, and resulting disease outbreaks.

The genetic evidence that the virus originated in bats was already overwhelming. Horseshoe bats, in particular, were considered likely hosts because other spillover diseases, like the SARS outbreak in 2003, came from viruses that originated in these bats, members of the genus Rhinolophus.

None of the bat viruses are close enough to the novel coronavirus to suggest that it jumped from bats to humans. The immediate progenitor of the new virus has not been found, and may have been present in bats or another animal. Pangolins were initially suspected, although more recent analysis of pangolin coronaviruses suggests that although they probably have played a part in the new virus's evolution, there is no evidence that they were the immediate source.

The new research includes an analysis of bat and viral evolution that strongly supports the suspected origin of the virus in horseshoe bats, but isn't definitive, largely because a vast amount about such viruses remains unknown...

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https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51235105

June 5

Coronavirus pandemic: Tracking the global outbreak

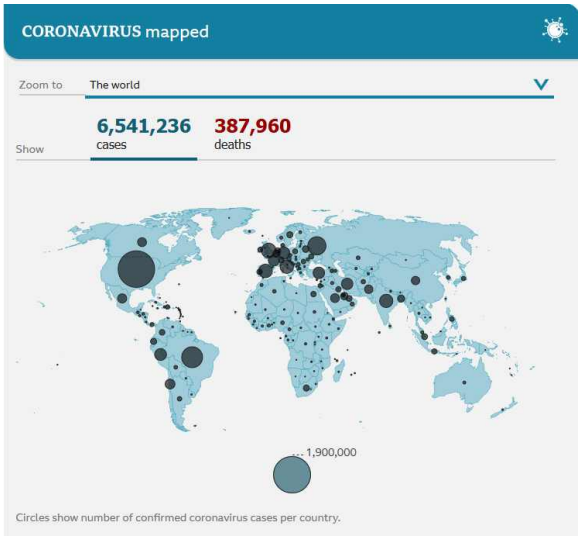
Coronavirus is continuing its spread across the world, with more than 6.5 million confirmed cases in 188 countries. Nearly 400,000 people have lost their lives.
...
The US has by far the largest number of cases, almost one third of the global total, according to figures collated by Johns Hopkins University. It also has the world's highest death toll, followed by the UK and Brazil.

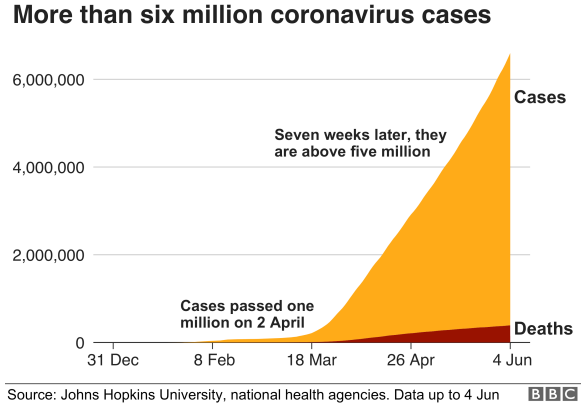
In Europe, Italy, France and Spain have also been badly hit.

In China, the official death toll is some 4,600 from about 84,000 confirmed cases, although critics have questioned whether the country's official numbers can be trusted.

The outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March. This is when an infectious disease is passing easily from person to person in many parts of the world at the same time.

The WHO has warned that the pandemic is a long way from being over and said people should be prepared for new outbreaks to build up very quickly - especially in areas where lockdowns are eased...





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https://www.cnn.com/world/live-news/coronavirus-pandemic-06-07-20-intl/index.html

June 7

Global coronavirus deaths top 400,000

More than 400,000 people have now died from coronavirus around the world, according to Johns Hopkins University's tally.

The grim milestone was reached in the early hours of Sunday morning (eastern time).

The United States has suffered more than 109,000 of those deaths, with the United Kingdom, Brazil and Italy behind it in terms of total fatalities.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/nyregion/new-york-reopening-coronavirus.html

June 7

New York City begins reopening after 3 months of outbreak and hardship

As many as 400,000 people may return to work on Monday in a city still recovering from the pandemic and roiled by protests.

Exactly 100 days since its first case of coronavirus was confirmed, New York City, which weathered extensive hardship as an epicenter of the worldwide outbreak, **is set to take the first tentative steps toward reopening its doors on Monday.**

Getting here took the sacrifice of millions of New Yorkers who learned to live radically different lives. More than 205,000 have been infected, and nearly 22,000 have died.

As many as 400,000 workers could begin returning to construction jobs, manufacturing sites and retail stores in the city's first phase of reopening— a surge of normalcy that seemed almost inconceivable several weeks ago, when the city's hospitals were at a breaking point and as many as 800 people were dying from Covid-19 on a single day.

Many retail stores, battered by months of closure, are readying to do business again on Monday, starting with curbside and in-store pickup. Construction companies are adding safety features and stockpiling masks and gloves. Manufacturers, whose shop floors have idled since March, are testing machines.

State and city officials said they were optimistic that the city would begin to spring back to life. Testing is robust, reaching 33,000 people on a recent day. And new infections are now down to around 500 a day — half as many as there were just a few weeks ago.

That is low enough for New York City's corps of contract tracers, who began work last week, to try to track every close interaction and,

"You want to talk about a turnaround — this one, my friends, is going to go in the history books," Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said on Saturday.

New York City, like nine other regions in the state, was required to meet seven health-related metrics before beginning reopening. New York City was the last part of the state to do so; much of upstate has already moved on to Phase 2, which allows most stores, offices and hair salons to open, with restrictions on capacity and social distance.

The road back will undoubtedly be challenging. More than 885,000 jobs vanished during the outbreak, and strong gains are not expected for the city until 2022. The city budget hemorrhaged tax revenue and now faces a $9 billion shortfall over the next year.

And the reopening has been complicated by the vast protests for racial justice that have swept the city for more than a week and have forced government officials and business owners to unexpectedly adjust their plans.

Hundreds of stores were burglarized by looters who took advantage of the protests to prey on commercial districts, from Midtown to the...

Return to Timeline

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/06/08/14-states-puerto-rico-hit-their-highest-seven-day-average-new-covid-19-infections-since-june/

June 8

14 states and Puerto Rico hit highest seven-day average of new infections

Since the start of June, 14 states and Puerto Rico have recorded their highest-ever seven-day average of new coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, according to data tracked by The Washington Post: **Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Mississippi, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Utah.**

If the pandemic's first wave burned through dense metro hubs such as New York City, Chicago and Detroit, the highest percentages of new cases are coming from places with much smaller populations: Lincoln County, Ore., an area of less than 50,000, has averaged 20 new daily cases; the Bear River Health District in northern **Utah has averaged 78 new cases a day in the past week, most of them tied to an outbreak at a meat processing plant in the small town of Hyrum.**

The increase of coronavirus cases in counties with fewer than 60,000 people is part of the trend of new infections surging across the rural United States. Health experts worry those areas, already short of resources before the pandemic, will struggle to track new cases with the infrastructure that remains.

Adding to the disparity in health-care support, residents in states such as Mississippi, Florida and South Carolina are living under only minor-to-moderate restrictions — even as their average daily infection rate is rising.

The past two weeks of protests against police brutality will be yet another variable in how the virus spreads in the country. Protesters flooded the streets of major cities but gathered in small towns across the country, too. Though the widespread protests are a boon for the movement, health officials have warned about the impact so many people closely packed with one another could have on transmission rates.

As of Monday, at least 109,000 people in the United States have died of covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, with more than 1.95 million cases of the virus reported.

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https://www.seattletimes.com/business/recession-hit-us-in-february-ending-record-long-expansion/

June 8

US recession could be the shortest and deepest on record

WASHINGTON (AP) — T**he U.S. economy entered a recession in February as the coronavirus struck the nation,** a group of economists declared Monday, ending the longest expansion on record.

The economists said that employment, income and spending peaked in February and then fell sharply afterward as the viral outbreak shut down businesses across the country, marking the start of the downturn after nearly 11 full years of economic growth.

A committee within the National Bureau of Economic Research, a private nonprofit group, determines when recessions begin and end. It broadly defines a recession as "a decline in economic activity that lasts more than a few months."

For that reason, the NBER typically waits longer before making a determination that the economy is in a downturn. In the previous recession, the committee did not declare that the economy was in recession until December 2008, a year after it had actually begun. But in this case, the NBER said the collapse in employment and incomes was so steep that it could much more quickly make a determination.

"The unprecedented magnitude of the decline in employment and production, and its broad reach across the entire economy, warrants the designation of this episode as a recession, even if it turns out to be briefer than earlier contractions," the NBER panel said.

The way the NBER defines recessions, they begin in the same month that the previous expansion ends. Because the economy peaked in February, that is the month when the recession officially began, rather than in March, when unemployment began to rise.

Financial markets had little reaction Monday to the NBER's declaration. February is when the stock market hit its own record high before stumbling into a severe downturn from which it has mostly recovered, thanks to extraordinary stimulus and support measures from the Federal Reserve and Congress as well as expectations that the worst of the economic pain may have passed.

The unemployment rate is officially 13.3%, down from 14.7% in April. Both figures are higher than in any other downturn since World War II. A broader measure of underemployment that includes those who have given up looking and those who have been reduced to part-time status is 21.2%.

On Friday, the government said that employers added 2.5 million jobs in May, an unexpected gain that suggested job losses may have bottomed out. **A recession ends when employment and output start to pick up again, not when they reach their pre-recession levels. So it's possible that the recession could technically end soon.**

That would make the current recession the shortest and deepest on record. It is expected to be followed by an extended recovery before the economy manages to regain its pre-pandemic levels of production and employment. Some economists say it could take two years or more, with the unemployment rate likely still 10% or higher at the end of this year.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/new-zealand-says-coronavirus-eliminated-and-life-can-resume-without-restrictions/ar-BB15aizM?li=BBnb7Kz

June 8

New Zealand says coronavirus 'eliminated' and life can resume without restrictions

WELLINGTON, June 8 (Reuters) - **New Zealand** has eliminated transmission of the coronavirus domestically and **will lift all containment measures except for border controls**, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday, **making it one of the first countries to do so.**

Public and private events, the retail and hospitality industries and all public transport could resume without social distancing norms still in place across much of the world, she said.

"While the job is not done, there is no denying this is a milestone ... Thank you, New Zealand," Ardern told reporters.

"We are confident we have eliminated transmission of the virus in New Zealand for now, but elimination is not a point in time, it is a sustained effort."

The South Pacific nation of about five million people is emerging from the pandemic while big economies such as Brazil, Britain, India and the United States grapple with the spreading virus.

This was largely due to 75 days of restrictions including about seven weeks of a strict lockdown in which most businesses were shut and everyone except essential workers had to stay at home.

"Today, 75 days later, we are ready," Ardern told a news conference, announcing the government would drop social

There were no active cases in New Zealand for the first time since the virus arrived in late February, the health ministry said. New Zealand has reported 1,154 infections and 22 deaths from the disease.

New Zealand vowed to eliminate, not just contain, the virus. This means stopping transmission for an extended period after the last known case is cleared, while being ready to quickly detect and isolate any new cases including from abroad.

New Zealanders cheered the lifting of curbs and the topic quickly trended on Twitter. Rugby fans in particular were looking forward to attending stadiums to watch the opening games of the domestic competition this weekend.

Return to Timeline

www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/coronavirus-asymptomatic-spread-appears-to-be-rare-who-official-says/ar-BB15dgkO?li=BBnb7Kz

June 9

Asymptomatic spread 'appears to be rare,' WHO official says

The spread of Covid-19 by someone who is not showing symptoms appears to be rare, Maria Van Kerkhove, the World Health Organization's technical lead for coronavirus response and head of the emerging diseases and zoonoses unit, said during a media briefing in Geneva on Monday.

"From the data we have, it still seems to be rare that an asymptomatic person actually transmits onward to a secondary individual," Van Kerkhove said on Monday.

"We have a number of reports from countries who are doing very detailed contact tracing. They're following asymptomatic cases, they're following contacts and they're not finding secondary transmission onward. It is very rare -- and much of that is not published in the literature," she said. "We are constantly looking at this data and we're trying to get more information from countries to truly answer this question. It still appears to be rare that an asymptomatic individual actually transmits onward."
...
Many people with Covid-19 who may appear to be asymptomatic actually could just have mild or atypical symptoms -- or they could be pre-symptomatic, Dr. Manisha Juthani, an infectious diseases specialist and associate professor of medicine and epidemiology at Yale School of Medicine, said in an email to CNN on Monday.

Pre-symptomatic refers to the early stages of an illness, before symptoms have developed, whereas asymptomatic may refer to having no symptoms throughout the course of an infection -- a distinction that Van Kerkhove hinted at during Monday's media briefing.

Juthani, who did not participate in the media briefing and has not reviewed the unpublished data Van Kerkhove cited, said **those findings are not necessarily inconsistent with other estimates regarding how pre-symptomatic spread of the coronavirus can occur.**

A study in April found that viral shedding -- when people may be able to infect others -- could begin two to three days before symptoms appeared. In addition, **the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates in planning scenarios that 40% of coronavirus transmission is occurring before people feel sick.**
...
Overall, **"these findings suggest that if we quarantine and contact trace symptomatic people, we can make a significant dent in the pandemic,"** ...

"Other data available, from studies in several continents confirming that presymptomatic transmission does occur, would suggest that being well does not necessarily mean one cannot transmit SARS-CoV-2," Javid said in part. **"This has important implications for the track/trace/isolate measures being instituted in many countries."**

"European transmission chain in Germany suggested that true asymptomatics rarely transmit. However, those (and many other) studies have found that paucisymptomatic transmission can occur, and in particular, in the **German study, they found that transmission often appeared to occur before or on the day symptoms first appeared,"** Javid said in the statement.

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https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/08/us/meat-processing-plants-coronavirus.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

June 10

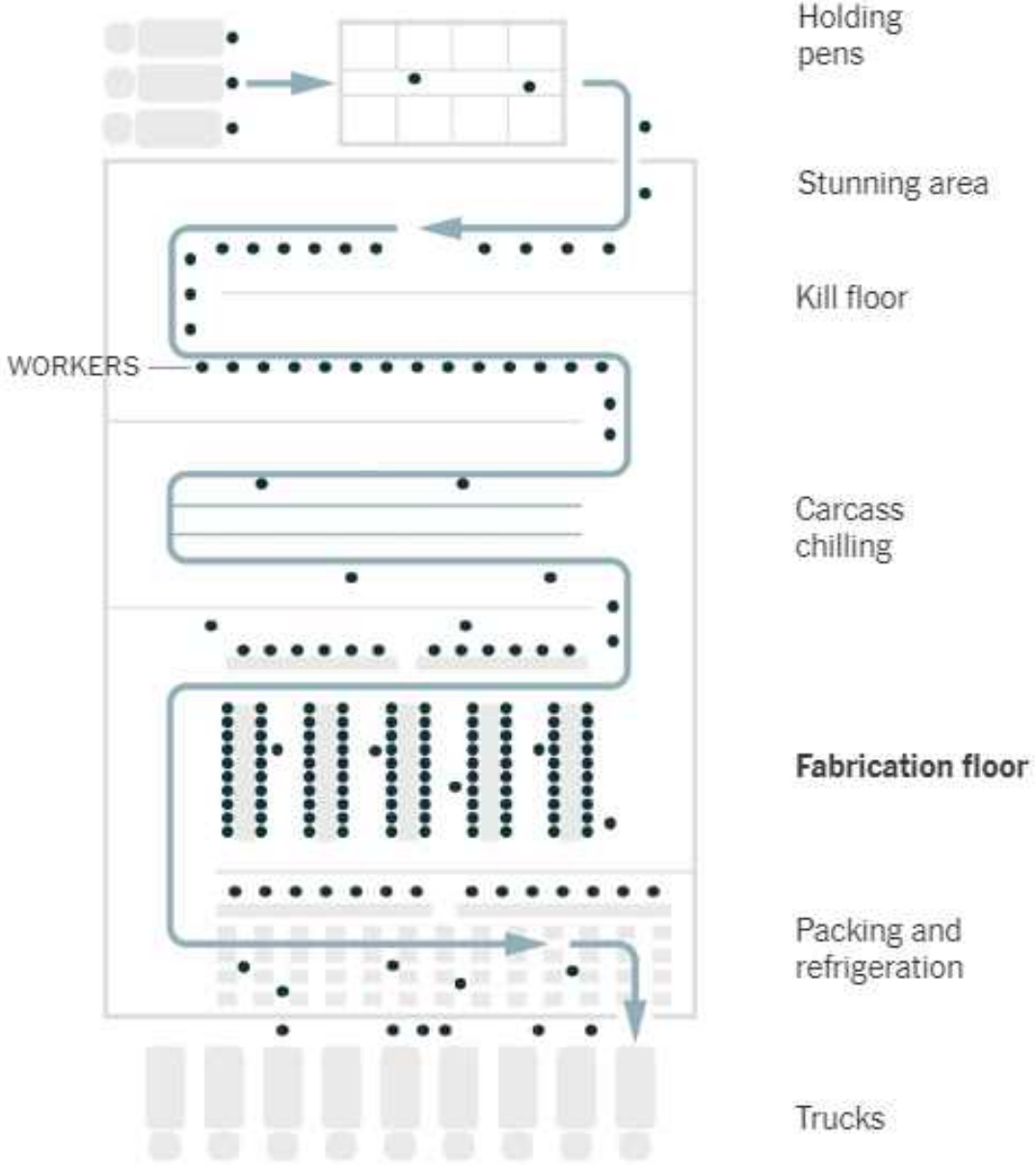
How COVID-19 is changing meatpacking plants

To precisely meet the C.D.C's guidelnes of spacing workers six feet apart, about two out of every three workers would need to be removed in the densest section of the fabrication floor.

The C.D.C. also advised plants to adjust airflow to minimize potential exposure to the cornonavirus, but this could mean a big financial investment for older facilities wiht less modern ventilation systems.

...

In the United States, about half a million pigs are killed for meat every day. Because a very small number of plants control a large share of production in the country, **any changes to the assembly line could have a big impact on prices and availability of meat.** Pork production was down 6 percent for the week ending May 30 from a year ago because of slowed production.



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https://oklahoman.com/article/5664234/oklahoma-farmers-seeing-lower-prices-for-crops-amid-economic-upheaval

June 10

Farmers affected by COVID-19

HOBART, OKLAHOMA — Zack Harris looked across his wheat fields earlier this year. He liked what he saw. His wheat crop was lush and green. He expected to have a strong yield. And wheat prices, he said, weren't bad.

In mid-March, that all changed. Businesses shuttered and stocks tumbled as fears of the coronavirus spread across the nation.

But why did wheat prices fall? People didn't stop eating.

"It's disheartening," Harris said. "Traditional supply and demand doesn't really affect the pricing of our livelihood anymore."

Farmers like Harris are at the mercy of those who run commodities exchanges, places where companies set prices for goods and trade them.

Seeds are purchased and planted in the late summer and early fall. Once that wheat grows, the crop is harvested and sold in the late spring and early summer.

Harris started harvesting his 4,600 acres of wheat in late May. Prices are down and so are his crop yields. A drought hit crops at the end of the month, and a freeze came at the end of April. At the start of May, a hail storm damaged crops.

Now, he's losing money. And he can't control that.

"When we planted the crop, we could justify a small profit in a wheat crop," Harris said. "Two months ago, the price was better, and the yield outlook was better."

The wheat is going to produce a smaller yield per acre, and the crop will sell for a lower price than expected, Harris said.

Zack Harris stands in front of a wheat field near Hobart June 1. [JORDAN GREEN/THE OKLAHOMAN]

My small profit of $20, $30, $40 or $50 per acre becomes a $50 loss per acre," Harris said. "Times that by, like I said, 4,000-plus acres."

Wheat prices have been on a downward trend since August 2018. The global price of wheat at the time was nearly $211 per metric ton, data from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis shows.

Harris and his family have grown a number of crops over the years including wheat, cotton, alfalfa and milo. They also raise cattle. Picking which crop to plant is difficult when markets fluctuate.

"It just kind of depends on if and where there's ever any profit in a crop," he said. "We try to rotate to that if the conditions allow."
...

Farmers have to take out loans to purchase equipment, seed and pay employees. Once they take the crop to market, someone else turns a profit — even if a farmer loses money.

"People don't understand anymore ... the dollars it takes to put the grain in the tank, to get it to town and to get it to the flour mill so the flour mill can grind it up. And then send it to the guy who makes the bread, and the Wonder Bread gets hauled to your United Supermarket or Walmart Supercenter," Harris said.

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https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-facts-history.html?algo=identity&fellback=false&imp_id=104115796&action=click&module=Science%20%20Technology&pgtype=Homepage#link-

June 10

Six Months of Coronavirus: Here's Some of What We've Learned

We don't really know when the novel coronavirus first began infecting people. But as we turn a page on our calendars into June, it is fair to say that Sars-Cov-2 has been with us now for a full six months.

At first, it had no name or true identity. Early in January, news reports referred to strange and threatening symptoms that had sickened dozens of people in a large Chinese city with which many people in the world were probably not familiar. After half a year, that large metropolis, Wuhan, is well-known, as is the coronavirus and the illness it causes, Covid-19.

In that time, many reporters and editors on the health and science desk at The New York Times have shifted our journalistic focus as we have sought to tell the story of the coronavirus pandemic. While much remains unknown and mysterious after six months, there are some things we're pretty sure of. These are some of those insights.

Here are some things we think we know about coronavirus:

- **We'll have to live with this for a long time**
- **You should be wearing a mask**
- **American public health infrastructure needs an update**
- **Responding to the virus is extraordinarily expensive**
- **We have a long way to go to fix virus testing**
- **We can't count on herd immunity to keep us healthy**
- **The virus produces more symptoms than expected**
- **We can worry a bit less about infection from surfaces**
- **We can also worry less about a mutating virus**
- **We can't count on warm weather to defeat the virus**

Return to Timeline

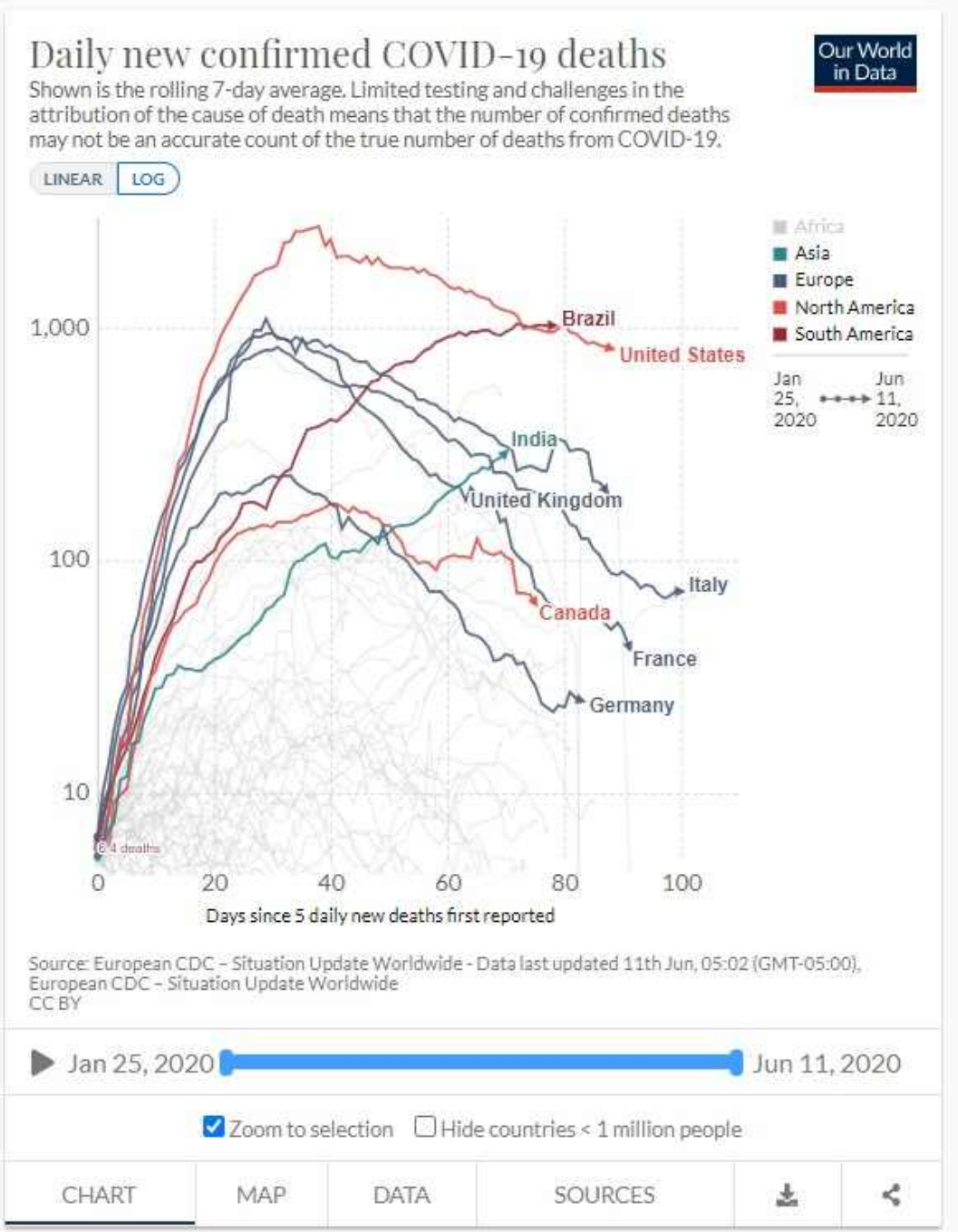
https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus

June 11

Rolling 7-day average of new confirmed deaths by country

... Limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death means that the number of confirmed deaths may not be an accurate count of the true number of deaths from COVID-19...

For an interactive version and additional charts, select live link at top of this page.



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https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html

June 12

Coronavirus in the US: An overview of the case count

More than 2,034,100 people in the United States have been infected with the coronavirus and at least 113,900 have died, according to a New York Times database...

Though the number of new deaths has been curving downward, the virus continues to circulate widely within the United States. As states move to partly reopen their economies, thousands of new cases are still being identified each day and true normalcy remains a distant vision. Every day, more beloved events are scrubbed from the calendar. There will be no Mountain Brewers Beer Fest in Idaho, no Paperfest in Wisconsin, no Dragon Boat Bash in Iowa.
...
In late February, there were just a few dozen known cases in the United States, most of them linked to travel. But by late spring, **the virus had torn through every state, infecting more people than the combined populations of Montana and Vermont, and killing more Americans than can fit in an N.F.L. stadium.** Despite some progress, new hotspots continue to emerge and hundreds more people are dying each day.

American life has been fundamentally reordered because of the virus. Concerts, parades and baseball games have been called off. Unemployment claims have spiked. Some governors have imposed quarantine requirements on Americans who cross state lines. And even as states reopen, officials have warned that the virus was likely to remain a persistent threat.

The New York Times is engaged in a comprehensive effort to track the details of every coronavirus case in the United States, collecting information from federal, state and local officials around the clock. The numbers in this article are being updated several times a day based on the latest information our journalists are gathering from around the country. The Times has made that data public in hopes of helping researchers and policymakers as they seek to slow the pandemic and prevent future ones.
...
The nation's most populous places have all suffered tremendously. In Cook County, Ill., which includes Chicago, deaths number in the thousands. In Los Angeles County, Calif., at least 64,000 people have had the virus. And **in New York City, about one of every 400 residents has died.**

But unlike in the early days of the pandemic, it is not so simple to say that big cities have been hit hardest. **On a per capita basis, the places with the most cases have been small cities and rural communities in the Midwest and South.**
...
Coronavirus outbreaks have been traced to funerals, fast food restaurants, cruise ships and Navy vessels. But most of the biggest known clusters have been in nursing homes, food processing plants and correctional facilities ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/what-the-who-meant-to-say-about-asymptomatic-people-spreading-the-coronavirus

June 12

What the W.H.O. meant to say about asymptomatics spreading the Coronavirus

... [Asymptomatics] ...can and do spread the disease, and the W.H.O. knows it. As Michael Ryan, an Irish epidemiologist and a veteran of two Ebola epidemics and the campaign to eradicate polio, who is leading the W.H.O.'s response to covid-19, said on Tuesday, **"It's clear that both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals are part of the transmission cycle."** Ryan was speaking at a Facebook Live event that the W.H.O. had hastily convened to offer a "clarification" of remarks that his colleague Maria Van Kerkhove, an American epidemiologist who is the team's lead technical consultant, had made the day before, in which, out of context, she seemed to say that such transmission was "very rare," inspiring the startling headlines. There had been a "misunderstanding," Van Kerkhove said at the event; there was no new statement or policy, whatever the impression. "Maybe we didn't use the most elegant words," Ryan said.

...

The source of the confusion is an answer that Van Kerkhove gave to a question from Reuters about new findings from Singapore which indicate that a strikingly high number of people with covid-19 are asymptomatic—perhaps as many as half. (That conclusion came as Singapore increased testing.) Van Kerkhove began with a disquisition on whether people who think they are asymptomatic are really asymptomatic or whether they have very mild symptoms or ones that are "not quote-unquote covid symptoms." She also noted that there is a distinction between truly asymptomatic infected people, who never experience any effects, and presymptomatic infected people, who eventually feel something. Then, without quite clarifying which kind of asymptomatic person she was talking about, she brought up some "reports" from unnamed W.H.O. member countries that have engaged in "detailed contact tracing" of asymptomatic people and are "not finding secondary transmission onward"; however, much of that information was unpublished, she said, and thus neither peer-reviewed nor publicly available, and the W.H.O. was "trying to get more information from countries to truly answer this question." In that very preliminary, narrow context, she said, it "still appears to be rare that an asymptomatic individual transmits onward." But, as she said in the Facebook event, she did not mean that this applied "globally." She was talking only about "a small subset of studies"; like Ryan, **she noted that asymptomatic people can transmit the disease.**

...

Also, **the virus is present in the upper respiratory tract, so it appears that it can spread simply through..."singing, speaking loudly, exertion, maybe in a gym . . . shouting in a night club because you can't hear your friend." (Coughing and sneezing, of course, are likely to spread virus-bearing droplets farther through the air, which is a reason that symptomatic patients could infect more people; an unanswered question is how much each group drives the pandemic.)**

...

An obvious lesson from the episode is that the W.H.O. must communicate better ...

Return to Timeline

https://www.businessinsider.com/fauci-normality-could-be-year-away-as-coronavirus-infections-rise-2020-6

June 14

Dr. Fauci says some ‘normality’ could be a year away

White House infectious disease expert Dr Anthony Fauci has warned of waves of coronavirus infection for months to come, and that **normality will only return "within a year or so."**

In an interview with the Telegraph published on Sunday, Fauci said he was concerned about the ongoing protests that are sweeping the nation —and the world — following the death of George Floyd ... The mass gatherings had the potential to become hotspots of coronavirus infection. “I'm concerned it's happening. I hope the individual states can blunt that. It [the virus] could go on for a couple of cycles, coming back and forth."

I would hope to get to some degree of real normality within a year or so. But I don't think it's this winter or fall, we'll be seeing it for a bit more, he said."

Fauci's comments come as the coronavirus cases are rising in more than a dozen US states, prompting some governors to reconsider their reopening plans.

"We were successful in suppressing the virus in cities where there were major outbreaks — New York, Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans," Dr Fauci said. "But we're seeing several states, as they try to reopen and get back to normal, starting to see early indications [that] infections are higher than previously.

At least 21 states in the country have seen a rise in their average daily new coronavirus cases, according to The Washington Post, with **Alabama, Oregon, and South Carolina witnessing some of the biggest increases.**

In Florida, coronavirus cases surged 35% on Saturday over the previous day to 2,581 cases. The Sunshine State has now hit a total of 73,552.

It was the third record jump in three days running of new COVID-19 cases, reported The Miami Herald. The Republican Party is planning to hold its convention in the state, in August.

On Thursday, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced a week-long postponement of applications to reopen.

In a statement cited in Reuters, Brown said: "This is essentially a statewide 'yellow light,' it's time to press pause for one week before any further reopening."

In Utah, Gov. Gary Herbert ordered most of the state to stop reopening until June 26 while it looked into a new spike in cases.

"I don't want to go forward and then take a step backward," Herbert said on Friday, according to Reuters.

Speaking to CNN earlier this week, Fauci told CNN that the **country is bound to see an increase in infection numbers as economies start reopening, but that if states are seeing "more [COVID-19] hospitalizations", its a sign that they are "going the wrong direction."**

This week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced new coronavirus guidelines that encourage cloth face coverings while attending large events demonstrations or political rallies.

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https://www.businessinsider.com/face-masks-social-distancing-curb-spread-coronavirus-research-2020-6

June 14

Growing body of research shows the role of face coverings in curbing the spread of the coronavirus

... A review and meta-analysis funded by the World Health Organization and published in The Lancet, a peer-reviewed medical journal, examined data from 172 studies from 16 countries and six continents.

Without a mask, the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is 17.4%

With an N95 respirator or face mask, that number drops to 3.1%

"Our findings continued to support the ideas not only that masks in general are associated with a large reduction in risk of infection from SARS-CoV-2, SARS-CoV, and MERS-CoV but also that N95 or similar respirators might be associated with a larger degree of protection from viral infection than disposable medical masks or reusable multilayer (12–16-layer) cotton masks," the review's authors wrote.

Similarly, **maintaining between three and six feet of distance from others reduces the infection rate from 12.8% to 2.6%**
...
eye protection hasn't been a standard recommendation like regular hand-washing. But the Lancet review found that **wearing goggles or a faceshield brings the transmission rate down from 16% to 5.5%**
...
A study that was published by the nonprofit Institute of Labor Economics (IZA) investigated the German city of Jena and arrived at similar conclusions about the efficacy of face masks.

"After face masks were introduced on 6 April 2020, the number of new infections fell almost to zero," the authors wrote, adding that the face coverings were most helpful in curbing the infection rate among people who were above 60 years old.

"**We believe that the reduction in the growth rates of infections by 40% to 60% is our best estimate of the effects of face masks** . . . We should also stress that 40 to 60% might still be a lower bound," they added.

The study went on to say that masks could have made a more significant impact if they had been used earlier and more widely. It wasn't until April 20 and April 29 that all German federal states made it compulsory to wear face coverings.

"The daily growth rates in the number of infections when face masks were introduced was around 2 to 3%," the study's authors wrote. "These are very low growth rates compared to the early days of the epidemic in Germany, where daily growth rates also lay above 50%. One might therefore conjecture that the effects might have been even greater if masks had been introduced earlier. "

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/why-a-second-covid-19-shutdown-might-be-worse-than-the-first-and-how-to-prevent-it/ar-BB15u2sb?li=BBnb7Kz

June 15

Why a second Covid-19 shutdown might be worse than the first - and how to prevent it

... **"Because of quarantine fatigue, because of the economic effects of quarantine, another round of shutdowns might have even larger effects on businesses that may be on the edge of not being able to stay solvent,"** said Dr. Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

The economic toll from one round of shutdowns has been staggering. More than 44 million people in the United States have filed for initial unemployment benefits since mid-March.

But the pandemic is far from over. More than 115,000 Americans have died from coronavirus, and hundreds more are dying from the virus every day.

"Covid's not taking a summer vacation," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious diseases expert and professor at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

“It's actually having new opportunities to spread."

... **the consequences of another shutdown would be wide-ranging, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.**

"We can't shut down the economy again," Mnuchin told CNBC. "I think we've learned that if you shut down the economy, you're going to create more damage. And not just economic damage, but ... medical problems and everything else that get put on hold."

But the federal government hasn't been in control of shutdowns and reopenings. Those have been at the discretion of each state.

"If you run out of hospital beds, and you run out of ICU beds ... (states would) have to shut down," said Reiner.

Second shutdowns aren't just possible -- they've already happened in some parts of the world during this pandemic.

Hong Kong and Singapore seemed to have coronavirus under control and started easing restrictions -- only to have major resurgences that led to stricter rules.

Japan's second-largest island, Hokkaido, also shut down to control the spread of coronavirus. "But they opened too quickly," Reiner said, leading to a Covid-19 comeback.

"They shut down again. And that's how they extinguished the virus."

While states try to revive the economy, **the fate of this pandemic is largely up to individuals.**

"People must observe the safety guidelines," top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said.

"Social distancing must be observed. Face coverings in key places must be observed."...

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/06/15/fda-pulls-emergency-use-authorization-of-hydroxychloroquine/24524393/

June 15

FDA pulls emergency use authorization of hydroxychloroquine

The Food and Drug Administration **rescinded the emergency use authorization for hydroxychloroquine** to treat hospitalized COVID-19 patients on Monday, **saying the drug carries too many risks without any apparent benefit.**

The EUA was first issued in March, and applied to patients hospitalized with the illness and those in clinical trials. In April, the FDA warned doctors against prescribing the drug to COVID-19 patients outside of those settings. Monday's action will not impact clinical trials, which are expected to continue.

The announcement covers both hydroxychloroquine and a related compound, chloroquine phosphate.

The decades-old drugs are traditionally used treat malaria and certain autoimmune conditions, including lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, and the FDA's announcement does not apply to these uses.

Hydroxychloroquine first gained attention as a potential COVID-19 treatment in February, when two small studies suggested it might be useful against the virus. President Donald Trump encouraged its use, even saying in May that he took the medication to prevent COVID-19, despite any evidence it would work. In fact, **a study published in early June found hydroxychloroquine was no better than a placebo at preventing coronavirus infection.**

Other research has also failed to find any benefit to treating COVID-19 patients with hydroxychloroquine. It does carry known risks.

"In light of ongoing serious cardiac adverse events and other serious side effects, the known and potential benefits" of hydroxychloroquine no longer outweigh those risks, the FDA wrote on its website Monday.

JOHN LOCHER – AP

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https://www.foxnews.com/science/covid-19-12-times-deadlier-patients-with-underlying-health-conditions-cdc

June 16

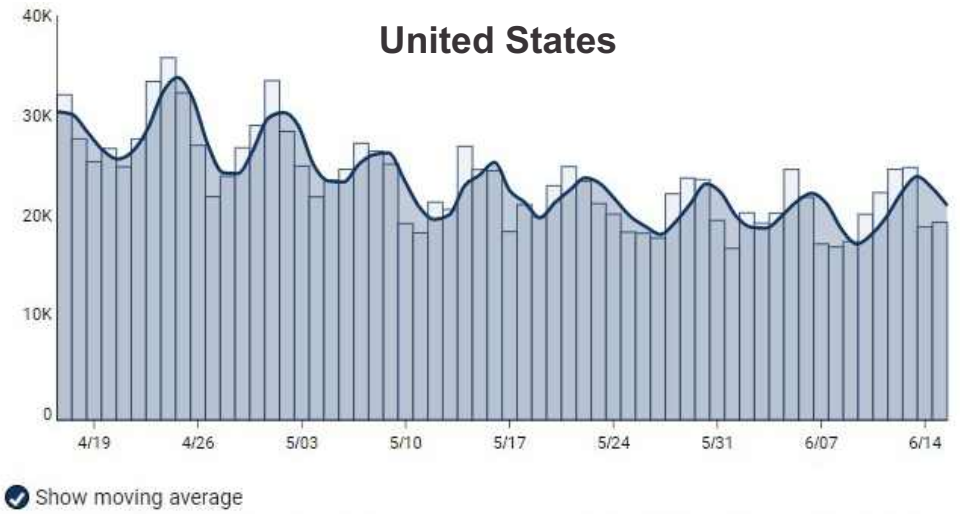
New Cases by Date (and State)

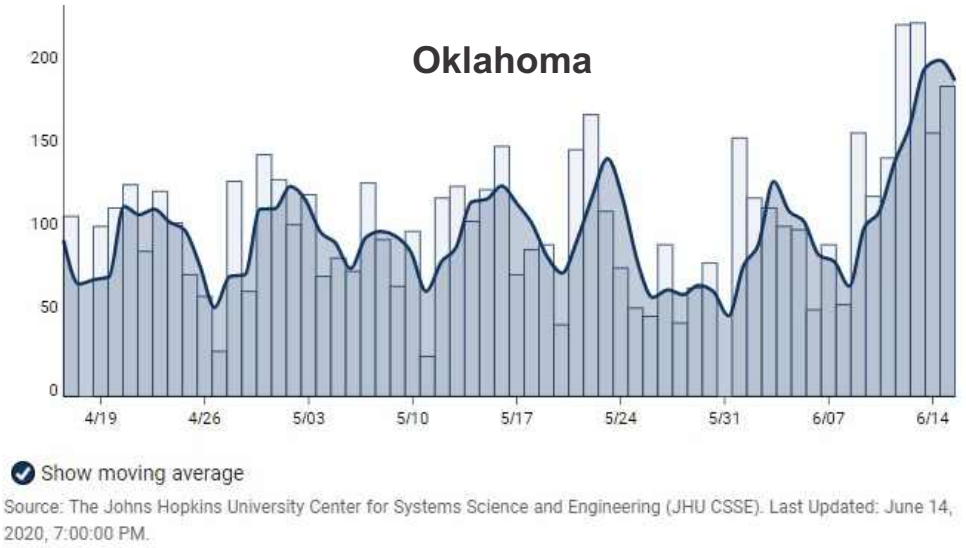
...The [graphs illustrate] the number of cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.

Select the link about and scroll down the page to "COVID US CASES Interactive"

Then use the dropdown to select specific states to see their number of cases day by day.

As of Tuesday morning, over 8 million coronavirus cases have been diagnosed worldwide, with over 2.1 million in the U.S., according to data from Johns Hopkins University. The disease has accounted for at least 437,283 deaths around the world, including at least 116,127 in the U.S.





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https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-exactly-do-you-catch-covid-19-there-is-a-growing-consensus-11592317650?mod=e2fb&fbclid=IwAR1PMbOf0z7rD31dgpBaJgLiVB0a3Judf237ElHySMZL6S06Lc8nE6BYVGU

June 16

How exactly do you catch COVID-19? There is a growing consensus

...
It's not common to contract Covid-19 from a contaminated surface, scientists say. And fleeting encounters with people outdoors are unlikely to spread the coronavirus.

Instead, the major culprit is close-up, person-to-person interactions for extended periods. **Crowded events, poorly ventilated areas and places where people are talking loudly—or singing** ...

wiping down surfaces and putting in hand-sanitizer stations in ... is good, **the bigger risks are close-range face-to-face interactions, and having lots of people in an enclosed space for long periods** ...

A Recipe for Infection

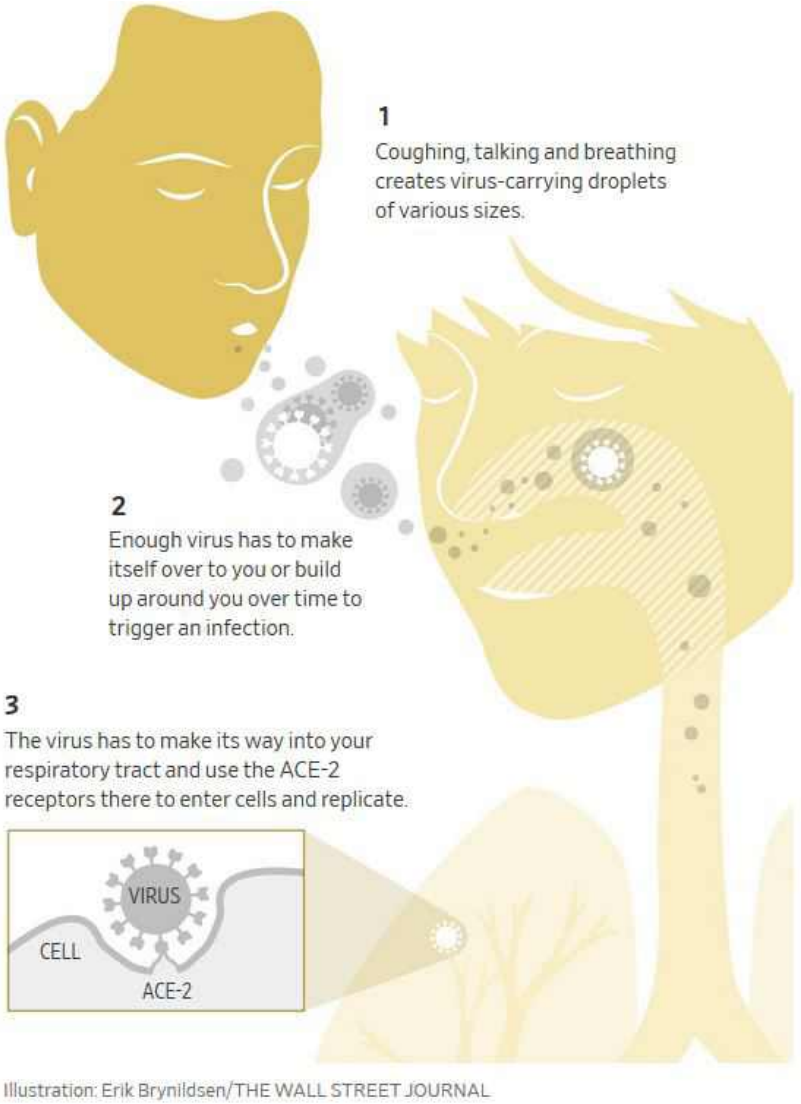

Illustration: Erik Brynildsen/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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https://www.newsweek.com/buying-new-covid-19-treatment-dexamethasone-illegally-online-dangerous-1511408

June 17

Dexamethasone lowers deaths in seriously ill patients

... Dexamethasone is an existing steroid drug that prevents the body from releasing substances that cause inflammation. Available as a tablet or injection, it is already used to treat conditions including ulcerative colitis, arthritis, lupus, psoriasis and breathing problems.

On Tuesday, researchers at the University of Oxford in the U.K. announced **dexamethasone was found to reduce deaths by one-third in hospitalized COVID-19 patients hooked up to ventilators, and a fifth in those requiring oxygen. They found it had no benefit to those who did not need respiratory support.** The study involving 2,104 patients was part of the university's RECOVERY trial into potential COVID-19 treatments.

The findings have not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal, meaning other experts have not been able to assess the team's data.

Following the announcement, Google searches in the U.S related to dexamethasone spiked, including terms such as "buy," "buy online," and "prevent COVID." While some searches appeared to be related to buying stocks in companies that sell the drug, related queries included "where can I buy dexamethasone," and "dexamethasone over the counter," suggesting an interest in taking it.

In the U.S., the drug is only available with a doctor's prescription. Experts told Newsweek the general public should not try to buy dexamethasone from illicit websites.
....
Ayfer Ali, assistant professor in the Strategy and International Group specializing in drug repurposing at the U.K.'s Warwick Business School, told Newsweek: **"It is really important to stress that dexamethasone has not been shown to lower deaths in mild disease and we have no data on whether it modifies disease duration in any of the patients.**

"Dexamethasone is an immunosuppressant that can theoretically make early disease worse and make one more susceptible to get ill with COVID-19 if used for those who don't have the disease. We just don't know."

Echoing their concerns, Ian Hall, professor of molecular medicine at the University of Nottingham told Newsweek: "Currently there is no evidence it works in patients with milder disease, and people should not take dexamethasone, which is a powerful steroid with significant side effects if used inappropriately, outside of the guidelines."

Asked whether there are concerns that the public might try to take dexamethasone, Stephen Evans, professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told Newsweek via email: **"We have seen that the public can do some crazy things in this pandemic, sometimes influenced by ignorant people so, yes, it's possible, but we hope people may be more sensible."**

He said: **"Steroids have many side-effects and using them when there is no benefit is very foolish. It is for use by doctors in hospitals for very sick patients, not for those in the community and definitely not for prevention."**

Commenting more widely on the results of the trial, Evans said: "There is a process by which the virus moves to infect someone, cause disease and cause death. Dexamethasone is relevant right at the end of that process in being the first drug to convincingly show a reduction (not total prevention by any means) in death from COVID-19."

He went on: "It is good news, but it is not a complete answer. **We will need a variety of drugs to act at different stages of the disease process** and to deal with different aspects of the disease, such as coagulation problems, as well as hopefully several different effective vaccines, so the battle is not won, but it is a good step towards it."

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https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/06/17/879038308/brazil-reports-big-surge-in-coronavirus-infections

June 17

Brazil reports big surge in COVID-19 cases

Several COVID-19 burials are performed in the Vila Formosa Cemetery on the east side of São Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday. Brazil, which reported a large spike in cases on Monday, now ranks second after the U.S. for total infections and deaths.
Fotoarena/Sipa USA via AP

Brazil on Tuesday reported a national record of nearly 35,000 new coronavirus cases in a 24-hour period, even as the government has insisted that the outbreak is under control.

The health ministry added 34,918 new cases, but **Brazilian media, in collaboration with state health departments, said the figure was probably undercounted by a few thousand. The ministry also announced 1,282 additional COVID-19 deaths, bringing the total to more than 45,000 since the pandemic began.**

In the number of confirmed cases and deaths attributed to the disease, **Brazil now ranks second only to the U.S.**

Meanwhile, Walter Braga Netto, a top Brazilian government official dealing with the response to the outbreak, said Tuesday: "There is a crisis, we sympathize with bereaved families, but it is managed."

Netto's statement is in line with President Jair Bolsonaro's consistent efforts to downplay the danger posed by the disease. The right-wing Bolsonaro, who has called the new coronavirus "a little flu" and campaigned against shutdowns, has been widely accused of endangering the public.

He has said that the economic costs of remaining in lockdown outweigh the risk to public health.
In April, Bolsonaro fired then-Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta over the official's support of broad isolation measures recommended by the World Health Organization and international medical experts.

Most of the infections in Brazil have been concentrated in the heavily populated states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and in the northeast.

Despite the uptick in cases, Brazil's towns and cities, urged on by Bolsonaro, have been gradually re-opening for business.

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https://oklahoman.com/article/5664772/coronavirus-in-oklahoma-oklahoma-sets-new-daily-record-for-covid-19-infections?no_cache=1&utm_source=SFMC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Oklahoman%20breaking-news%202020-06-

June 17

Oklahoma sets new daily record for COVID-19 infections

Oklahoma confirmed 228 new COVID-19 infections Tuesday — setting a new state record and continuing a recent trend that has doctors warning residents they need to be more cautious.

"We have reached a peak that is higher than at any other point in the pandemic here in the state," said Dr. Dale Bratzler, OU Medicine's chief enterprise quality officer. "We are bending the curve — sadly in the wrong direction."

...

"It is the density of people in an enclosed space that translates into spread of the infection," Bratlzer said. "I don't care what event it is, if you bring a lot of people into a space that's relatively closed, there's an increased risk of transmission. ... **The No. 1 intervention you can do to help protect yourself and the people around you is to wear a mask. So I would strongly encourage anybody going out into any public setting ... that they wear a mask."**

...

A lot has happened within the last couple of weeks with Oklahomans gathering at bars and restaurants, attending Memorial Day activities and participating in protest marches, Bratzler said, noting that often masks are not worn and the infection rate is now going up.

"We expect we're periodically going to see local community outbreaks, but what we're seeing now appears to be community spread again," he said.

Bratzler pointed to a chart of the seven-day rolling average of Oklahoma COVID-19 cases that shows the numbers have risen dramatically from a little over 80 just two weeks ago to more than 180 Tuesday.

"Our previous peak was in April and now we're seeing levels of infection that are much, much higher," he said.

...

"The State has more than 80 free mobile testing sites in operation, has implemented a hospital surge plan that has expanded capacity by 40% and has acquired massive amounts of PPE for emergency support. Oklahoma has also prioritized data transparency to empower citizens, business leaders and elected officials across the state on how to make unique accommodations to protect vulnerable populations.

"Oklahoma is prepared to confront COVID-19 until a vaccine is developed."

Bratzler said the spike in confirmed COVID-19 cases can't be attributed to more testing. The state actually performed more tests the week of May 17, but the number of tests that came back positive in the week that followed was only 1.8%. Last week, 4.6% of the tests came back positive.

Hospitalizations remain relatively low, with about 170 people hospitalized who have either been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are under investigation for COVID-19 symptoms, he said.

Bratzler said the **hospitalization rate may be lower because more younger people are being diagnosed with the virus.**

"Part of the reason we may not be seeing as many hospitalizations and deaths is that it is a different demographic right now that are testing positive," he said.

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https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/17/nine-us-states-hit-record-highs-covid-19-mike-pence-calls-fear/

June 17

Nine states hit record highs for COVID-19 cases as Pence calls fear of a second wave 'overblown'

Nine states — **Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina and Texas** — reported either new single-day highs or set a record for seven-day new coronavirus case averages on Tuesday, according to a Washington Post analysis. At least 115,000 people in the United States have died of the coronavirus, and more than 2,126,000 cases have been reported.

Nonetheless, **Vice President Pence said on Tuesday that fears of a second wave of infections were "overblown."** In a Wall Street Journal op-ed, Pence, who leads the White House coronavirus task force, claimed that **"the media has tried to scare the American people."**

Link to Vice President's op-ed in Wall Street Journal:

https://www.wsj.com/articles/there-isnt-a-coronavirus-second-wave-11592327890

Return to Timeline

https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2020/jun/18/coronavirus-live-news-brazil-cases-near-1m-as-who-hails-steroid-treatment-hope?page=with:block-5eebb4c48f08cf3f351369bd#block-5eebb4c48f08cf3f351369bd

June 18

Global Covid-19 death toll passes 450,000

The global death toll from coronavirus has passed 450,000.

The figure stands at 450,435, according to the US-based Johns Hopkins University.

There have been an estimated

118,029 fatalities in the US, the most of any country, followed by

46,510 deaths in Brazil and

42,373 in the UK

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.tulsaworld.com/news/covid-19-oklahoma-numbers-continue-to-spike-with-450-new-cases-2-more-oklahomans-deaths/article_c7bd2ce0-292f-5c3c-bb12-2e4c4efe11b5.html#1

June 19

COVID-19: Oklahoma numbers continue to spike, with 450 new cases, 2 more Oklahomans' deaths announced Thursday

Oklahoma saw a 5.1% jump in the number of COVID-19 cases Thursday, with 450 new cases and two additional deaths.

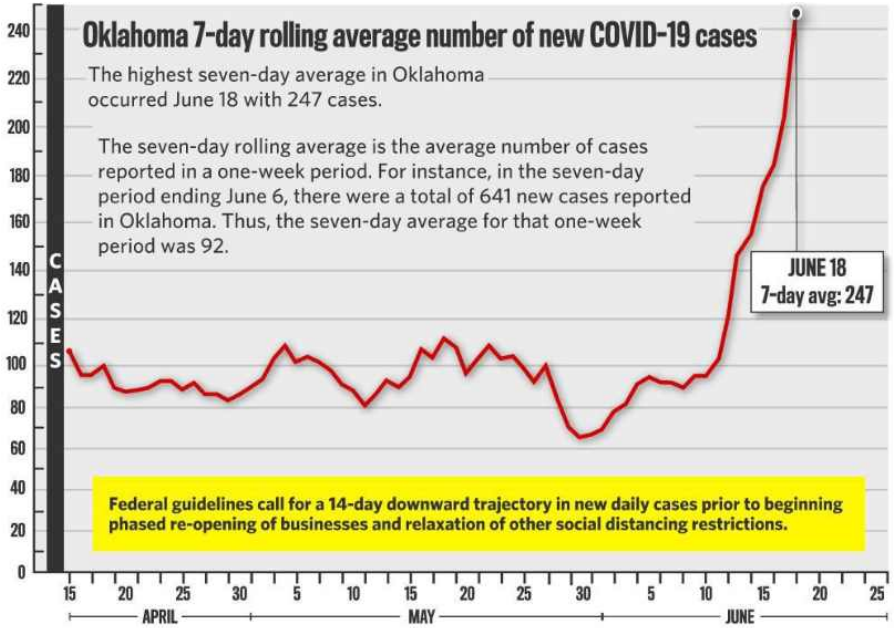
Thursday's numbers, which include **the highest daily count since the pandemic began**, leaves the state with 9,354 cases overall, with more than 1,100 of those coming since Sunday.

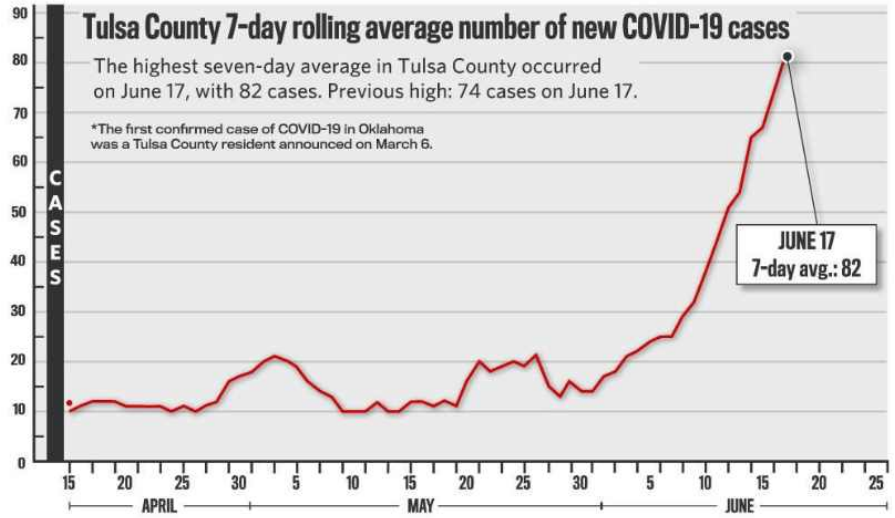
Thursday's numbers, which were delayed from their regular 11 a.m. release time because of reported technical difficulties, continue a sharp upward trend going back to late May.

Tulsa County has 120 additional cases, up more than 6%, and one more death, according to state data.

Thursday's continued spike saw Tulsa County's seven-day rolling average of new cases rise to 81.9. There are 654 active cases in the county, according to Tulsa Health Department data.

Statewide hospitalization numbers saw an increase in confirmed COVID-19 patients, with 76 of 129 of those in intensive care. Another 82 people remain under investigation for possible COVID-19, with 20 of those in ICU, according to state data.





SOURCE: Oklahoma State Health Department. Rolling averages based on criteria established by state and county health officials.

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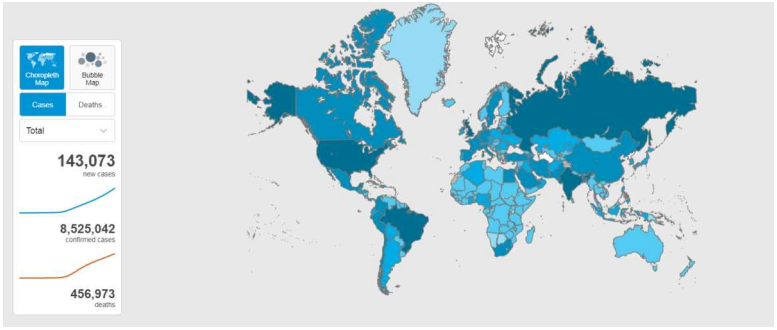
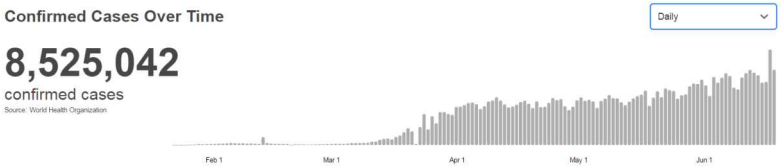
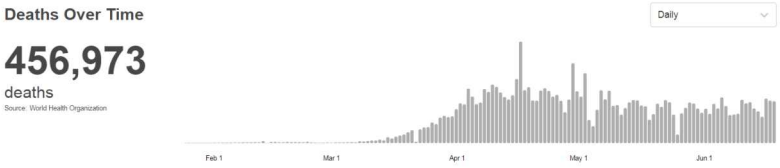
https://covid19.who.int/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgPz70-qR6gIVEvDACh1aLw9eEAMYASAAEgJLO_D_BwE

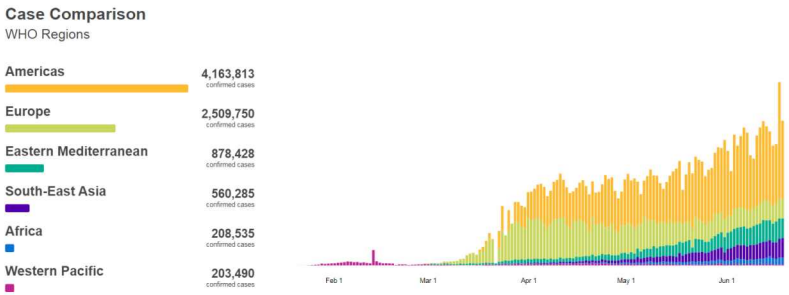
June 20

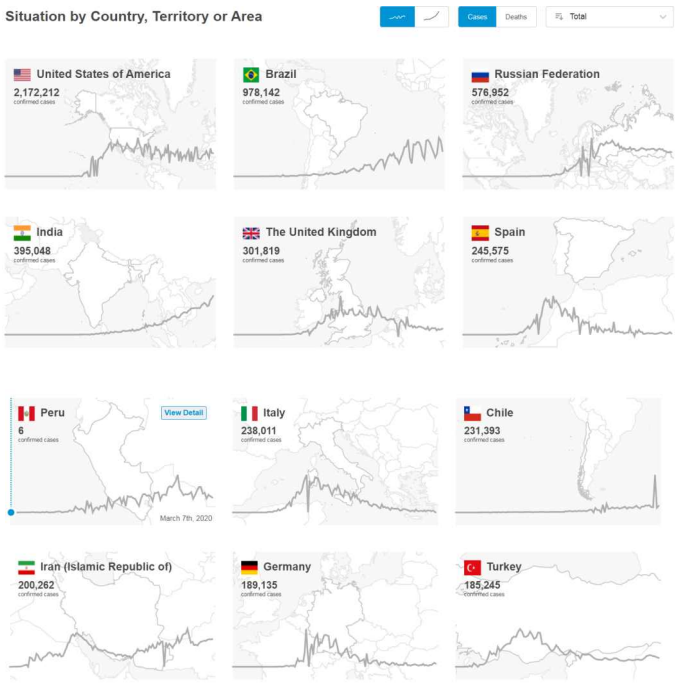
World Health Organization - Charts and graphs by the day











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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/health-news/who-announces-biggest-single-day-rise-in-covid-19-cases-globally/ar-BB15ORPB?li=BBnb7Kz

June 22

WHO announces biggest single day rise in COVID-19 cases globally

The World Health Organization has reported the biggest increase in coronavirus cases in a single day, with the **Americas bearing the brunt.** ...

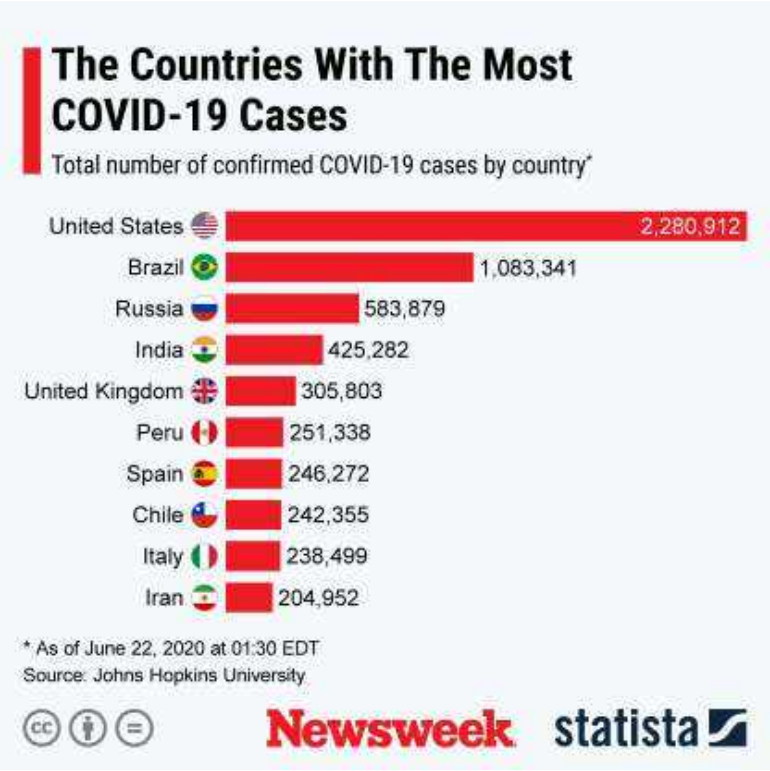
However, a model by Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) indicates that Brazil could surpass the U.S. and lead the world in deaths by August 1.

Last week, **experts told Newsweek the U.S. could soon be hit by a rise in deaths, as cases have recently spiked in the south and west, and fatalities lag diagnoses.**

Amanda M. Simanek, associate professor in epidemiology at the Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, told Newsweek **the surge in cases may be the result of lockdown measures being eased too soon and/or increasing testing capacity with more cases getting detected.**

"In many states, recent increases in cases are related to outbreaks of COVID-19 in food production facilities and congregate settings such as jails or assisted living centers where there is often rapid spread and a high number of cases detected in a short time frame, particularly when targeted testing is carried out," she said.

However, Peter Drobac, a physician and specialist in infectious diseases and public health at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford, U.K., told Newsweek **the idea increased testing is behind the rise is not supported by evidence.**



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https://www.wjcl.com/article/erasing-progress-hospitalizations-now-on-the-rise-as-georgia-covid-cases-hit-new-peak/32943691#

June 23

Hospitalizations now on the rise as Georgia COVID cases hit new peak

ATLANTA (AP) — The number of people hospitalized in Georgia because of COVID-19 rose to 1,000 Monday, erasing a month's worth of progress and showing that an accompanying increase in confirmed infections is leading to serious illness.

Coronavirus infections have been rising throughout June and are now at the highest level since the pandemic began. **Georgia has averaged 1,073 infections reported daily over the last seven days**, according to figures kept by The Associated Press. Since Friday, the average has been higher than the previous peak of 857 set on April 13.
...
The surge in infections comes nearly two months after Georgia began lifting restrictions April 24 on hair salons, gyms, bowling alleys and other businesses that had been forced to close to slow the virus. Restaurants, retail stores and bars have since reopened as well.
...
"What we're seeing is that people are going out and just basically not realizing the virus is still there," Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease expert at Emory University, told reporters in a conference call Monday.

Hospitalizations had fallen steadily beginning in April and through May, bottoming out at 783 on June 7. The numbers have marched steadily upward since.

Deaths trended upward earlier this month, but haven't spiked as infections and hospitalizations have. Still, at the current pace, 8,600 Georgians could die from the virus by the end of the year.
...
Georgia's highest per-capita infection rate remains in Echols County at the Georgia-Florida line, where officials have cited large numbers of infections among farm workers. The second-highest rate is in Chattahoochee County, home to many soldiers at Fort Benning.

Dr. Jodie Guest, an Emory University epidemiologist, said some individual testing sites set up to screen farm workers in south Georgia have shown "staggering rates" of infection — with up to 70% testing positive. At sites established to test poultry workers around Gainesville in northeast Georgia, up to 25% were found to be infected.

Many of those workers live with multiple relatives or even multiple families in single-family homes, Guest said. Or they live in barracks-style housing while performing seasonal labor.

"They're working in crowded conditions and then they're going home and living in crowded conditions as well," Guest said. "We know COVID-19 is going to take off in conditions like that."

Del Rio said there's no evidence so far of outbreaks related to protests against racial injustice that drew large crowds in Atlanta and other Georgia cities in the past month. He said that's likely because those gatherings were held outdoors — and a large number of protesters appear to have worn face masks.

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https://www.healthline.com/health-news/heres-what-happened-in-sweden-and-you-cant-compare-it-to-u-s#Sweden-not-untouched-by-COVID-19

June 23

Sweden not untouched by COVID-19

Sweden's more relaxed approach — coexisting with the new coronavirus rather than declaring war on it — hasn't been entirely painless.

"In terms of the mortality rate per capita from COVID-19, Sweden is not doing as well as the other countries nearby in Scandinavia that are similar but have approached the pandemic in a different way," said Dr. Saahir Khan, assistant clinical professor of infectious disease at UCI Health in Orange, California.

As of May 18, Sweden's per capita death rate was 36 per 100,000, which is higher than the United States at 27 and neighboring Denmark at 9.

Over this past week, Sweden also had the highest per capita death rate for COVID-19 in Europe.

Sweden, Denmark, and other Scandinavian countries all have strong public healthcare systems and low levels of health inequality.

Even with Sweden's lack of a lockdown, the country is still a long way from herd immunity. This is the point at which enough people are immune to a virus that it stops spreading out of control.

Scientists estimate that herd immunity for the new coronavirus occurs at 70 percent.
Recent antibody testing in Sweden found that 7.3 percent of the population had had an infection with the new coronavirus.

Spencer Fox, PhD, a data scientist at the University of Texas at Austin, says this means the country "needs 10 times more infections to actually reach herd immunity to halt the epidemic."
...
Sweden had to adjust its strategy for dealing with COVID-19 after a spike in deaths at long-term care homes. This shows the challenges of letting one segment of society move freely while trying to protect others.

"You may not be at high risk from COVID-19, but as a society we're interconnected — the things we do affect other people," Khan said. "So I would ask people to keep that in mind when they're looking at Sweden's experience with COVID-19."

Sweden's economy has also not come through unscathed. The country has experienced similar economic disruptions as in Denmark and Norway, both of which enacted more strict measures.

https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-19-antibodies-fade-months-study/story?id=71406787

June 24

COVID-19 antibodies may fade in as little as 2 months, study says

... a new study suggests that **antibodies -- the proteins produced by the immune system that can grant protection against reinfection -- may fade in as little as two months after infection in certain people who have recovered from the virus.**
...
The data suggests that asymptomatic people had a weaker immune response to the virus, echoing NIAID Director Anthony Fauci's concerns about varying antibody protection.

"It isn't a uniformly robust antibody response, which may be a reason why, when you look at the history of the common coronaviruses that cause the common cold, the reports in the literature are that the durability of immunity that's protective ranges from 3 to 6 months to almost always less than a year," Fauci said in an interview with JAMA Editor-in-Chief Howard Bauchner.

The study leaves just as many questions as answers. For example, scientists still don't know exactly what these dwindling antibody levels mean, and the lower levels don't necessarily imply that people who have already recovered from COVID-19 will be vulnerable to reinfection within a few months.

However, the study's authors said **their results caution against "immunity passports," or the idea that people who have recovered from infection should be granted some sort of special status to allow them to travel or return to work because they are theoretically totally immune from reinfection.**

Past studies on SARS and MERS, two related coronaviruses that have led to prior outbreaks in people, have found that antibodies last for at least a year. In comparison, this study suggests that antibody levels for the new virus, SARS-CoV-2, may drop much more quickly.

"Given that antibodies are likely a component of COVID-19 protective immunity, this is important to confirm in larger studies," said Dr. Beth Kirkpatrick, chair of the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at the University of Vermont.

Antibodies are not the only immune response the body can generate. Although the immune components that protect against COVID-19 are still unknown, Kirkpatrick said that in some infections, **people can still be protected even if antibodies are undetectably low. That's because their immune system, including the cells that produce antibodies or other parts of the immune system like T cells, carries a memory response that can be boosted rapidly.**

Despite finding innate immunity in most COVID-19 patients, public health officials remain concerned about reinfection. **There is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection,** according to the World Health Organization.

"I think that you're going to see as the immune response wanes in these respiratory infections, there is a possibility that you could get reinfected," said Dr. Robert Garry, professor at the Tulane University School of Medicine.

Garry cautioned, however, that **it's too soon to know what level of immunity is protective.** ...

The mystery surrounding immunity only reinforces the urgent need for a successful vaccine. Both experts agree that more data is needed to confirm the study's findings, but that **the mere presence of antibodies may not be enough to immunize most of the population.**

"Until there's a vaccine, things are not really going to be able to be relaxed to the point where people were doing the things that they were doing before," Garry said.

Return to Timeline

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-24/pandemic-races-through-u-s-forcing-grim-reality-on-states?utm_campaign

June 25

Pandemic rages in the U.S., spurring quarantines and mask orders

...the **U.S. seeing one of its highest-ever increases in cases Wednesday**, some states took drastic measures, imposing face mask orders and internal quarantines. The country recorded more than 34,500 new infections for a second day, rattling markets as numbers neared the peak of 36,188 set April 24, when the virus was coursing through New York.

The resurgence, coming just as the regions first hit by the pandemic start to emerge, reflects the pathogen's inexorable spread in states that were slow to enforce lockdowns or quick to lift them. It also made clear to places where the disease was late to arrive that there are no magical escapes.

Florida and Texas each hit records for cases Wednesday, with health officials in **Houston saying their infrastructure was "overwhelmed." Arizona, meanwhile, reached a peak in hospitalizations. In California, which also saw an all-time high for new infections,** Walt Disney Co. delayed the reopening of its theme parks indefinitely, while Nevada's governor ordered everyone to wear masks in public as some of Las Vegas' biggest casinos made them a condition of entry.

New York, New Jersey and Connecticut set quarantines for incoming travelers from the hot zones, and North Carolina put its reopening on ice for three weeks.

...

In California, which was early to enact statewide shelter-in-place rules in March, Governor Gavin Newsom urged residents to recommit to slowing the pandemic. Newsom, who **last week issued an order requiring face masks in public**, said too many people were letting down their guard against the virus, which has killed more than 5,600 people in the state. California has seen record numbers of confirmed infections and hospitalizations this week, as more businesses open and social justice demonstrations continue.

...

In Florida, leaders rushed to pass mask mandates and crack down on the bars and nightclubs where the pandemic is spreading, including a threat to pull liquor licenses in Orlando.

Texas posted its worst day so far for new cases, with a jump of 5,551 to 125,921, according to the state health department. The 4.6% one-day rise exceeded the 3.7% seven-day average. Hospitalizations climbed by 7.3% to 4,389, the data showed.

...

The fresh surge raised the specter of new shortages of ventilators and gear. **In Colorado, "hospitals have increased their capacity by upwards of 20%,"** Governor Jared Polis said at a news conference. "If we hit much higher levels, we don't currently have the supplies in place to handle that. We would enter another kind of crisis."

...

"I can't see a possibility of any of the states with the increases you are seeing right now not dialing back," Mokdad said. "From a public-health standpoint, shutting down faster, you can open faster and earlier and your economy will open faster and much better."

Nevada's face-mask order came two days after the state saw a single-day record for cases -- most in the county where Las Vegas is located. ...

America is on track to lose 180,000 lives to coronavirus by the start of October,

... **The forecast is predicated on the expectation that the outbreak will pick up in late August and intensify further in September.** If more than 95% of Americans start regularly wearing masks in public, that number would drop to 146,047 deaths...

Return to Timeline

https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/national/coronavirus/cdc-broadens-list-of-people-at-risk-of-severe-covid-19-illness

June 26

CDC broadens its list of people at risk of severe COVID-19 illness

... Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions remain at increased risk for severe illness, but now the CDC has further defined age- and condition-related risks.

...

The agency now warns that among adults, risk increases steadily as you age, and it's not just those over the age of 65 who are at increased risk for severe illness.

...

The CDC has also updated its list of underlying medical conditions that increase risk of severe illness. After reviewing reports, studies and various other data sources, the CDC found there is consistent evidence these specific conditions increase a person's risk of severe COVID-19 illness:

- **Chronic kidney disease**
- **COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)**
- **Obesity (BMI of 30 or higher)**
- **Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant**
- **Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies**
- **Sickle cell disease**
- **Type 2 diabetes**

...

An estimated 60% of American adults have at least one chronic medical condition and obesity is one of the most common underlying conditions that increases one's risk for severe illness – with about 40% of U.S. adults considered obese.

...other conditions that "might" increase a person's risk of severe illness, including additions such as a**sthma, high blood pressure, neurologic conditions such as dementia, cerebrovascular disease such as stroke, and pregnancy.**

...

Officials recommend that everyone do their part to implement prevention strategies, such as focusing on activities where social distancing can be maintained, **washing your hands frequently, limiting contact with and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces or shared items, and wearing a cloth face covering when you are around people you do not live with, especially when it is difficult to stay 6 feet apart or when people are indoors.**

"By taking these steps, you can help protect yourself, your loved ones, and others around you, including those most vulnerable to severe illness," the CDC writes.

https://www.deseret.com/u-s-world/2020/6/26/21303174/coronavirus-covid-19-symptoms-new-latest-update

11 symptoms associated with COVID-19

These symptoms usually appear **two days to two weeks after exposure** to the virus, according to the CDC.

- **Fever or chills**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Fatigue**
- **Muscle or body aches**
- **Headache**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Sore throat**
- **Congestion or runny nose***
- **Nausea* or vomiting**
- **Diarrhea***

**** 3 new symptoms***

Return to Timeline

https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2020/06/26/giant-saharan-dust-cloud-reaches-us-2020-godzilla-version-bigger-than-before/#35ab2ec52c8d

June 26

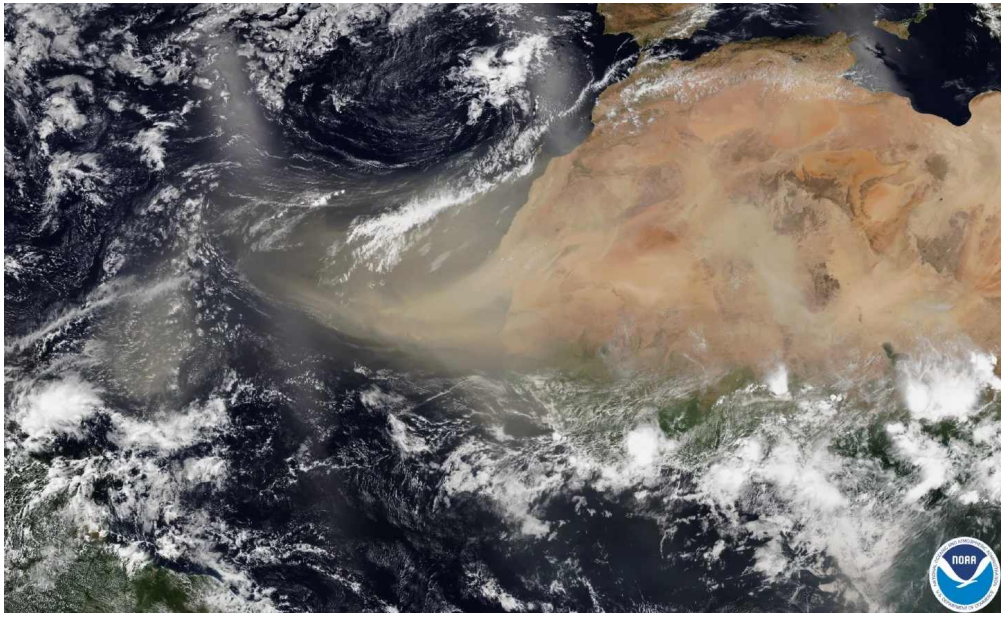
Giant Saharan Dust Cloud Reaches U.S.

As Covid-19 coronavirus cases continue to surge in Florida, Texas, and other Southern States, what would be a terrific thing to have right now? How about a “Godzilla” dust cloud?

Yep, 2020 is bringing to the Southeastern U.S. a massive dust cloud. This isn’t just the type of dust cloud that puffs up when you reach under your bed or open your copy of the book The Secret. It’s an unusually large cloud, nicknamed Godzilla because **it’s potentially the largest such cloud in 50 years.**

What’s unusually large? How about around 3,500 miles or 5,600 km long? That’s **longer than a trip from Miami to Seattle, which is about 3,300 miles** and a lot of vacuum cleaner bags placed end-to-end. Consider that the next time that you claim that something is unusually large.

Godzilla is not the cloud’s official name. It’s technically called the Saharan Air Layer because it’s a traveling layer of air with stuff originating from the Saharan Desert. Winds whipped up particulate matter from the Desert in North Africa, depositing it into the cloud, so to speak. This dust in the wind is a relatively regular (often yearly) occurrence. However, as indicated earlier, this time it’s hella big...



Saharan dust plume, seen by the NOAA-20 satellite on June 17, 2020

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/coronavirus-surge-in-south-and-west-looks-different-from-norths/ar-BB1615Ph?li=BBnb7Kz

June 27

Coronavirus surge in South and West looks different from North's

Younger people are getting sick with Covid-19. States that had brief coronavirus lockdowns are struggling to encourage social distancing and mask-wearing. **Many people appear to have embraced their usual summer rituals**. Health officials are sounding alarms about a surge in cases racing not through nursing homes, but bars and house parties. **Hospitals are filling with medically-vulnerable elderly—but also 20-somethings and patients in their 30s and 40s.**

...

The U.S. has confirmed more than 2.4 million Covid-19 cases, and more than 124,000 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University data as of Friday morning. **New cases have climbed to more than 30,000 a day—back to their April peak**—after dropping to around 20,000 a day in May. **Nearly 40,000 new cases were reported on Thursday, a record; Florida, Texas, California and Arizona accounted for nearly half of the new cases.**

Early hot spots such as New York, New Jersey and Illinois are seeing steady declines in cases, hospitalizations and deaths. New daily Covid-19 cases in states such as Arizona and Texas are reaching records, and hospitalizations are increasing. Texas rolled back its reopening Friday.

"We're still in the first wave, and that first wave is taking different shapes," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield said in a Thursday briefing. The U.S. has improved its testing ability and is seeing more cases in young people, who typically have better outcomes, he said.

But **younger people in Texas and Arizona are taking hospital beds and straining the health-care system**, he said. "These hot spots that we see, I don't minimize them. They're significant," he said.

Arizona's Covid-19 hospitalizations since it reopened May 15 have grown from 789 to 2,110, according to state data Thursday. **Nine of 10 hospital ICU beds were full this week,** state data show. In Texas, nearly 6,000 tested positive for Covid-19 Thursday, versus just over 600 new diagnoses on Memorial Day, state data show; hospitalizations rose to more than 4,700 from just over 1,500 in that period.

...

The steady and broad increase ... can't be tied to any one thing, whether Memorial Day, protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd or other particular events. In general, **public-health experts attribute the rise in cases to people becoming more mobile, congregating in groups and dropping safety measures.**

Increased testing is likely responsible for part of the data shift toward younger people, epidemiologists said. Health officials and doctors are testing more mild and asymptomatic patients nationwide than in March and April, as the availability of tests has grown, they said.

Another possible factor: The virus is spreading in some of the hottest states. People might be staying in the air-conditioned indoors "where you can't physically distance" said Dr. Joe K. Gerald, associate professor of public-health policy and management at University of Arizona. Phoenix temperatures hit 108 Thursday.

Skeptics about that explanation include Dr. McDeavitt, who said he believed Houstonians are outdoors more now than they were in February and March.

The percentage of tests coming back positive is rising around America, which epidemiologists said indicates the disease is spreading. And the percentage of positive tests is now higher in the 18-to-49 age group than among older brackets, CDC data show—a departure from earlier patterns.

...**The more the virus spreads, he said, the harder it is to keep from vulnerable populations**...

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https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/u-s-health-secretary-warns-window-is-closing

June 28

U.S. health secretary warns ‘window is closing’ to curb the coronavirus

WASHINGTON — Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar is stressing that “the window is closing” for the **U.S. to take action to effectively curb the coronavirus.**

Azar pointed to a recent spike in infections, particularly in the South. He says **people have “to act responsibly” by social distancing and wearing face masks especially “in these hot zones.”**

Azar argued that the **U.S. is in a better position than two months ago** in fighting the virus because it is conducting more testing and has therapeutics available to treat COVID-19.

But he acknowledges that **hospitalizations and deaths could increase in the next few weeks**, because it is a lagging indicator.

Texas and Florida reversed course on parts of their reopening and clamped down on bars on Friday as the **daily number of confirmed coronavirus infections in the U.S. surged to an all-time high of 40,000.**

Azar spoke on NBC and CNN.

FILE PHOTO: U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar gives a news conference next to President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington, U.S., February 26, 2020. Photo by Carlos Barria/Reuters.

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https://www.bbc.com/news/world-53212430

June 28

COVID-19 death toll hits 500,000 worldwide

Since the virus emerged in China late last year, there have been more than 10 million cases, Johns Hopkins reports.

Half the world's cases have been in the US and Europe, but Covid-19 is now rapidly growing in the Americas.

The virus is also affecting South Asia and Africa, where it is not expected to peak until the end of July.

Outbreaks are still spreading in many parts of the world, with one million new cases recorded in the last six days.

The US has reported a total of 2.5 million cases and 125,000 deaths with Covid-19 so far - more than any other country.

US states that emerged from lockdown in recent weeks - notably in the south - have been reporting record increases in new infections.

The spike has led officials in Texas, Florida and other states to tighten restrictions on business again.

The country with the second-highest number of recorded cases is Brazil, with a total of 1.3 million, and deaths in excess of 57,000.

Despite a wave of new infections, the state of Rio de Janeiro has said it will allow football stadiums to reopen to fans from 10 July - initially at one-third capacity.

On Sunday China has imposed a strict lockdown near Beijing to curb a fresh outbreak. Nearly half a million people will be barred from travelling in and out of Anxin county in the province of Hebei.

In the UK - the country with the greatest number of deaths in Western Europe - the government has said it could impose its first local lockdown following a surge in new cases in the English city of Leicester.

Statistics from several countries have shown that people from black and Asian ethnic groups are more likely to be severely affected by the virus than white people.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use this link to access live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/06/29/virus-death-toll-drops-to-5-in-ny-once-the-us-epicenter/24540216/

June 29

Virus death toll drops to 5 in NY, once the U.S. epicenter

NEW YORK (AP) — Five people died Saturday from the coronavirus in New York state, **the lowest daily death toll the state has reported since March 15.**

Saturday's total compared with 13 fatalities the day before as the number of fatalities caused by the virus continues to plummet in the state. **During the peak of the pandemic in April, nearly 800 people were dying a day from coronavirus.**

“We are on the exact opposite end,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in an interview with NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

New York still leads the nation in COVID-19 deaths with nearly 25,000, according to the state’s official tally, which doesn’t include people who likely died of the disease.

Meanwhile, **fewer than 900 patients were hospitalized Saturday for COVID-19, down from a peak of over 18,000 in April.**

The governor cautioned that the numbers could spike again if New Yorkers let down their guard down and fail to follow social distancing and mask-wearing requirements.

“I’m now afraid of the spread coming from other states because we are one country and people travel,” Cuomo said. “I’m afraid the infection rate in the other states will come back to New York and raise that rate again.”

Confirmed daily infections in the U.S. hit an all-time high of 40,000 on Friday, prompting officials in Texas and Florida to reverse course and close down bars in their states again.

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar stressed that “the window is closing” for the U.S. to take action to effectively curb the coronavirus.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan on Sunday celebrated the first public Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral since the coronavirus pandemic began.

The storied cathedral was limited to 25% capacity and social-distancing guidelines outlined by state officials.

Dolan thanked the congregation for its perseverance and joked that more than a dozen collections would be taken to make up for the missed Sundays.

“Where have you all been these last 14 weeks?” Dolan quipped. “Am I ever happy to see you.”

The church continues to livestream daily Mass on its website.

Return to Timeline

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-28/sweden-s-covid-expert-says-the-world-still-doesn-t-understand

June 30

Is Sweden's strategy misunderstood?

After three months of non-stop controversy, Sweden's top epidemiologist is about to go on vacation.

Anders Tegnell is unlikely to stray far from home, after much of the European Union excluded Sweden from safe travel lists. His **decision to advise against a Swedish lockdown has coincided with one of the world's highest Covid-19 mortality rates.** But Tegnell insists Sweden's strategy remains widely misunderstood.

Over the past week, the epidemiologist has made headlines by lashing out at the World Health Organization and labeling as "mad" countries that opted for strict lockdowns.

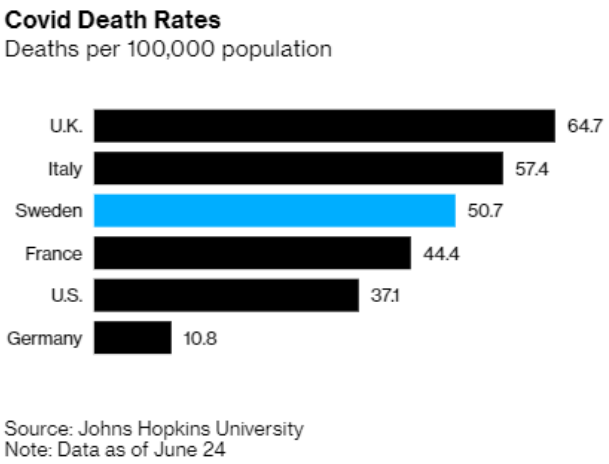
Throughout it all, **Tegnell has argued that the world is only in the first stage of dealing with a long, uncertain battle with Covid-19. That's why Sweden's strategy -- keep much of society open, but train people to observe distancing guidelines -- is the only realistic way to cope in the long run**, he says.
...
On Friday, Tegnell won a very public victory against the WHO, after lambasting the organization for making a "total mistake." The WHO named Sweden on a list of 11 European countries where it said "accelerated transmission has led to very significant resurgence that, if left unchecked, will push health systems to the brink." While Sweden remains on the list available on the WHO's website, the organization has amended its assessment, and said **Swedish contagion rates are in fact "stable."** It linked the high number of cases to an increase in testing.
...
Tegnell's main concern is that strict lockdowns may temporarily contain the virus, but won't prevent it from returning. He also says lockdowns come at an avoidable cost.

"In the s**ame way that all drugs have side effects, measures against a pandemic also have negative effects,**" he said. "At an authority like ours, which works with a broad spectrum of public health issues, it is natural to take these aspects into account." **He lists domestic abuse, loneliness and mass unemployment.**

In its emailed comment on Friday, **the WHO said "there are several very positive trends in Sweden, notably, a continued decrease in new cases presenting with severe disease, a gradual decrease in patients admitted into intensive care since April, and continued decreasing numbers of new Covid-19 deaths."**
...
"Sweden's approach has been widely misrepresented as doing nothing. It's not," Hanage said. "Given a starting point in which it has been decided an outbreak is inevitable, the question becomes how to mitigate it and preserve health care, and the earlier on in the outbreak you take action to slow transmission, the less intense that action needs to be -- initially."

"Sweden's strategy, in that sense, has been smarter than those countries' that encouraged transmission until shutdowns became necessary," Hanage said. "However, it has come at a great cost in terms of mortality in vulnerable groups...It also needs to be flexible and responsive; if a surge is building, you need to be able to detect it and know what you will do to avert it."

"As for the overall outcome," Hanage said, "time will tell."



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https://hallboothsmith.com/insurers-win-first-battle-in-fight-over-business-interruption-coverage-for-covid-related-closings-michigan-judge-issues-first-decision-in-this-billion-dollar-insurance-coverage-fight/

July 1

Michigan Judge issues first decision in this billion dollar insurance coverage fight

Written by Duane L Cochenour, Esq. and Caitlin E. Correa, Esq.

Hundreds of declaratory judgment actions have been filed across the country seeking business interruption coverage for shutting down businesses due to the coronavirus. It is shaping up as one of the biggest coverage battles in years with billions of dollars of losses at stake. On July 1st, a Michigan Circuit Court issued the first ruling in any of these cases. In Gavrilides Management Company vs. Michigan Insurance Company, Case No. 20-258-CB-C30, Judge Draganchuk (Ingham County) granted the insurer's motion for summary judgment, finding that the lack of a direct physical loss precluded coverage. A formal opinion has not yet been published or transcribed, but the Court issued its ruling in a video hearing, which can be viewed [using link found on bottom right of this page]

By way of brief background, the Plaintiff's Complaint is based on the Governor of Michigan's shelter-in-place order, which shut down the dine-in portion of the Plaintiff's restaurant. Notably, the **Plaintiff admitted that at no point in time did COVID-19 enter the business.** The Complaint only alleges that there was a loss of business due to executive orders that caused certain dine-in aspects of the Plaintiff's restaurant to be shut down. This is an important distinction which may limit the reach of this decision, as many of the businesses pursuing these lawsuits have made no such admission (and in some cases, allege the virus was or may have been present at some level).

In this case, **Judge Dradanchuk found that the allegations in the Complaint did not, and could not, meet the terms of the insuring agreement since the policy ultimately requires that the loss of business income result from a direct physical loss.** Thus, because the Complaint explicitly admits that COVID-19 did not enter the business at any time, there can be no possibility of direct physical loss of or damage to the property.

In addition to the question of whether there was a direct physical loss, the other big issue in these cases is the application of the virus exclusion. The Plaintiff argued that it was vague, or in the alternative, that the coverage for government acts is rendered illusory when the virus exclusion interacts with the causes of loss special form. The judge rejected both arguments. She found that the virus exclusion is clear and not ambiguous at all. Further, it would not exclude government acts that were also considered a covered cause of loss. Therefore, the coverage was not illusory. The virus exclusion would have applied to exclude coverage as the claim did not fit the exception to the exclusion due to the lack of a direct physical loss.

While this is a win for the insurer, it should not have been much of a surprise given the Plaintiff's admission that COVID-19 was never present in the business at any time and the policy's requirement of a direct physical loss. The question remains whether the presence of the virus constitutes a direct physical loss. The bigger take-away may be the finding that the virus exclusion was not ambiguous or illusory. **The real fight will come on cases in which there is at least the possibility of the virus being present.** For now, Gavrilides Management Company vs. Michigan Insurance Company can be considered a win for the insurer, but stay tuned for other cases with different factual scenarios and appellate review of trial court decisions, which will ultimately decide these issues.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dsy4pA5NoPw&feature=youtu.be

Return to Timeline

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/states-comparison

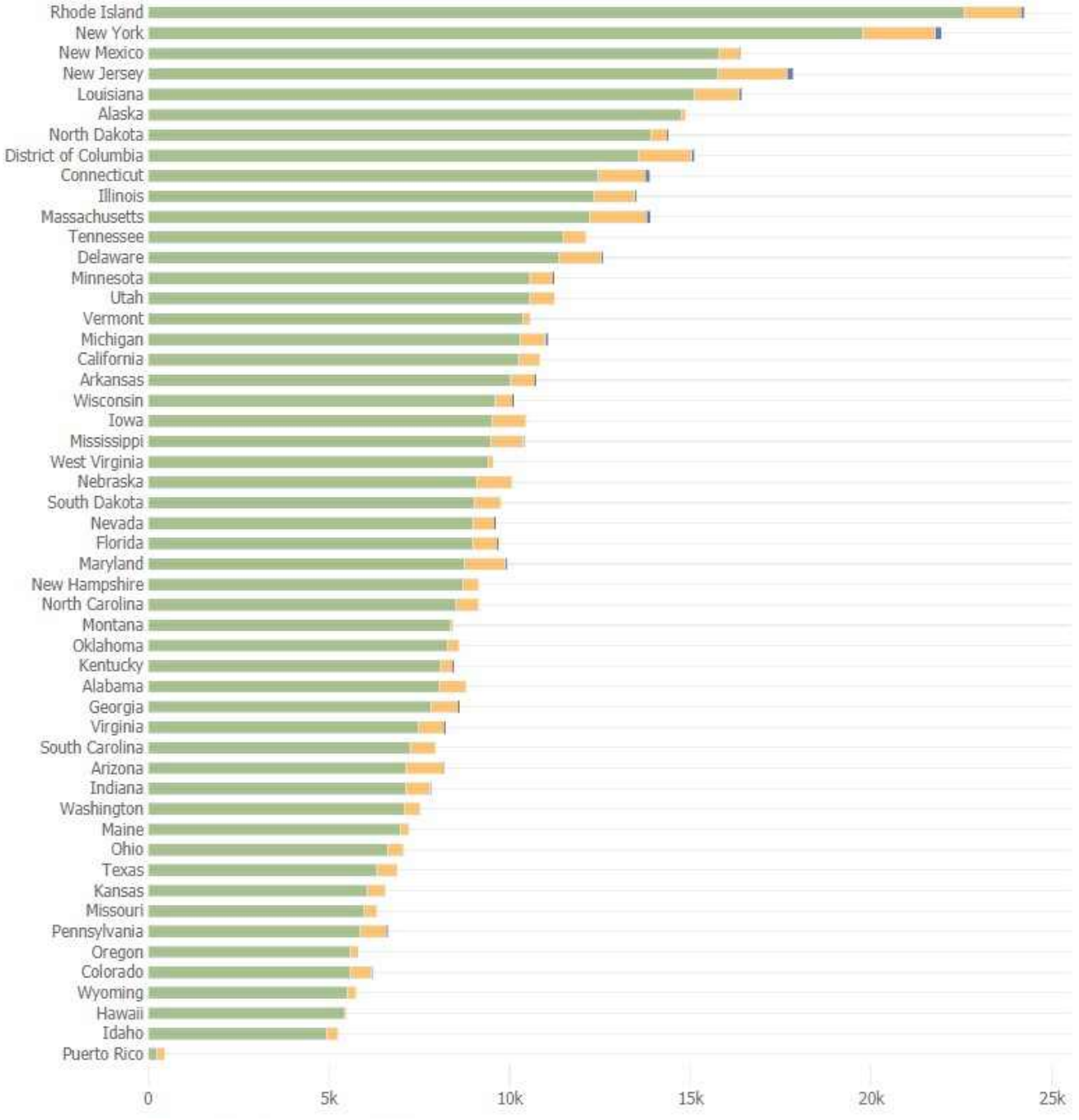
July 1

How the states compare

This graph shows:

1. Tests performed
2. Confirmed cases
3. Deaths

(in each state per 100,000 people)



Return to Timeline

https://mymodernmet.com/paris-cafe-giant-teddy-bears-social-distancing/

July 2

Creative Social Distancing

... establishments all over the world are thinking of innovative ways to adapt to social distancing regulations.

Return to Timeline

https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/01/stock-market-futures-open-to-close-news.html

July 2

Dow surges more than 400 points after U.S. jobs report blows past expectations

Stocks rose sharply on Thursday as investors cheered a **bigger-than-expected increase in jobs in June** as the economy tries to claws back from the coronavirus shutdown.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average traded 412 points higher, or 1.6%. The Nasdaq Composite hit a record high, climbing more than 1%. The S&P 500 gained 1.4%.

Boeing contributed to the gains, rising more than 3% after the airplane maker completed recertification flights for its grounded 737 Max jet.

Stocks that would benefit from an economic reopening also rose. **Cruise operators Carnival, Norwegian Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean all gained at least 3.6%. United Airlines and Delta each traded more than 2% higher. American Airlines and Southwest advanced 3.3% and 2.8%, respectively.**

The government's June jobs report showed 4.8 million jobs were created. Economists were expecting 2.9 million jobs were created. The unemployment rate fell to 11.1% from 13.3% in May. Economists were expecting a rate of 12.4%, according to Dow Jones.

Last month, economists forecast a loss of 8 million jobs in May and the economy gained 2.5 million payrolls instead.

"The direction of the economy is certainly north," Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist at the Leuthold Group, said on CNBC's "Squawk Box" following the report. "I think that's all it has to do to continue to provide confidence, not only to investors, but also to companies and to consumers."

Meanwhile, weekly jobless claims data was released Thursday morning.

The Labor Department said Thursday that initial jobless claims rose by 1.427 million in the week ending June 27. Economists polled by Dow Jones expected initial U.S. jobless claims to rise by another 1.38 million, down from 1.48 million the week earlier.

The data also showed the number of continuing claims — the number of people receiving unemployment benefits for consecutive weeks — rose to 19.29 million, an increase of about 59,000.

The moves Thursday followed the market's first trading day in the third quarter. Both the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite gained during the regular session on Wednesday, with the latter jumping more than 1% to an all-time high.

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/03/health/us-coronavirus-friday/index.html

July 3

Coronavirus infections going up in 36* states as July Fourth weekend starts

As Americans head into a holiday weekend in the shadow of a ravaging coronavirus pandemic, some governors are rethinking their stance on face coverings after days of record infections.

The US reported more than 52,000 new cases of the virus Thursday, a new daily record surpassing one set the previous day.

Coronavirus has killed more than 128,000 people and infected over 2.7 million nationwide, according to Johns Hopkins University. Infection rates are rising in 36 states, with patients rapidly filling hospitals across the South and West.

California, Arizona, Texas and Florida all posted record new cases this week -- Florida reported more than 10,000 additional coronavirus cases Thursday while Texas had about 8,000.

Nearly two dozen states have paused their reopenings to combat the spread while others have taken extra measures to keep it out of their borders. New York, New Jersey and Connecticut issued a travel advisory that requires people arriving from eight states with high coronavirus rates to quarantine for two weeks.

...

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now projects nearly 148,000 coronavirus deaths in the United States by July 25.

This week's national forecast relies on 24 individual forecasts from outside institutions and researchers. The new projections published Thursday offer the projection with a possible range of about 139,000 to 161,000 deaths.

"The state-level ensemble forecasts suggest that the number of new deaths over the next four weeks in Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Wyoming will likely exceed the number reported over the last four weeks," the CDC said on its forecasting website.

"For other states, the number of new deaths is expected to be similar to the number seen in the previous four weeks or to decrease slightly."

Unlike individual models, the CDC's ensemble forecast offers projections for the next month.

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/coronavirus-updates-some-texas-hospitals-at-100percent-capacity/ar-BB16kjAs?li=BBnb7Kz

July 4

Some Texas hospitals at 100% capacity

More than 10.8 million people across the globe have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the new respiratory virus, according to data compiled by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. The actual numbers are believed to be much higher due to testing shortages, many unreported cases and suspicions that some governments are hiding the scope of their nations' outbreaks.

The United States is the worst-affected country in the world, with more than 2.79 million diagnosed cases and at least 129,437 deaths.

Some people in Texas received a jarring alert on their phones Friday evening, saying hospitals were at capacity. The alert, sent to Hidalgo and Starr County residents, asked them to celebrate this holiday weekend "responsibly" by sheltering-in-place, avoiding gatherings of more than 10 people, wearing a face mask and social distancing.

Hidalgo County and Starr County, which are located in the Rio Grande Valley, are home to more than 900,000 people. Hospitals in the region also put out statements that they have reached or are at critical capacity levels.

"Valley Baptist Health System is urging local residents to take all necessary precautions against COVID-19 as our hospitals are at a critical capacity level, like every other hospital across our region," the organization said in a statement Friday. "Our entire team is working around the clock to manage this crisis situation."

The health system CEO Manny Vela said **their hospitals are now at "102% and 101% occupancy,"** according to ABC News Texas affiliate KRGV.

Dr. Jose Vazquez, of the Starr County health authority, said Friday that every hospital in the Valley is full and that patients are being transported to other parts of Texas.

"There are no beds in the Valley, Vazquez said. "We are becoming New York," Vazquez said, KRGV reported.

"Unfortunately, we find ourselves in difficult times, right smack in the middle of this difficult pandemic," Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez said in a statement Friday. "Americans have always risen to the top in hard times. We did it WWII, we did it in 9/11, and we'll do it again today. All it requires is for us to take personal responsibility for our actions."

Texas has more than 82,000 active COVID-19 cases, and Friday's statewide test positivity rate was 13.32%. More than 7,300 coronavirus patients are hospitalized across the state. That number was at 6,900 on Thursday.

States reported over 57,000 new cases Friday across the U.S., which was another record day for cases, the third this week. There were 721,000 new tests Friday, a huge jump and the country's first day of more than 700,000 tests. There were 635 reported deaths Friday, according to analysis from the COVID Tracking Project.

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https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/us-dips-under-50-000-new-coronavirus-cases/story-1Ick3M8v9fI3RpkUtEansL.html

July 5

US holiday fuels worries about skyrocketing virus cases

The United States has dipped under 50,000 new daily infections for the first time in four days, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, but experts fear celebrations for the July 4th weekend will act like rocket fuel for the nation's surging coronavirus outbreak.

Johns Hopkins on Sunday counted 45,300 new coronavirus infections reported Saturday in the U.S. after three days in which the daily count reached as high as 54,500 new cases. The lower figure does not mean the situation in the U.S. is improving, **it could be due to reduced reporting on a national holiday.**

The United States has the most infections and virus-related deaths in the world, with 2.8 million cases and nearly 130,000 dead, according to the university. Experts say the true toll of the pandemic is significantly higher, due to people who died before they were tested and missed mild cases.

Worldwide, nearly 11.3 million people have been infected and over 531,000 have died, with **outbreaks surging in India, South Africa, Pakistan, Brazil** and several other Latin American countries. In a first, South Africa on Sunday reported more than 10,000 new confirmed cases in a single day.

To show just how steep the U.S. infection curve is, authorities were reporting under 20,000 new infections a day as recently as June 15. **On Saturday, Florida and Texas reported more record daily increases in confirmed cases and virus-related deaths have begun to rise.**
...
In another worrying sign, the **World Health Organization said member states reported more than 212,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 around the world on Saturday, the highest single-day increase since the start of the pandemic.** The Geneva-based organization said more than 60% of the confirmed cases reports it received were in the Americas, which includes the United States and Brazil.

Faced with rising infections, many U.S. communities canceled parades and fireworks and cautioned people against hosting large gatherings.

Texas, which reported a record daily increase of 8,258 confirmed coronavirus cases Saturday, is retreating from what had been one of the country's swiftest reopenings. Much of the state **began mandating face coverings Friday, with a $250 fine for scofflaws**.

In **Florida**, which reported 11,445 confirmed infections on Saturday, **bars statewide are shut down and some regional attractions, such as Zoo Miami and Jungle Island, have closed**. Officials in **South Florida** — including in Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys — also **closed beaches through the weekend**.

Other beaches remained open. At St. Pete Beach on the Gulf of Mexico, parking spaces were scarce and hundreds clustered under umbrellas and in cabanas on the sand. Keisha Pereira came to the beach from Osceola County — more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) inland — with her daughter and two other children.

"We're going to stay with each other," she said. "I feel pretty safe outside."

The holiday weekend coincided with a big step back this week for **California**'s efforts to reopen the state's economy. Gov. Gavin Newsom **ordered a three-week closure of bars and many indoor establishments** in counties where some 30 million people live.

In several California regions, economic woes prompted campaigns to convince state residents to travel within its borders. But public health experts and mayors of popular beach towns Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay pleaded with people to stay home for the holiday.

Crista Luedtke said demand has been "bonkers" since reopening the 14-room Boon Hotel and Spa that she owns in the Sonoma County town of Guerneville. Guests must stay at least two nights and are assigned lounges near the pool.

"Tourism is not dangerous," Luedtke said. "I think people not following the rules is dangerous."

Return to Timeline

https://www.newsbreak.com/news/0PWaf9sj/global-stocks-rise-as-investors-look-to-economic-data

July 6

Markets Swell Around the World; Nasdaq Sets Another Record

Stocks rallied worldwide Monday as investors bet that the economy can continue its dramatic turnaround despite all the challenges ahead.

The S&P 500 rose 1.6%, following up on similar gains in Europe and Asia, and clawed back to within 6.1% of its record set in February.

The headliner was China's stock market, which leaped 5.7% for its biggest gain since 2015, when it was in the midst of a bubble bursting. Treasury yields also ticked higher in a signal of growing optimism after reports showed improvements in the U.S. and European economies.

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https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53315983

July 7

Spanish study casts doubt on herd immunity feasibility

The study of more than 60,000 people estimates that around **just 5% of the Spanish population has developed antibodies**, the medical journal the Lancet reported.

Herd immunity is achieved when enough people become infected with a virus to stop its spread.

Around **70% to 90% of a population needs to be immune to protect the uninfected.**

The prevalence of Covid-19 antibodies was below 3% in coastal regions, but higher in areas of Spain with widespread outbreaks, the report said.

"Despite the high impact of Covid-19 in Spain, prevalence estimates remain low and are clearly insufficient to provide herd immunity," the study's authors said in the report.

"This cannot be achieved without accepting the collateral damage of many deaths in the susceptible population and overburdening of health systems.

"In this situation, **social distance measures and efforts to identify and isolate new cases and their contacts are imperative for future epidemic control."**

The study is thought to be the largest of its kind on the coronavirus in Europe.

There have been studies of a similar kind in China and the US and "the key finding from these representative cohorts is that most of the population appears to have remained unexposed" to the coronavirus, "even in areas with widespread virus circulation," the Lancet article said.

Prof Danny Altmann, British Society for Immunology spokesperson and Professor of Immunology at Imperial College London, described the study as "sobering".

"Findings such as this reinforce the idea that faced with a lethal infection that induces rather short-lived immunity, the challenge is to identify the best vaccine strategies able to overcome these problems and stimulate a large, sustained, optimal, immune response in the way the virus failed to do," Prof Altmann said.

The country has recorded more than a quarter of a million cases and at least 28,385 deaths. But daily fatalities have been in the single figures for most of the past three weeks.

However, officials in the north-western region of Galicia have re-imposed restrictions on an area of 70,000 people following an outbreak.

Officials linked local outbreaks to bars in the area. Capacity in bars and restaurants have been limited to 50%.

There are now 258 cases of Covid-19 in Galicia, including 117 in Lugo province, authorities say...

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https://oklahoman.com/article/5666266/integris-seeks-additional-bed-capacity-as-oklahoma-shatters-record-for-covid-cases?utm_source=SFMC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Oklahoman%20breaking-news%202020-07-0721:17:02&utm_content=GTDT_OKC&utm_term=070720

July 7

Oklahoma shatters record for COVID cases

As Oklahoma reported its **largest single-day increase of new COVID-19 cases Tuesday,** a metro hospital announced it is reopening a temporarily shuttered hospital as it seeks more room for patients.

The state reported 858 new positive cases, nearly double the number of cases reported a day prior.

The total is a record high for the state and more than the 588 cases reported Tuesday in New York — once one of the worst COVID-19 hot spots in the country.

Oklahoma's second-highest increase of COVID-19 cases was reported a week prior, with 585 cases on June 30. The state reported five new COVID-19 deaths Tuesday, bringing the total to 404.

The number of hospitalizations in Oklahoma related to the disease rose to 458 Tuesday, up from 426 on Monday. Of those hospitalized, 209 are in intensive care, 27 more than the previous day.

Due to the growing number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, Integris Baptist Medical Center announced it would reopen on Tuesday its Portland campus, which temporarily closed in April.

"As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rapidly increase across the state, the Northwest Expressway campus of Integris Baptist Medical Center is experiencing capacity constraints," said Integris spokeswoman Brooke Cayot. "To continue caring for our patients with non-COVID-19 needs and the growing number of COVID-19 patients, we have decided to open our Portland campus."

The Portland Avenue campus, previously known as Deaconess Hospital, was a key component of the state's hospital "surge" plan, and was to be used if the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients surged beyond the state's existing hospital capacity. The state terminated its lease with Integris, effective June 30.

...

The spokesman also noted Health Commissioner Lance Frye continues to monitor the coronavirus numbers daily, and members of the agency hold regular phone calls with stakeholders across the state to deploy resources to areas that need it and make adjustments to COVID-19 guidance.

"At this time, personal responsibility remains key in protecting both public health and Oklahoma's economy," according to a statement from the agency. "Get tested, vigilantly wash hands, limit social interactions, and wear a mask when physical distancing is difficult." The statement also mentioned the state has a "robust" hospital surge plan and "adequate" supply of emergency protective equipment.

As Oklahoma's COVID-19 cases continue to surge, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo added the Sooner State to a list of states whose travelers must quarantine for 14 days when they go to New York.

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https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-coronavirus-10000-cases-shatters-daily-record/

July 7

Texas shatters daily record with over 10,000 new coronavirus cases

Texas has once again broken its single-day record for new coronavirus cases. The state reported 10,028 new cases Tuesday as officials warned that hospitals are reaching capacity.

The previous daily record was 8,260 new cases on July 4. There are now more than 200,000 cases across the state, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. The state also set a new record for single-day deaths, with 60.

Coronavirus hospitalizations have more than doubled in Texas over the last two weeks. Officials reported 9,268 people were sick with coronavirus in state hospitals Tuesday — another daily record.

Officials across the state fear hospitals could soon hit capacity.

An average of 13.5% of tests now come back positive, as of Monday. Texas Governor Greg Abbott previously warned that a positivity rate of over 10% would be a red flag for the state.

Deaths remain lower across the state compared to other states with large surges. As of Tuesday, 2,715 people have died of the virus in Texas.

Abbott began one of the nation's most aggressive reopening strategies in May as experts warned that relaxed social distancing measures would cause a resurgence of the virus. Last week, the Republican governor reversed course, issuing an executive order requiring face masks in public and limited gatherings of more than 10 people.

After a number of sheriffs said they refuse to enforce Abbott's order, the governor blasted local leaders, calling on them to "show action, not absenteeism."

"If local officials enforce the mask order, it will slow the spread of the coronavirus," he told CBS Beaumont, Texas, affiliate KFDM-TV. "They just now need to step up and begin to enforce the orders that are already in place."

According to The Associated Press, New York and Florida are the only other states to surpass 10,000 new cases in a single day. New York reached that number in April, but Florida reported over 11,400 cases on Saturday.

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https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2020-07-08/united-could-furlough-up-to-36-000-workers-as-airline-industry-crisis-drags-on

July 9

United Airlines announcement signals Industry rebound remains far off

UNITED AIRLINES ON Wednesday announced major cuts planned for this fall, a grim sign for an industry that has struggled to stay aloft despite billions of dollars in federal stimulus funds.

Air travel has plummeted since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and, despite a steady increase in passenger load since April, it remains severely depressed. United's announcement is another sign that the industry is not expecting travel to rebound. It comes amid a sharp uptick in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations nationwide.

The federal government distributed about $25 billion in emergency stimulus funding to airlines on the condition that those that received the money would not make any significant worker cuts through Sept. 30. United received about $5 billion of that money.

The airline said it could furlough up to 36,000 employees, or more than 40% of its total workforce, starting Oct. 1, depending on traveler volume and the number of people who take buyouts or early retirement packages.

United is losing about $40 million a day, an executive told reporters Wednesday. The airline expects to, at best, be operating at 40% of its pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year.

The furloughs would include about 15,000 flight attendants, 11,000 customer service and gate agents, 5,5000 maintenance workers and 2,250 pilots, according to widespread reports. The numbers could be reduced if travelers return, or if thousands of employees apply for reduced hours or say they will take voluntary leave before a mid-July deadline, the company told employees in an email, according to The New York Times.

Major domestic airlines have warned employees about possible cuts for months as travel volume remains extremely low. **American Airlines has said that it could shed up to 20,000 workers.** Overseas airliners have already made significant cuts to their workforces.

The number of air travelers traveling out of U.S. airports has steadily risen since bottoming out in April but remains low. Some 642,000 people flew out of American airports Tuesday, roughly a quarter of the passenger volume seen on the same day last year but above a low of around 90,000 travelers in mid-April, according to screening data from the Transportation Security Administration.

"The United Airlines projected furlough numbers are a gut punch, but they are also the most honest assessment we've seen on the state of the industry – and our entire economy," Sara Nelson, the president of the Association of Flight Attendants union, which represents 50,000 workers at airlines including United, said in a statement.

Nelson called on Congress to approve more stimulus funding.

"The [COVID-19] crisis dwarfs all others in aviation history and there's no end in sight. Demand was just barely climbing back to 20 percent of last year's levels and even those minimal gains evaporated over the last week due to surging COVID-19 cases across the country," she said. "Congress must extend the [CARES Act Payroll Support Program] in order to avoid hundreds of thousands of layoffs from an industry that normally drives economic activity for every other sector & supports more than 11 M jobs. Failing to do so will have a ripple effect across the economy."

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https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/09/coronavirus-pandemic-us-opioids-crisis

July 9

'Opioid overdoses are skyrocketing': as COVID-19 sweeps across US, an old epidemic returns

... coronavirus looks to be undoing the advances made against a **drug epidemic that has claimed close to 600,000 lives in the US over the past two decades**. Worse, **it is also laying the ground for a long-term resurgence of addiction by exacerbating many of the conditions, including unemployment, low incomes and isolation, that contributed to the rise of the opioid epidemic and "deaths of despair".**

...

The American Medical Association said it was "greatly concerned" at reported **increases in opioid overdoses in more than 30 states** although it will be months before hard data is available.

Clearly, what we have lost with the pandemic is a loss of connection

Public **health officials from Kentucky to Florida, Texas and Colorado have recorded surges in opioid deaths as the economic and social anxieties created by the Covid-19 pandemic prove fertile ground for addiction**. In addition, Brumage said significant numbers of people have fallen out of treatment programmes as support networks have been yanked away by social distancing orders.

"I'm a firm adherent to the idea that the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, **the opposite of addiction is connection. Clearly, what we have lost with the pandemic is a loss of connection,**" he said.

..

"Congress immediately acted with coronavirus to help those that lost their jobs, to make sure that people were taken care of and it was addressed properly," she said. "Look at the difference with the opioid epidemic, which has largely been ignored by our federal government for 20 years."

...

"The difference between getting Covid and dying of an overdose is stigma around drug use. This has been ingrained across the United States – that people using drugs are somehow seen as morally deficient and so it becomes easier then to other and alienate those people," he said.

Walden does not accept that explanation. Like many whose families have been devastated by opioids, she sees a personal and public health catastrophe perpetuated by the financial and political power of the pharmaceutical industry to drive the US's exceptionally high opioid prescribing rates which were a major factor in driving the epidemic.

"This comes down to lobbyists and money. People say it's stigma and it's not. There is stigma but it's about profits and greed," she said.

Dr Raeford Brown, a former chair of the Food and Drug Administration's opioid advisory committee, is a longstanding critic of drug industry influence over opioid medical policy and the government's response to the epidemic. He sees a parallel with coronavirus with US states lifting strong social distancing orders too early under corporate pressure.

"The United States is not good at doing public health," he said. "It failed the test with opioids and it failed the test with viral pandemics. But coronavirus and pandemics, and the things like the opioid crisis, are much more likely to get us than the Russians or the Chinese are."

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https://www.barrons.com/news/global-coronavirus-deaths-pass-550-000-afp-tally-01594304404?tesla=y

July 9

Global Coronavirus Deaths Pass 550,000

The new coronavirus pandemic has claimed more than 550,000 lives worldwide, an AFP tally showed Thursday, with **more than half the deaths in the four worst-hit countries -- the US, Brazil, Britain and Italy.**

A total of 550,013 deaths were recorded globally out of 12,081,516 cases, a tally based on official data showed.

The United States led with 132,309 deaths,
followed by Brazil (67,964),
the United Kingdom (44,517) and
Italy (34,914).

Europe recorded 201,124 deaths for 2,782,032 cases, making it the worst affected continent.

Worldwide, 6,447,909 patients -- or more than half the number of infections -- were declared by health authorities to have recovered.

Use the link to access live tracker for today's numbers

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Return to Timeline

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/07/how-new-coronavirus-surges-compare-new-york-city-peak-cvd/

July 10

How the new coronavirus surges compare to New York City's peak

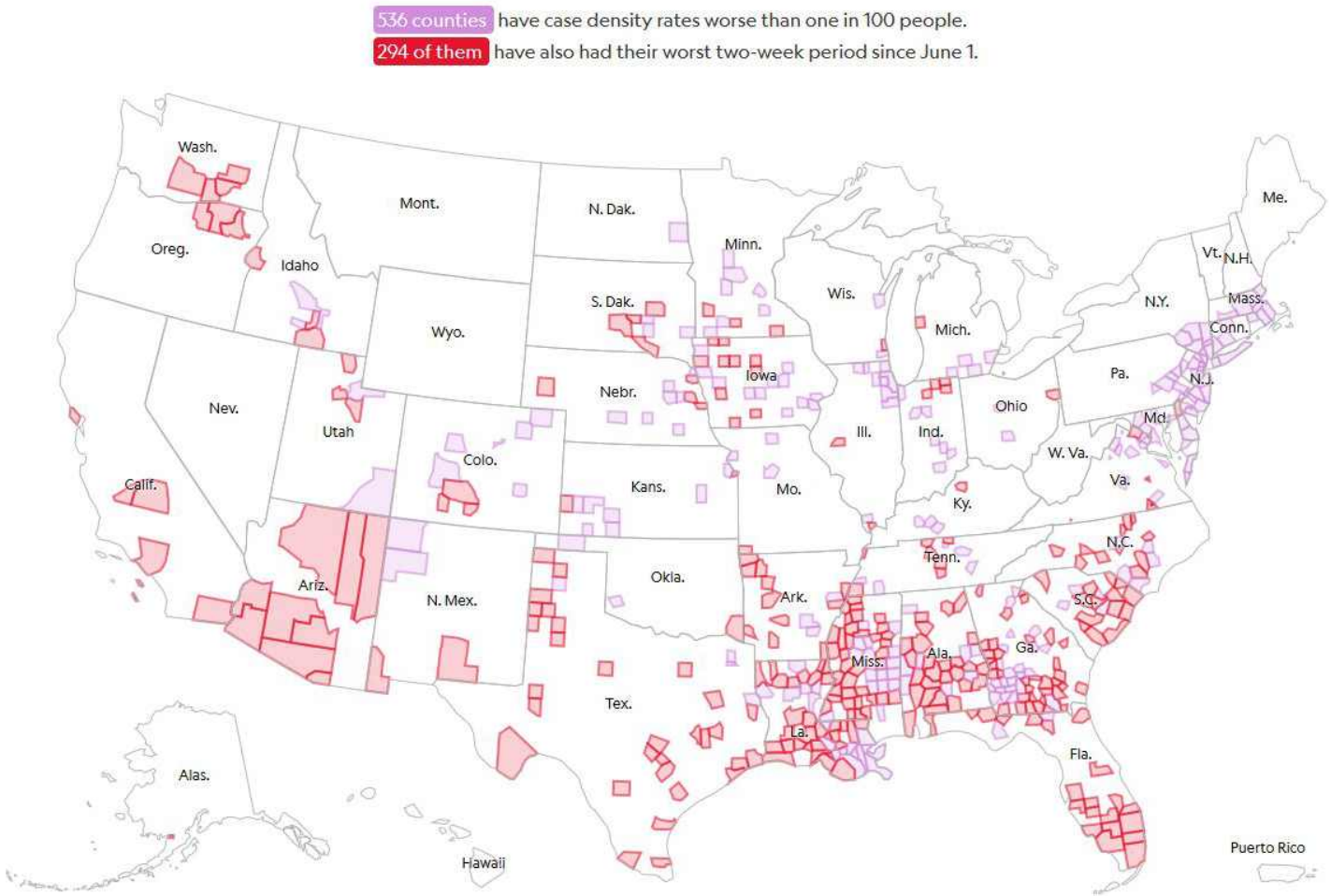
... **The U.S. just experienced its worst two-week stretch, with more newly confirmed cases than at any point since its coronavirus outbreak began in early 2020**.

...

With the recent surge elsewhere in the U.S., **many areas are experiencing a greater density of cases than New York City witnessed during its two-week peak.** In the past few weeks, 59 counties with at least 50 cases have experienced a rise in cases per capita on par with or worse than New York City's peak. When looking at total cases since the pandemic's start, 536 counties have case densities worse than one in 100 people.

...

The worst density of all belongs to **Lee, Arkansas, where county data indicates that on average one in 17 residents**—a total of 545 people—were diagnosed ...



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https://bgr.com/2020/07/10/coronavirus-vaccine-update-timeline-pfizer-biontech-fda-approval-october/

July 11

Could we have a vaccine as soon as October?

... We've looked at Pfizer's partnership with German firm BioNTech quite a few times in the past few months. The two companies launched clinical trials in Germany and the US for messenger RNA vaccine candidates (mRNA) a few weeks ago. **The drug uses genetic material to generate an immune response that can neutralize the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which is a new type of technology for vaccines. Moderna has a similar product in development.**

Pfizer and BioNTech released research data from the first phase of the trial, which showed the drug delivered the expected reaction, neutralizing antibodies that can block the infection. "That the vaccine in humans created the very robust immune responses in all individuals that received the vaccine," Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said, "And those responses were also able to kill the virus. What we learned is that this vaccine can neutralize the virus."

The CEO appeared to be very confident that the vaccine will prove to be effective in an interview with Time. "For me, it was the moment when I saw the data, plus many other data that we haven't published yet, [that] made me say that until now I was thinking if we have a vaccine," he said. "Now I'm discussing when we're going to have a vaccine."

Every CEO is enthusiastic about his or her company's products, of course. So Bourla's remarks need to be treated with some informed skepticism. There's always a chance the vaccine will not work. **Pfizer will start Phase 3 of its clinical trial this month, enrolling 30,000 people in 150 locations. That's the study regulators will need in order to approve the use of the mRNA vaccine.**

The exec did address that fact as well. "Let me be accurate and factual here," he told Time. "One, **we will only know if the vaccine works when we have the final study.** We have a lot of indications that make me feel that really it should make it … **We should be able in the September time frame to have enough data to say if the vaccine works or not. And to submit that to the FDA."**

Bourla thinks the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval could come as soon as October, which is even faster than we would have anticipated. Like other drugmakers, Pfizer has already started production of the vaccine ahead of regulatory approval, aiming to produce up to 100 million doses by the end of 2020. Pfizer has also begun commercial talks with several governments already.

Bourla said that Pfizer will price the vaccine to make a profit, but he thinks that governments should distribute it to the most vulnerable at no cost. The exec says the company stands to lose $1 billion if the manufacturing risk doesn't pay off, and the vaccine ultimately doesn't work. "We will throw it away. It's only money we're going to lose," he said. But if the approval does come on time, those prepared doses of the vaccine will be ready to go immediately.

That said, governments are yet to issue immunization policies. Even if Pfizer's vaccine is ready in October, these vaccines won't meet global demand for billions of doses. Because of that, health officials will have to prioritize use to save as many lives.

https://okcfox.com/newsletter-daily/2000-dollars-for-participants-in-okc-covid-19-vaccine-trial

July 11

$2,000 being offered for participants in OKC COVID-19 vaccine trial

OKLAHOMA CITY (KOKH) — As the worldwide scramble to find a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine continues, one Oklahoma company is hoping to take the lead.

The Lynn Health Science Institute in Oklahoma City has been awarded the Moderna Phase III COVID-19 Vaccine Study slated to start July 28, 2020.

Dr. Carl Griffin, the primary investigator says, "Knowing that it may be a game-changer in this world I'm very excited."

But in order for them to be successful, they need willing participants to try out the new drug.

The institute is **looking for 230 to 330 Oklahomans to participate.**

It's a **part of a national study spanning over the course two years and encompassing tens of thousands of participants in order to guarantee the vaccine is ready for the real world.**

"We want to make sure everybody is going to be receiving something that is safe and efficacious," says Griffin.

Volunteers for the study will get two doses of the vaccine and be monitored regularly.

In order to qualify patients must be at least 18-years-old or older, be healthy, and never have contracted COVID-19.

Dr. Griffin claims previous trials have shown the side effects to be mild. No more than muscle soreness at the injection site, and mild fever.

"They're using this newer process," says Dr. Griffin.

Different from many vaccines in the past, this vaccine doesn't contain any traces of the virus itself.

"There for it should technically be safer to use," says Dr. Griffin.

Researchers also claim this method allows them to develop a vaccine quicker than ever before.

"We have an opportunity to shut down the coronavirus much sooner than much later," says Dr. Griffin.

Dr. Griffin says if all goes well, they could release the vaccine to the public as early as the end of this year.

Volunteers who complete the study in its entirety will receive $2,000 in compensation.

If you are interested in signing up for the clinical trial, you can visit the Lynn Institute's website.
https://lhsi.net/

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/covid-19-surge-pushes-us-toward-deadly-cliff/ar-BB16DuNG?li=BBnb7Kz

July 12

COVID-19 surges in US

...Forty-three states have seen the number of cases confirmed on an average day increase in the last two weeks. The number of patients in hospitals has risen over the same period in 29 states. **More than 80 percent of intensive care beds are occupied in Alabama, Arizona and Georgia.**

The same models that predicted surges in Phoenix, Houston and Miami now show a new and broader round of cities as the likely next epicenters. **The number of confirmed cases is likely to rise substantially in places like Atlanta, Kansas City, Mo., Tulsa, Okla., and Greenville, S.C.**

The virus also appears to be traveling north along the I-95 corridor. Cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore, which struggled through earlier peaks of viral transmission, are now seeing early signs of a second wave. Transmissions even appear to be rising in New York City.

... California ... is now averaging more than 7,900 new cases a day, substantially more than its seven-day average just two weeks ago.
...
"Our projections show that without immediate actions to significantly reduce travel and social distancing nationwide, this virus will not only threaten our ability to reopen schools in the coming weeks, but our capacity to care for the sickest individuals," said David Rubin, director of PolicyLab at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia whose models forecast higher case counts.

More than 3.1 million Americans have tested positive for the virus, though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that as many as 25 million people in the U.S. may have contracted it. More than 133,000 people have died, almost twice as many victims as in Brazil, the second-hardest hit country.
...
Rubin warned that smaller cities are likely to experience significant outbreaks in the coming weeks, potentially straining health systems that are not as prepared to handle a high volume of patients in need of intensive care. College towns like South Bend, Ind., and Tuscaloosa, Ala., are beginning to see case counts rise even with most students gone.

... some who have sought to downplay the severity of the American outbreak have pointed to an increasing number of tests being conducted across the country, which they say will naturally lead to identification of those who have only minor symptoms or asymptomatic cases. But **the number of cases is rising faster than would be accounted for by the increase in testing; the share of tests coming back positive is rising in 38 states.**

More than a quarter of tests conducted in Arizona are coming back positive, according to state data. More than 15 percent of tests are coming back positive in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas.

Governors in 23 states have ordered residents to wear masks in public, though President Trump has refused to order a nationwide mask mandate. Trump has instead focused on reopening the economy, insisting that schools operate as normal in the months before he faces voters in November.
..
"So, do we admit that we've failed and try to salvage the reopening of our schools in fall by quickly enacting a national approach to pause all reopenings and try to get our country back onto stable footing?" he asked. "It may not be what people want to hear, but the situation is that dire that we need to consider this."

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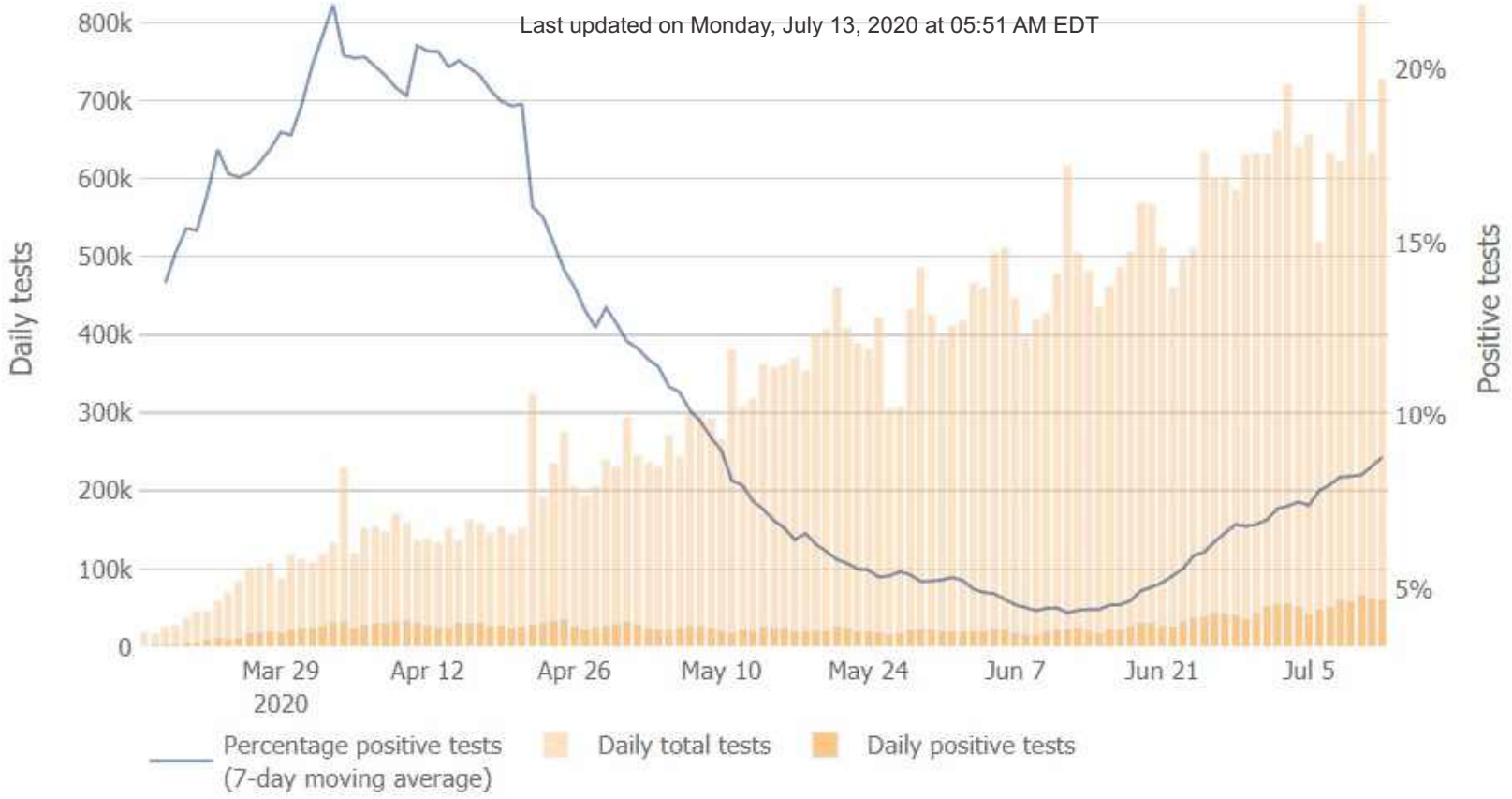
https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/individual-states/usa

July 13

Rate of positive tests in the US over time

Last updated on Monday, July 13, 2020 at 05:51 AM EDT



This graph shows the total daily number of virus tests conducted in each state and of those tests, how many were positive each day. The trend line in blue shows the average percentage of tests that were positive over the last 7 days. The rate of positivity is an important indicator because it can provide insights into whether a community is conducting enough testing to find cases. If a community's **positivity is high**, it **suggests that that community may largely be testing the sickest patients and possibly missing milder or asymptomatic cases**. A lower positivity may indicate that a community is including in its testing patients with milder or no symptoms. The WHO has said that in countries that have conducted extensive testing for COVID-19, should remain at 5% or lower for at least 14 days.

This initiative relies upon publicly available data from multiple sources. States are not consistent in how and when they release and update their data, and some may even retroactively change the numbers they report. This can affect the percentages you see presented in these data visualizations. We are taking steps to account for these irregularities in how we present the information, but it is important to understand the full context behind these data.

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https://www.foxnews.com/health/florida-coronavirus-record

July 13

Florida shatters largest single-day record of coronavirus infections in US while world sees cases spike

Florida set a new national record for the largest daily increase in coronavirus cases in the United States on Sunday, while infections continue to spike around the world.

The state added at least **15,299** positive COVID-19 cases, for a total of 269,811, and recorded 45 more deaths, according to state Department of Health statistics.

California had the **previous record** of daily positive cases — **11,694**, set on Wednesday. **New York had 11,571** on April 15.

Florida has had a record-breaking week leading to the all-time surge in cases. **The state reported 514 fatalities last wee**k, **averaging 73 deaths per day**. Three weeks ago, the daily average was 30 deaths.

The total number of deaths in Florida climbed to at least 4,242 on Sunday, according to the state.

Florida has nearly doubled its testing over the last month to almost 50,000 per day. The percentage of people testing positive has also risen, with the daily average over the past week exceeding 19 percent. A month ago, fewer than 5 percent of tests came up positive on a daily average.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said even with the rising rates, he still wants the schools to reopen as scheduled next month, saying children have not proven to be vectors for the disease in states and countries where campuses are open.

“We know there are huge, huge costs for not providing the availability of in-person schooling,” he said. “The risk of corona, fortunately, for students is incredibly low.”

Florida's grim record comes as the World Health Organization reported a record increase in global COVID-19 cases, with 230,370 more infections recorded in 24 hours. **The global average of daily deaths has remained at about 5,000 per day**.

The world's largest single-day increases have come from the Americas, according to the WHO daily report.

The two countries leading the region are the U.S., with more than 66,000 new cases, and Brazil, which reported more than 45,000 new infections in 24 hours.

Europe recorded nearly 19,000 new cases, while the number of **new infections in Africa climbed by almost 18,000**. China reported just 35 new cases.

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-14/america-s-jobless-are-about-to-lose-their-600-a-week-lifeline?utm_campaign=pol&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews

July 14

America's jobless are about to lose their $600-a-week lifeline

In about two weeks millions of Americans could lose a crucial economic lifeline of this pandemic: $600 a week in extra federal unemployment benefits.

The scheduled end will ripple through households and the entire economy. The program accounts for a big chunk of the Treasury Department's record jobless payments last month, which exceeded $100 billion. Without the additional cash, some of the hardest-hit households may be forced to choose which bills to pay and which to let slide.
...
Democrats want to extend the program, called Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. Republicans and the Trump administration have called for capping the amount of money jobless Americans can receive, seeing it as a disincentive to return to work.
...
Some Americans are making more money from jobless benefits than they did when they were employed. **Two-thirds of workers who are eligible for unemployment insurance can receive more than what they lost in earnings**, according to a paper by researchers at the University of Chicago.

Amanda Steinhauser, 33, is one of them. Before the pandemic began, she earned $14.75 an hour at a small party supply company in Blackwood, New Jersey. Now, she's earning nearly twice as much with unemployment assistance. As a result, she has paid off some credit card debt and is saving hundreds of dollars each week.

But she says her savings will run out in a matter of months, before the U.S. jobs market is expected to return to normal. Without the additional federal top-up, Steinhauser's unemployment benefits will fall to $280 a week, about half of what she made before the pandemic.

"I have been looking for a job ever since I was laid off back in March, and I haven't been able to find anything," Steinhauser said. "If I don't have that $600, I know I'm going to be screwed."

Employers argue that the $600 boost has created a disincentive for employees to return to work. For example, at the diner chain Waffle House Inc., based in Norcross, Georgia, some employees aren't coming back to work because they make more money from unemployment, creating a shortage during some shifts, according to spokeswoman Njeri Boss.

Those searching for jobs have faced an extremely challenging -- and competitive -- market. **Job postings as of July 10 were about 23% lower than they were in 2019**, according to data from hiring site Indeed.

Jill Haber, 42, has been looking for a job since April when she was laid off from a senior position at a marketing agency in Los Angeles. The extra weekly benefits have helped her pay monthly bills but doesn't make up for her salary. Adding to her expenses, Haber now has to pay for her own healthcare.
...
For those receiving **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, or the program that extends jobless benefits to those not typically covered like the self-employed and gig workers,** the extra $600 often takes on even greater importance.

Raven Gilbert used to manage the bar at Hunter House & Gardens, a wedding and event venue in Huntersville, North Carolina, before she was laid off in March. She said she didn't qualify for regular state jobless benefits but was able to get PUA.

Even with the $600 weekly bonus, the sum falls short of what she was making earlier this year. Though she hopes her job will become available again, she's been looking for a new job but bars are still closed and restaurants are operating at reduced capacity. Without the extra unemployment benefit, she qualifies for just $134 a week in government aid.

"I don't know what will happen," Gilbert said. "I don't know that I'll be able to make my bills or buy enough food."

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https://www.statnews.com/2020/07/14/moderna-covid19-vaccine-first-data-show-spurs-immune-response/

July 15

First data for Moderna Covid-19 vaccine show it spurs an immune response

Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine led patients to produce antibodies that can neutralize the novel coronavirus that causes the disease, though it caused minor side effects in many patients, according to the first published data from an early-stage trial of the experimental shot.

The results were published Tuesday in the New England Journal of Medicine. Moderna had previously released some results in a press release, but many experts said they were not sufficient to draw many conclusions. Even now, many are withholding judgment.
...
"The hallmark of a vaccine is one that can actually mimic natural infection and induce the kind of response that you would get with natural infection. And it looks like, at least in this limited, small number of individuals, that is exactly what's happening," said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the NIH branch that conducted the trial. "The data really look quite good," he added. "There were no serious adverse events."

The data roughly mirror the results from a similar vaccine being produced by Pfizer and BioNTech, which were released July 1.

Moderna posted a listing on clinicaltrials.gov, a government registry, that says it **will start a Phase 3 study in 30,000 patients on July 27**. Pfizer and BioNTech said they plan to start their own large study by the end of the month. **There are 23 vaccines in human clinical trials against the virus, SARS-CoV-2,** according to the World Health Organization, with more set to begin testing soon.
...
One big question is whether producing antibodies predicts protection against infection — and how much protection. Another is whether the antibodies will last.

"We don't know how much [antibody] we need to be protected, so we can't say" all the participants "achieved a protective level," Kathryn Edwards, scientific director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Research Program, said in an email to STAT. "What we can say is that they made antibody that ...Moderna began its Phase 1 trial just 66 days after scientists first decoded the genome of SARS-CoV-2.
...
Already, he said, SARS-CoV-2 has done things experts never would have expected, he said. It spreads in hot weather. It causes deadly blood clots. It rarely makes children sick, but sometimes causes a surprising immune disorder. "I can promise you that over the next two years, we'll learn a lot of things that we wish we'd known now that we are going to learn as we move forward," Offit said.

Researchers measured the efficacy of Moderna's vaccine in multiple ways, all of which showed higher average antibody levels than were seen in patients who had recovered from Covid-19. It took time for antibody levels to rise. Only after the booster shot did volunteers compare favorably with recovered patients.
...
Several researchers said that seeing the results increased their hope not so much in Moderna's vaccine, but in arriving at one or more vaccines that will help reduce the impact of the virus.

"I am **cautiously optimistic**, based on the data that we've seen so far, **that amongst the several different vaccine platforms** that are being tested, there seem to be encouraging Phase 1 data to suggest **that at least one of them is going to work,"** said Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health. "And maybe several of them**."**

But he warned that such science is not predictable. "Hence the word **cautiously is attached to the word optimistic in this**

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https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/six-reasons-to-be-optimistic-amid-covid-19/

July 15

Six reasons to be optimistic amid COVID-19

Although COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are rising, there is also some positive news on the horizon, according to Joseph Allen of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

In a July 14, 2020 Washington Post op-ed, Allen, assistant professor of exposure assessment science and director of the Healthy Buildings program, wrote that progress is being made in treatments, testing, and vaccines, and that there's growing agreement about ways to curb the spread of infection.

Among positive developments, Allen cited:

1. Therapeutic treatments, such as cloned antibodies, are showing to be effective both to treat and prevent COVID-19.

2. Rapid, low-cost saliva tests for COVID-19 are being developed and could be a game-changer.

3. Universal mask-wearing is catching on.

4. Consensus has emerged that airborne spread of the coronavirus is happening, and the World Health Organization and other organizations are now recommending the use of healthy building strategies such as higher ventilation, better filtration, and the use of air-cleaning devices.

5. Several studies suggest that past exposure to common-cold coronaviruses may help protect some people from COVID-19 infection.

6. Vaccine trials seem to be working and drug makers have said they may be able to deliver doses as early as October.

"For the first time in history, nearly every scientist in the world is focused on the same problem," Allen wrote. "This is starting to pay real dividends."

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https://covid19.healthdata.org/united-states-of-america

Use live link to access current projections

July 15

Death toll predictions rise from surge

...
The model from the **Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington is now projecting that 224,000 people will die from the virus by November 1**, which is an increase of almost 16,000 from the week before.

That jump is due to skyrocketing cases around the country, particularly in Florida, Texas, Arizona, California, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Utah, chair of the IHME Dr. Chris Murray told CNN's Don Lemon Tuesday.

Some of those states set coronavirus records Tuesday.

Texas reported a record high daily number of new cases Tuesday with more 10,745.

Mississippi has its highest numbers of coronavirus hospitalizations by far since the first case was reported, Gov. Tate Reeves said.

California also set records with 6,745 hospitalizations and 1,886 ICU admissions, according to data from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

The virus is so widespread that **laboratories are getting more coronavirus samples than they can process**, the American Clinical Laboratory Association said Tuesday.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/nobel-laureates-call-for-challenge-trials-to-speed-up-vaccine-process/ar-BB16P2tM?li=BBnb7Kz

July 16

Top scientists call for “challenge trials” to speed up vaccine process

More than 100 top scientists including 15 Nobel laureates have written an open letter calling for volunteers to be exposed to the coronavirus to assist with vaccine development.

They said so-called "human challenge trials" or "controlled infection trials" were of "vast importance" in speeding up the testing of the vaccines in development around the world.

"If challenge trials can safely and effectively speed the vaccine development process, there is a formidable presumption in favor of their use, which would require a very compelling ethical justification to overcome," the scientists wrote in the letter to Dr. Francis Collins, director of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).

It urged the US government to undertake immediate preparations for human challenge trials, "including supporting safe and reliable production of the virus and any biocontainment facilities necessary to house participants.”

...

Challenge trials were used in early research with smallpox, yellow fever and malaria, which changed the course of global public health, according to WHO.

Over the past 50 years, tens of thousands of consenting adult volunteers have safely undergone such trials under the oversight of research ethics committees, WHO reported.

It said controlled infection trials could be ethically acceptable if they met certain criteria. These include choosing young and healthy adults as participants, starting with low doses, ensuring public engagement, and providing high-quality care and close monitoring.

The notion of a human challenge trial for Covid-19 was jump-started by a March 31 article in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, which made the case that the nature of the global emergency warranted consideration of unconventional approaches.

Co-authored by Nir Eyal of Rutgers, Marc Lipsitch of Harvard, and Peter Smith of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the piece concluded that while a human challenge study would not be without risks, "every week that vaccine rollout is delayed will be accompanied by many thousands of deaths globally."

But members of the NIH's Accelerating Covid-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) Vaccines Working Group said earlier this month that challenge trials would not speed up vaccine development.

In a commentary published in the New England Journal of Medicine, ACTIV members wrote that using controlled human infection models to support vaccine development requires "essential criteria" to limit the risk for participants and could take "one to two years."

"A single death or severe illness in an otherwise healthy volunteer would be unconscionable and would halt progress," they wrote.

They said it would be unethical to organize an experiment in which people were deliberately infected unless there were a rescue therapy -- a treatment that can save lives -- which does not exist for coronavirus.

"Large, randomized, controlled trials of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines are currently the most efficient, generalizable, and scientifically robust path to establishing vaccine efficacy," the authors concluded.

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https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/science/coronavirus-drugs-treatments.html

Use live link to read descriptions of each and see tracking after July 17

July 17

19 of the most-talked-about treatments and how they rate for effectiveness and safety

Widely used	Promising evidence	Tentative or mixed evidence	Not promising	Pseudoscience or fraud
1. Prone positioning	1. Remdesivir	1. Favipiravir	1. Lopinavir and ritonavir combo	1. Drinking or injecting bleach and disinfectants
2. Ventilators and other respiratory support devices	2. Dexamethasone	2. EIDD-2801	2. Hydroxychlor-oquine and chloroquine	2. UV light
		3. Recombinant ACE-2		3. Silver
		4. Convalescent plasma		
		5. Monoclonal antibodies		
		6. Interferons		
		7. Cytokine Inhibitors		
		8. Cytosorb		
		9. Stem cells		
		10. Anticoagulants		

https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/17/health/us-coronavirus-friday/index.html

July 18

Fauci implores state and local leaders to 'be as forceful as possible' with mask orders

The nation's top infectious disease expert on Friday urged governors and mayors to "be as forceful as possible" to get people to wear face coverings.

Social distancing, an important factor in blunting the spread of coronavirus, can be difficult with more people going out, Dr. Anthony Fauci said.

"When you're living your life and trying to open up the country, you are going to come into contact with people. And for that reason, we know that masks are really important, and we should be using them everywhere," he said during a US Chamber of Commerce virtual event.

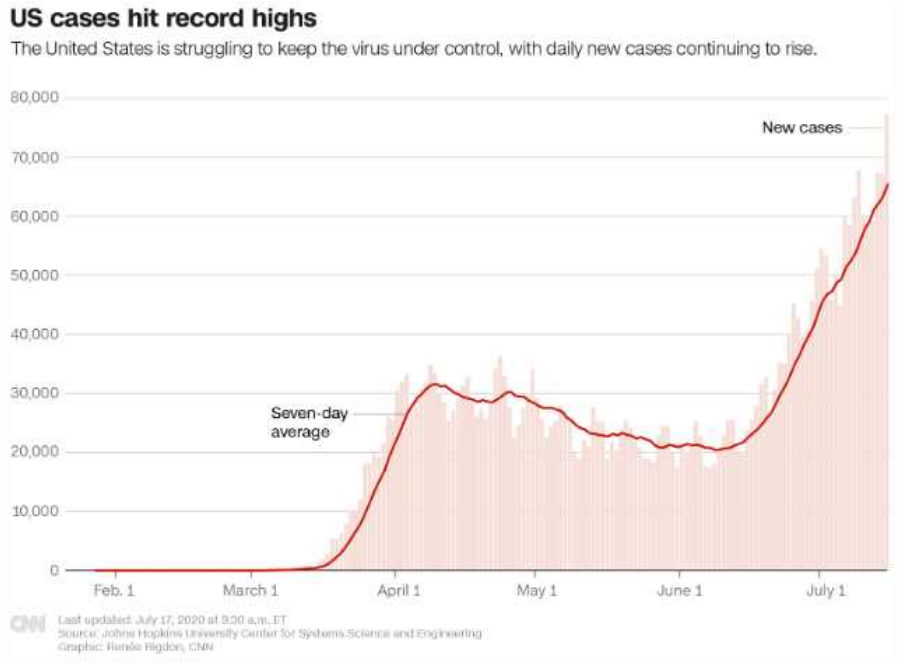
Americans are actually slowing down the re-opening the country by not wearing a mask, said Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

People need to understand that we are in a very serious situation that necessitates communities pulling together, he said.

"If we could get more people to understand that, hopefully we'll get more people who'd be willing to wear masks."
He said he would "urge the leaders -- the local political and other leaders -- in states and cities and towns to be as forceful as possible in getting your citizenry to wear masks."
The country needs to concentrate on the problems at hand and not worry about a second wave, he said.

"When you're having up to 70,000 new infections ... that's something you need to focus on right now, as opposed to looking at what's going to happen in September or October," he said.

There were 77,255 new cases reported Thursday, topping a previous high set two days ago, according to Johns Hopkins University. On Friday, the World Health Organization's situation report said there were a record 237,743 new Covid-19 cases reported to agency in the past 24 hours.



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https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality

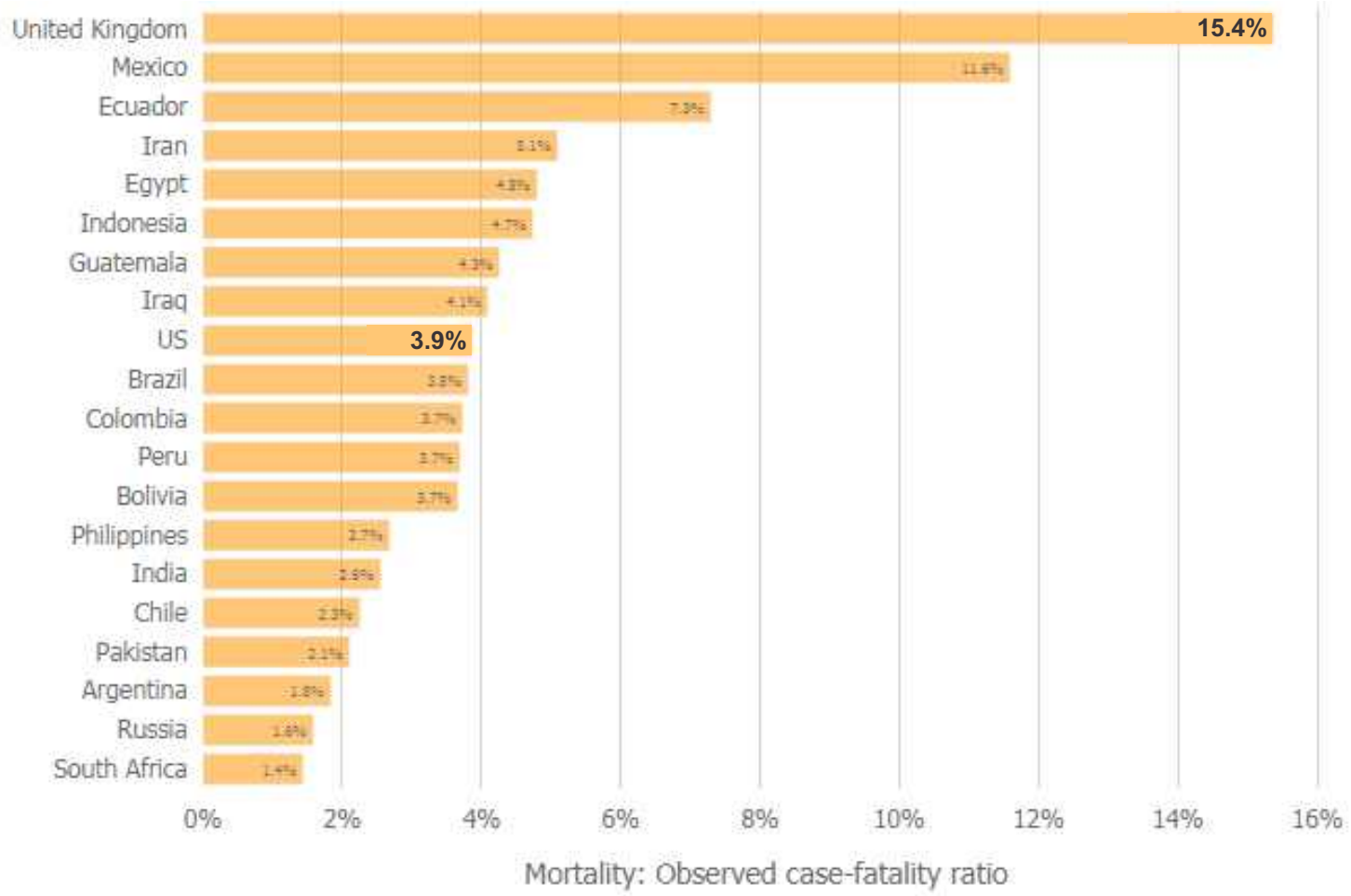
for the most current information, select the live link

July 18

Countries with the most deaths proportionally to their confirmed cases

For the twenty countries currently most affected by COVID-19 worldwide, the bars in the chart below show the **number of deaths per 100 confirmed cases**

Countries at the top of this figure have the most deaths proportionally to their COVID-19 cases, not necessarily the most deaths overall.



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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-coronavirus-america-broke-its-single-day-record-of-new-cases-at-least-9-times-in-a-month/ar-BB16Vdjp?li=BBnb7K

July 19

America broke its single-day record of new cases at least 9 times in a month

It's been a month of harrowing milestones set across the country, with the US beating its own daily record of total new coronavirus cases at least nine times.

On July 16, the country reported its latest single-day record with at least 77,255 new cases, according to Johns Hopkins University data. **The second highest number was reported a day later: 71,558. Saturday's number: 63,698.**

On June 16, with most states deep into their reopening plans, the country reported more than 23,700 cases of the virus. After what some saw as hopeful dips in cases, states across the South and other parts of the country warned of an increase in young people testing positive. Images emerged of crowded beaches and parties, despite experts cautioning Americans to stay home when possible.

In mid-June, **Florida** reported nearly 4,000 new cases in a day, a record single-day increase back then. The state has since grown to become the country's hotspot, **reporting more than 10,300 new cases Saturday.**

In the past few weeks, hospitals across the country have reached capacity. **At least 27 US states have halted or rolled back their reopening plans** to slow the spread of the virus. New estimates from US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say at least 40% of people who get the virus could show no symptoms, meaning thousands of Americans could be unknowingly still infecting others.

Now, officials point to gatherings and crowded bars as some of the major drivers of the surge. **To prevent further spikes, parts of the country -- including Arizona, California and Texas -- have closed bars back down.** Local leaders have begun pushing schools to remote instruction in the fall, after outcries from terrified parents and educators. Across the country, more mask requirements are going into effect, despite consistent backlash from some Americans. Face masks, experts have said, are the most powerful weapon against the virus.

With the surge in cases, **models are projecting more than 150,000 American deaths will be linked to the virus by August 8**, according to an ensemble forecast published by the CDC. The previous forecast published July 9 projected roughly 147,000 deaths by August 1.

At least 140,119 Americans have died of the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University. There have now been more than 3.7 million cases in the country.

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https://www.thealpenanews.com/news/international-news-apwire/2020/07/coronavirus-finds-fresh-legs-around-the-world-deaths-top-600000/

July 19

Virus rebounds around the world, deaths top 600,000

BERLIN (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic has found fresh legs around the world, as confirmed deaths pass 600,000 and countries from the U.S. to South Africa to India struggle to contain a surge of new infections. Hong Kong issued tougher new rules on wearing face masks, Spain closed overcrowded beaches and Germany reported another outbreak at a slaughterhouse.

Pope Francis said “the pandemic is showing no sign of stopping” and urged compassion for those whose suffering during the outbreak has been worsened by conflicts.

The World Health Organization said that 259,848 new infections were reported Saturday, its highest one-day tally yet.

While the U.S. leads global infections, South Africa now ranks as the fifth worst-hit country in the pandemic with more than 350,000 cases, or around half of all those confirmed on the continent. Its struggles are a sign of trouble to come for nations with even fewer health care resources.

India, which has now confirmed more than 1 million infections, on Sunday reported a 24-hour record of 38,902 new cases.

In Europe, where infections are far below their peak but local outbreaks are causing concern, leaders of the 27-nation European Union haggled for a third day in Brussels over a proposed 1.85 trillion-euro ($2.1 trillion) EU budget and coronavirus recovery fund.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there is “a lot of good will, but there are also a lot of positions” in the talks, which have have laid bare divisions about how the countries hit hardest by the pandemic, such as Italy and Spain, should be helped. She said the talks, which were initially scheduled to end on Saturday, could still end without a deal.

As scientists around the world race to find a vaccine to halt the pandemic, Russia’s ambassador to Britain on Sunday rejected allegations by the United States, Britain and China that his country’s intelligence services have sought to steal information about vaccine efforts.

“I don’t believe in this story at all, there is no sense in it,” Ambassador Andrei Kelin said when asked in a BBC interview about the allegations. “I learned about their (the hackers’) existence from British media. In this world, to attribute any kind of computer hackers to any country, it is impossible.”

Confirmed global virus deaths risen to nearly 603,000, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins. The United States tops the list with over 140,000, followed by more than 78,000 in Brazil. Europe as a continent has seen about 200,000 deaths.

The number of confirmed infections worldwide has passed 14.2 million, with 3.7 million in the United States and more than 2 million in Brazil. Experts believe the pandemic’s true toll around the world is much higher because of testing shortages and data collection issues.

Infections have been soaring in U.S. states such as Florida, Texas, Arizona, with many blaming a haphazard, partisan approach to lifting lockdowns as well as the resistance of some Americans to wearing masks. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said Sunday that the situation was so dire in his California city that authorities were considering a new stay-at-home order.

Even where the situation has been largely brought under control, new outbreaks are prompting the return of restrictions.

Following a recent surge in cases, Hong Kong made the wearing of masks mandatory in all public places and told ...

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https://apnews.com/462cdd447c84138c17d0bc0100d6f671

July 20

Facing uncertain fall, schools make flexible reopening plans

... With the number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths still rising, districts must grapple with whether to bring students back to classrooms, and how to keep pupils and teachers safe if they do.
...
The Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest public school system behind New York City, announced last week that all classes will be conducted virtually when they resume next month.

... **Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat, noted that many school districts in his state "are going back as planned, as normal, taking the kinds of precautions that health experts and scientists recommend."**

In **Missouri**'s St. Louis County, the Parkway district on Monday is **scheduled to announce its plans for the fall, but it will stay ready to pivot quickly if the spread worsens or the outlook improves**, Beckner said.

"Even if we are able to bring back all of our students, it won't look the same as it was in February," Beckner said. "There will be more hand-washing. There will be more restrictions on how we're able to do things like lunch, like recess."

Signs will encourage social distancing, and desks will be spaced farther apart. Face coverings will be required for all students, instructors and staff. Some teachers will wear masks with clear coverings so students who are deaf or heard of hearing can follow what they are saying.

Times will be scheduled for hand washing and using hand sanitizer. Plexiglass will separate librarians, office staff and teachers interacting one-on-one with students. A nurse will perform contact tracing on confirmed cases.

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, third-grade teacher Leigh Grady is preparing to enter both a new school and a new world after a tornado demolished most of East Brainard Elementary in April.

"It's going to be a hot mess express," she said. "I can't even wrap my mind fully around what it's going to look like."

Face masks will be mandatory for staff and all but the youngest students. Seating will be assigned on buses, and lunches served in classrooms. Water fountains will be off limits, and restrooms will disinfected "after each class goes as a group."

If a teacher or student tests positive for the virus, schools will close for 48 to 72 hours, and the county is working with a staffing agency to line up substitutes.

If a rise in confirmed cases warrant it, schools will operate under more restrictive measures, with students taking turns spending part of the week at school and part at home.

"All it's going to take is one kid with a positive test, and that will shut everything down," she said.

As of Sunday, there have been 3.7 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and more than 140,000 deaths in the United States, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins.

Grady said her own children will be attending 10th and 12th grade in person, and she's comfortable with that if schools stick to the safety plan.

"I need them to be at school," she said. "I need them to be around other people."

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https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/vaccine-trials-show-early-promising-results-major-challenges-are-ahead-n1234414

July 20

Vaccine trials show early promising results — but major challenges are ahead

...The early trial results for the **two vaccine candidates** — one developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca and the other by the Chinese company CanSino Biologics — **showed that both were safe and could induce immune responses** in participants. **But the next phase will be critical to demonstrate that the potential vaccines can protect against infections.**

"If we're making a plane, right now we're at the production level," said Dr. Carlos del Rio, executive associate dean of the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. "We can say it looks like this can at least get off the ground and do so safely. But can it get me from here to Paris? That's the question now."

So far, vaccine development efforts have proceeded at an exceptional pace. Typically, it takes roughly a decade for a new vaccine to go through the various stages of development and testing. But the urgency of the pandemic, which has killed more than 600,000 people worldwide, means that there are already two dozen vaccine candidates in clinical trials around the world.

For the Oxford-AstraZeneca and CanSino vaccine candidates, the next step in testing is known as phase three of human clinical trials. It's in this stage that scientists will be able to see whether a potential vaccine truly works to prevent coronavirus infections. While it's not common for vaccine candidates that have delivered good results in early stages to fail in subsequent phases, it can happen, del Rio said.

"I can tell you that in the world of HIV, we've seen a ton of vaccines be immunogenic — they produce immune responses — and then you take them to phase three and they don't protect you," he said.

Still, the results have been positive so far, del Rio said.

The newly released clinical trial results showed that the **Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate triggered the production of both antibodies and T cells, which can recognize and attack virus cells.** The multipronged immune response may be key, because researchers are still trying to figure out whether one is more important than the other in providing long-term protection.
[and] ...has already progressed to phase three clinical trials in Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Additional trials are expected to begin in other parts of the world, including the United States. The CanSino vaccine is expected to begin similar efficacy trials in Brazil.

...early Oxford-AstraZeneca trials included 1,077 participants, but the vaccine candidate wasn't tested in anyone over age 55. The CanSino vaccine candidate was tested in 508 people and did include participants ages 55 and older, but more research is needed before any vaccine is deemed safe to be widely administered.

During phase three clinical trials, it's crucial to expand and diversify the people being studied, which means including people from demographics that have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus, del Rio said.

"Here in the U.S., I want to see the people most heavily affected enrolled in the studies," he said. "We need African Americans, Hispanic and older populations enrolled. There's no benefit if we enroll a bunch of middle-class white people who have a lower incidence of the disease."

Scientists will also be on the lookout for dangerous side effects. In early trials, both vaccine candidates produced only minor side effects, such as fever and headaches.

Pin Wang, a professor of materials sciences and biomedical and chemical engineering at the University of Southern California, said it's reassuring that the side effects seen so far have been manageable. And although it's not unheard of to identify other issues later, **both studies were large enough that any major side effects would likely have been seen already.**

"If there are other side effects, they're probably related to genetic background," Wang said. "I think it's rare with the number of people that have been tested that we're missing something big."

But he didn't rule out that other surprises could be in store as the vaccine candidates undergo more detailed evaluations. **Part of the problem is that while vaccine development has proceeded at a breakneck pace, researchers are still making discoveries about the coronavirus every day.**

"This virus is new, and that is challenging for vaccine development," Wang said. "We don't have all kinds of data to give us clues. We can only learn the answer to these questions by doing more studies."

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https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-deadly-is-covid-19-researchers-are-getting-closer-to-an-answer-11595323801

July 21

How deadly is COVID-19? Researchers are getting closer to an answer

... examining deaths out of the total number of infections, which includes unreported cases—suggests that **Covid-19 kills from around 0.3% to 1.5% of people infected**. Most studies put the rate between 0.5% and 1.0%, meaning that f**or every 1,000 people who get infected, from five to 10 would die on average.**

The estimates suggest the new coronavirus is deadlier than the seasonal flu, though not as lethal as Ebola and other infectious diseases that have emerged in recent years. **The coronavirus is killing more people than the deadlier diseases, however, in part because it is more infectious**

"It's not just what the infection-fatality rate is. It's also how contagious the disease is, and **Covid is very contagious**," said Eric Toner, an emergency medicine physician and senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, who studies health-care preparedness for epidemics and infectious diseases. **"It's the combination of the fatality rate and the infectiousness that makes this such a dangerous disease."**

...

More than 14.7 million people have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 across the globe, and over 609,000 people have died, with nearly a quarter of the fatalities in the U.S., according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. That means that among confirmed global cases, roughly 4.2% of those people died.

...

In June, officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that for every known case of Covid-19, roughly 10 more went unrecorded through the beginning of May.

"...

An analysis of 26 different studies estimating the infection-fatality rate in different parts of the globe found an aggregate estimate of about 0.68%, with a range of 0.53% to 0.82%, according to a report posted in July on the preprint server medRxiv, which hasn't yet been reviewed by other researchers.

"To say that we will ever have one absolute true estimate is erroneous. We can get an idea of a trend, but we need to be mindful that this can change and vary," said Lea Merone, a public-health physician and health economist at James Cook University in Australia who co-wrote the paper. "It is context dependent."

The CDC is now using the report as the basis for its own best-estimate for the infection-fatality rate in its pandemic planning scenarios. The agency's estimate is 0.65% as of July 10, higher than its previous estimates.

The fatality rate for an individual varies, sometimes markedly, depending on factors such as age, sex and the presence of pre-existing medical conditions, studies show.

Researchers in the U.S. and Switzerland examined data from the Swiss city of Geneva to calculate fatality rates for different age groups. They found those over **65 had an infection-fatality rate of 5.6%—40 times the risk of someone in their 50s.**

Quality and access to health care and treatment could shift the mortality rate. Better treatment in the future could push the rate down, but a situation in which a hospital system is overwhelmed can drive the rate up, said Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz, an epidemiologist at the University of Wollongong who co-wrote the July medRxiv paper.

An infection-fatality rate of roughly 0.6% is six times greater than the 0.1% estimate for seasonal influenza, which is based on CDC data. Though researchers point out the estimates are calculated in different ways and the flu estimate doesn't take asymptomatic cases into account.

Diseases such as SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome; MERS, or Middle East respiratory syndrome; and Ebola are much deadlier, with case fatality rates ranging from roughly 10% to 50%.

There have been far fewer deaths from those diseases than the new coronavirus and even the seasonal flu because they aren't nearly as infectious or widespread.

SARS and MERS have killed 774 and 858 people, respectively. More than 11,300 people have died from Ebola.

Also, **many doctors worry Covid-19 might result in longer-term complications for some patients, especially those who have spent weeks in the hospital before being discharged.**

"There's this narrative I think a lot of people have that you get the disease and you die, or you're fine. And that's not true," Dr. Toner said. "There's a large range of health-care consequences for people who get severely ill, not just death."

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https://wallethub.com/edu/states-coronavirus-restrictions/73818/

July 22

States with the fewest coronavirus restrictions

All states have at least partially reopened after keeping non-essential businesses closed for months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, some states have recently chosen to pause their reopening processes due to spikes in the disease, and some local areas have even closed down again.

In order to determine the states with the fewest coronavirus restrictions despite a surge in cases across the U.S., WalletHub **compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 18 key metrics.**

Our **data set ranges from whether child-care programs and restaurants have reopened to whether the state has required face masks in public and workplace temperature screenings.** ...

Fewest

1. South Dakota
2. Wisconsin
3. Oklahoma
4. Utah
5. Iowa
6. Idaho
7. Wyoming
8. South Carolina
9. Arkansas
10. North Dakota
11. Missouri
12. Mississippi
13. Nebraska
14. Georgia
15. Alabama
16. Tennessee
17. Kansas
18. Indiana
19. Alaska
20. Louisiana
21. Florida
22. Montana
23. Ohio
24. Nevada
25. Kentucky
26. Minnesota
27. Illinois
28. Michigan
29. District of Columbia
30. New York
31. Washington
32. Maine
33. Oregon
34. West Virginia
35. New Hampshire
36. Connecticut
37. Rhode Island
38. Hawaii
39. Maryland
40. Virginia
41. Delaware
42. New Mexico
43. Vermont
44. Arizona
45. North Carolina
46. Texas
47. Colorado
48. Massachusetts
49. Pennsylvania
50. New Jersey
51. California

Most

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-idUSKCN24M29Z

July 22

U.S. records 1,000 deaths in one day from COVID-19, California passes 400,000 cases

ATLANTA (Reuters) - The United States reported more than 1,000 deaths from COVID-19 on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, marking the first time since June 10 the nation has surpassed that

Nearly 142,000 Americans have now died from the illness caused by the coronavirus, a toll that experts warn will likely surge following recent record spikes in case numbers and an alarming rise in hospitalizations in many states.

But in some **states, governors and local officials continued to bicker over the best way to respond to the crisis**.

In **Texas**, Governor Greg Abbott said Hidalgo county could not order residents to stay home and said mask and social distancing rules were sufficient to keep businesses open in the Rio Grande Valley, on the U.S. border with Mexico.

In **Georgia**, Governor Brian Kemp has sought to prevent Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms from enforcing an order that residents wear masks in public.grim milestone, as California closed in on passing New York in total infections.
...
In **Florida**, the state teachers' union has sued Governor Ron DeSantis and other officials in an attempt to halt his plans to reopen school classrooms as the state suffered a surge of more than 10,000 daily new COVID-19 cases for six out of the last seven days.

On average last week, 19% of Florida's tests for the virus came back positive, indicating widespread community transmission. Deaths have climbed 45% week-over-week.
...
Neither Florida nor Georgia have issued statewide mask mandates. In **Texas**, Abbott initially resisted such an order but earlier **this month agreed to require face coverings in most counties.**

In Hidalgo County, cases have risen 59% in the last week to nearly 13,000 total. In just one week, deaths have doubled to over 300, according to a Reuters tally.

California on Tuesday became the second U.S. state after New York to report more than 400,000 COVID-19 cases since the outbreak was first detected in the United States in January, according to a Reuters tally of county data.

New York - the epicenter of the pandemic earlier this year - has recorded by far the most deaths of any U.S. state at 32,218. California has reported more than 7,700 deaths.

But **New York now has one of the nation's lowest infection rates** and reported just two coronavirus-related deaths on Tuesday. It has eased its once strict lockdown restrictions.
...
President Donald Trump has been reluctant to wear a mask himself in public, but encouraged Americans on Tuesday to wear one if they cannot maintain social distance, and avoid crowded bars.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/news/us-secures-100-million-doses-of-pfizer-coronavirus-vaccine-candidate/ar-BB173CWw?li=BBnb7Kz

July 22

US secures 100 million doses of Pfizer coronavirus vaccine candidate

The U.S. government announced Wednesday it has reached a deal to gain access to at least 100 million doses of a Pfizer coronavirus vaccine candidate if it proves to be safe and effective.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Defense announced the agreement with Pfizer for the large-scale production of over 100 million doses following the vaccine's successful manufacture. Upon receipt of the first 100 million doses, the **U.S. will pay the drugmaker $1.95 billion.**

The Trump administration has previously committed to free access for COVID-19 vaccines for Americans who can't afford it.

The agreement also allows the U.S. to acquire an additional 500 million doses.

"Through Operation Warp Speed, we are assembling a portfolio of vaccines to **increase the odds that the American people will have at least one safe, effective vaccine as soon as the end of this year,**" HHS Secretary Alex Azar said in a statement.

"Depending on success in clinical trials, today's agreement will enable the delivery of approximately 100 million doses of vaccine being developed by Pfizer and BioNTech," Azar added.

Pfizer and German partner BioNTech are on track to begin an anticipated Phase 2b/4 safety and efficacy trial later this month. **Pfizer is seeking regulatory review as early as October 2020 and aims to manufacture up to 100 million doses by the end of 2020 and up to 1.3 billion doses by the end of 2021.**

"We've been committed to making the impossible possible by working tirelessly to develop and produce in record time a safe and effective vaccine to help bring an end to this global health crisis," Dr. Albert Bourla, Pfizer's chairman and CEO, said in a statement.

Bourla added the company is "honored to be a part of this effort to provide Americans access to protection from this deadly virus."

Phase ½ clinical trials are currently underway for the vaccines in the U.S. and Germany.

The U.S. government has similar agreements in place with other vaccine creators including Moderna and Oxford/AstraZenaca.

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https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/07/why-do-asymptomatic-coronavirus-cases-even-happen-cvd/#close

July 22

An estimated 40% of persons infected with COVID-19, never feel sick

...Up to half of stealthy spreaders “feel fine” on Saturday night—but by the time they come down with the telltale cough, fever, and fatigue on Monday, they’ve potentially infected multitudes. Meanwhile, what could be an even more elusive bunch—**people who are infected with the coronavirus but never, ever feel sick—make up 40 percent of infections in the United States, according to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

What’s especially puzzling is why these two groups—presymptomatic transmitters and asymptomatic cases—appear so frequently. Other viruses, such as influenza and colds, spread silently too. But the extreme evasiveness of COVID-19 makes it harder to control.

Part of the problem is knowing so little about how the disease manifests. We know that people who are old, obese, or have other health conditions such as asthma or diabetes, are more likely to develop a severe form of COVID-19. But the people who get infected yet escape the worst of its wrath are harder to comprehend.

Researchers are racing to understand the biology of these sneaky cases and to develop models that predict how they might be spreading COVID-19. **Emerging evidence suggests that a mixture of genetics, age, and individuality in people’s immune systems might factor into who gets a mild or barely noticeable case.**

The biggest challenge in studying symptom-free transmission is figuring out how often it happens. If you don’t feel sick, you’re not likely to get tested, right?

And even in places that have conducted widespread testing, such as China and Iceland, reliable data have been hard to come by. One reason is that research studies don’t follow patients for a significant amount of time after testing to see if they might have developed symptoms later. **One new study in Nature estimated that 87 percent of the infections in Wuhan, China, in the early days of the pandemic were missed because health officials didn’t know about pre-symptomatic spread.**

As for the people who never feel ill, it’s unclear how contagious they might be because researchers have a hard time documenting their transmission. **The CDC estimates asymptomatic cases are 75 percent as infectious as symptomatic ones**, but the agency cautions that this assumption is based on a murky understanding of what’s known as “viral shedding,” in which people unknowingly release contagious virus into the atmosphere.

Perhaps asymptomatic people don’t carry as much virus to begin with, or their immune systems behave like those found in bats. “Bats have these viruses, but they don’t get sick at all. They seem to have an immune response that allows them to clear the virus,” says Stanley Perlman, a professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

These theories could shed light on new Chinese research showing asymptomatic individuals have a weaker immune response overall and produce fewer antibodies, one of the immune system’s weapons.

Baffling biology ...

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https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/07/23/unemployment-claims-1-4-m-seek-jobless-benefits-covid-19-surges/5481957002/

July 23

1.4M workers file for unemployment as COVID-19 surges, and some benefits near end

The number of Americans filing jobless claims **rose for the first time since March**, showing the need for aid isn't waning even as the extra $600 that bolstered weekly checks during the pandemic comes to an end.

A total of 1.4 million more Americans filed for unemployment benefits for the first time as the coronavirus surges throughout many states, and recently reopened businesses shut their doors to slow the virus's spread.

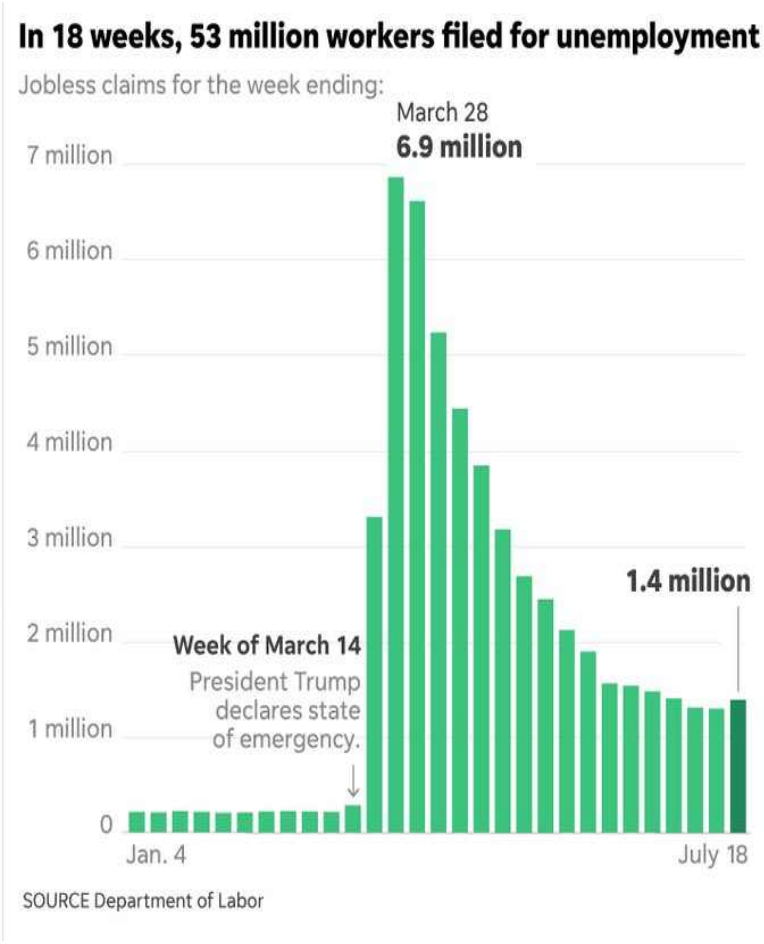
The uptick ended a 15-week stretch in which initial weekly claims steadily declined. In little more than four months, a staggering 52.7 million have sought unemployment aid for the first time.

...

Economists also warn that some temporary layoffs could become permanent.

"In more normal times, a significant share of people on temporary layoff could be expected to return to their previous employers, causing total unemployment to recede quickly," Dante DeAntonio, economist at Moody's Analytics said in a note last week.

"However, given the heightened uncertainty created by COVID-19 and the expansion in classification of temporary layoffs, that assumption is tenuous at best," DeAntonio continued. "What is certain is that in the coming months permanent job losses will continue to mount as new layoffs occur and as some workers who were previously classified as temporarily laid off enter a more permanent state of unemployment.



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https://apnews.com/59db961e7181936b80d834fede417167

July 23

Opening day for baseball amid virus: Masks, empty parks, social justice

... A baseball season that was on the brink before it ever began because of the virus outbreak is set to start [tonight] when excitable Max Scherzer and the World Series champion Washington Nationals host prized ace Gerrit Cole and the New York Yankees.

When it does get underway — the DC forecast calls for thunderstorms, the latest rocky inning in this what-can-go-wrong game — it'll mark the most bizarre year in the history of Major League Baseball.

A 60-game season, stars opting out. **Ballparks without fans, players wearing masks. Piped-in sound effects, cardboard cutouts for spectators. Spray-painted ads on the mound, pitchers with personal rosin bags.**

And a rack of strange rules. DHs in the National League, well, OK. An automatic runner on second to start the 10th inning? C'mon, now.

"Gosh, it's going to be fun," Cole said. "It's going to have fake crowd noise, and going to be 2020 coronavirus baseball."

Plus, a poignant reminder of the world we live in. A Black Lives Matter stencil can be put on mounds throughout the majors during the opening weekend.

And still there's a team that doesn't know where it's going to play — barred from Toronto because of health concerns, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and the Blue Jays had hoped to roost in Pittsburgh or Baltimore or Buffalo or somewhere else.

"This is 2020 baseball," Scherzer said.

To many fans, that will do. No other choice, really. F**our months after the games were supposed to start,** strange ball is better than no ball, right?

We'll see.

New York Yankees' Clint Frazier, left, watches his two-run home run against the New York Mets during the fourth inning of a baseball spring training game Saturday, July 18, 2020, in New York. (AP Photo/Adam Hunger)

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https://apnews.com/e1e78e2ef94705b5364185605f42f317

July 24

Always rocky, China-US relations appear at a turning point

BEIJING (AP) — Four decades after the U.S. established diplomatic ties with Communist China, the relationship between the two may have reached a turning point.

Tensions have risen to new heights on what has always been a rocky road, as the ambitions of a rising superpower increasingly clash with those of the established one. China ordered the closing of the U.S. Consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu on Friday, in rapid retaliation for the closing of its consulate in Houston.

Two weeks ago, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asked aloud if relations could stay on track. On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered an answer: The time has come to change course.

“The old paradigm of blind engagement with China simply won’t get it done,” he said in a speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in southern California. ”We must not continue it. We must not return to it.”

It was Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, the first by an American president since the Communists took power in 1949, that upended a Cold War paradigm and paved the way for the normalization of relations in 1979.

The United States had been a close ally of then-Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek in World War II and for three decades recognized Taiwan as the government of China after Chiang fled there when he lost control of the mainland in 1949.

Relations between Washington and the Communist government in Beijing began to thaw in the 1970s, as China’s ties with the Soviet Union deteriorated and leader Mao Zedong sought a counterweight to its more powerful neighbor.

A new leader, Deng Xiaoping, visited the U.S. in 1979 after the establishment of diplomatic ties, smiling in photos as he tried on a cowboy hat in Texas. The Houston consulate that is being shut, opened later the same year. It was China’s first in the United States.

Setting aside political differences, the U.S. and China promoted economic, social and cultural ties that were briefly interrupted a decade later by China’s military crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square.

Economic links grew exponentially in the following years, with heavy investment by U.S. businesses in China and an accompanying Chinese trade surplus that has reached $350 billion annually.

The relationship was punctuated by bouts of tension. The U.S. continues to support Taiwan militarily, and the Clinton administration sent an aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait in 1996 after China fired missiles toward the island.

In 2001, a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S. Navy surveillance plane collided over the South China Sea, a vital shipping lane in the Asia-Pacific region. China detained the U.S. crew for days after its plane made an emergency landing at a Chinese base.

As China has grown into the world’s second-largest economy, behind only the U.S., it is increasingly viewed as a competitor both economically and militarily ...

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https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-changes-covid-19-guidance-how-long-patients-need-be-n1234883

July 24

CDC changes COVID-19 guidance on how long patients need to be isolated

... Increasing evidence shows that most people are no longer infectious 10 days after they begin having symptoms of COVID-19. As a result, the **CDC is discouraging people from getting tested a second time after they recover.**

“For most persons with COVID-19 illness, isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 10 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms,” the CDC says.

For people who have tested positive but don't have symptoms, "isolation and other precautions can be discontinued 10 days after the date of their first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA.”

Dr. Joshua Barocas, an infectious disease physician at the Boston Medical Center, said **many doctors have felt for months that a negative test to end isolation was not a practical solution.**

“What we had seen clinically very much aligns with these new guidelines, at least for the vast majority of people,” he told NBC News. “It's one of those cases in which the CDC is now catching up to the clinician.”

There are exceptions for the 10-day guidance, including people with compromised immune systems who may be infectious for a longer period of time.
“...
The CDC also notes that virus fragments have been found in patients up to three months after the onset of the illness, although those pieces of virus have not been shown to be capable of transmitting the disease.

“You could be positive by PCR test long after no longer being infectious,” Giroir said during the Health and Human Services briefing July 14. Some people were getting tests four to six times. You don’t need to be be retested unless you’re critically ill or immunosuppressed in which you could shed virus longer.”
...
Schaffner said that it will take time for these recommendations to become widely adopted but once they do, they will have a modest effect on testing backlogs that are plaguing the U.S. health system.

“Our testing circumstances in the United States are not anywhere close still, to what they need to be,” he said. “The question is how well do the testing resources fulfill the needs of our country? And on that score, it's C minus at best.”

“Anything we can do to help that, the better,” he added.

The recommendation of 10 days is specifically for those who test positive for the coronavirus and have been asked to self-isolate. It doesn’t apply to people who need to quarantine to keep from possibly spreading the virus. The incubation period for the virus is 14 days, health experts say, so anyone who has been exposed to the virus would need to quarantine to see if they become sick.

Most people who are infected develop symptoms after about five days, although approximately 20 to 40 percent who are infected don’t develop any symptoms.

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https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-24/coronavirus-hospitalizations-for-children-younger-adults-dramatically-worsen-in-l-a-county

July 25

California reached another bleak coronavirus milestone this week

... recording more than 150 daily deaths in the worst fatality numbers since the pandemic began.
...
“The epidemic in the West is particularly among the Latinx community. ... They are both in urban, as well as rural, agricultural areas,” said Dr. George Rutherford, an epidemiologist and infectious diseases expert at UC San Francisco. “There’s tremendous amount of transmission in Southern California, in particular in Orange and Los Angeles counties.”
...
The seven-day average for daily coronavirus-related deaths reached 102 on Thursday — the first time the number went above 100, according to a Los Angeles Times analysis of its county-by-county tally of pandemic deaths. **Daily death tolls** have soared in recent days, **hitting 119 Tuesday, 158 Wednesday — a new one-day record — and 153 deaths Thursday,** the second-worst daily death toll. An additional 136 fatalities were reported Friday.

A cumulative total of 8,340 Californians infected with the coronavirus have died.
...
California’s COVID-19 hospitalizations hit records this week, for the first time reaching above 7,000 hospitalized. On Monday, 7,091 people with **confirmed coronavirus infections were in the hospital statewide; on Tuesday, the figure was 7,170**; on Wednesday, it was 6,825; and on Thursday, 6,952. Two months ago, about 3,000 people with confirmed COVID-19 infections were in California’s hospitals.

“We have more patients than ever in California,” Rutherford said. There’s more evidence that younger people are increasingly getting infected and hospitalized. Cases among L.A. County’s youngest adults — those under 30 — rose by 109% between mid-June and mid-July, but only rose by 53% among seniors up to the age of 79.

Children saw their rate of hospitalizations for COVID-19 in L.A. County climb by 50% over the same period, while it only rose by 13% for seniors aged 65 and older.
...
But there were **some increasing signs of optimism**. Ferrer, L.A. County’s director of public health, on Wednesday ruled out the need for a renewed stay-at-home order at least for this week.

The effective transmission rate of the coronavirus is now at about 0.94, meaning every 1 person infected with the virus on average infects 0.94 people, said Dr. Christina Ghaly, director of health services for L.A. County. That’s **better than it was in June,** when it rose above 1 and fueled the surge in disease.

And the number of new patients with COVID-19 requiring hospitalization in L.A. County, which had been rising, **has become flat and maybe even started to decrease**, Ghaly said. It’s plateaued at a substantially worse number than it was in April, but the data nonetheless suggest an improvement.

“These numbers—while they’re not going down—do appear to be stabilized,” Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said Friday evening. “And because our public health is not worsening.…we are not introducing any further closures at this time...

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https://apnews.com/a5c642c37e9f9970c3f2184858f5a5a2

July 26

Hanna's rain remains biggest threat to virus hot spot Texas

...Forecasters downgraded Hanna to a tropical storm early Sunday. The storm had maximum sustained winds at 60 mph (95 kph), the National Hurricane Center said in a 4 a.m. advisory.

Many parts of Texas, including areas near where Hanna came ashore, have been dealing with a surge in coronavirus cases in recent weeks, but local officials said they were prepared for whatever the storm might bring.
...
Some areas in South Texas had already reported receiving up to 9 inches (23 centimeters) of rain, including Cameron County, which borders Mexico and where Brownsville is located. Rainfall totals were expected to rise throughout the evening and into Sunday.
...
Sherry Boehme, who lives in a condo along the beach in Corpus Christi, said the storm's approach had increased the anxiety she has felt during the pandemic. The 67-year-old has mostly stayed at home because of health issues related to chronic lung disease.

"It's almost like a double whammy to us," Boehme said Saturday by phone. "I think it's made a lot of people nervous. ... We'll get through it. Everybody is good and strong and sticks together."
...
The U.S. Coast Guard was called to help with the rescue of a couple on a sailboat that was taking on water Saturday evening in a harbor near Corpus Christi, spokesperson Paige Hause said. A swiftwater rescue team assisted in getting the couple back to land without injuries.

Corpus Christi is in Nueces County, where health officials made headlines when they revealed that 60 infants tested positive for COVID-19 from July 1 to July 16.

Farther south in Cameron County, more than 300 confirmed new cases have been reported almost daily for the past two weeks, according to state health figures. The past week has also been the county's deadliest of the pandemic.

Coastal states scrambled this spring to adjust emergency hurricane plans to account for the virus, and Hanna loomed as the first big test.

South Texas officials' plans for any possible rescues, shelters and monitoring of the storm will have the pandemic in mind and incorporate social distancing guidelines and mask wearing. Cameron County planned to open at least three evacuation shelters. Other counties and cities throughout South Texas had also opened shelters, with many requiring face masks.

Gov. Greg Abbott said Saturday that some sheltering would take place in hotel rooms so people could be separated.

"We cannot allow this hurricane to lead to a more catastrophically deadly event by stoking additional spread of COVID-19 that could lead to fatalities," Abbott said...

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https://apnews.com/a57b2d0fed11f615fa4e62c0e48fd4f6

July 27

Gold surges and global markets are mixed

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets were mixed and gold surged to a record price Monday amid U.S.-China tension and concern a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic might be weakening.

London, Tokyo and Hong Kong declined while Frankfurt and Shanghai advanced. U.S. stock futures were higher.

Wall Street ended last week down after a new diplomatic flare-up between Washington and Beijing and mixed earnings reports.

Global markets have regained most of this year's losses but forecasters warn the rebound might be too big and too early as virus case numbers rise in the United States and some other economies.

Weak stock prices "speak volumes of soured risk appetite amid escalating U.S.-China risks, worsening virus outbreaks and a flagging recovery," said Hayaki Narita of Mizuho Bank in a report.

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London declined 0.1% to 6,117.51 while the DAX in Frankfurt advanced 0.5% to 12,898.10. The CAC 40 in France was off less than 0.1% at 4,953.

Gold jumped $41.80 to a record $1,939.30 per ounce in a sign investors were looking for safe havens to park money.

On Wall Street, futures for the benchmark S&P 500 index and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were up 0.4%.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.3% to close at 3,205.23 after swinging between gains and losses. The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo lost 0.2% to 22,715.85 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong retreated 0.4% to 24,603.26.

The Kospi in Seoul advanced 0.8% to 2,217.86 and Australia's S&P-ASX 200 gained 0.3% to 6,044.20. India's Sensex lost 0.2% to 38,047.55. New Zealand and Singapore declined while Jakarta rose.

Investors were rattled by the latest U.S.-Chinese diplomatic feud. The Trump administration told Beijing last week to close its consulate in Houston. China responded by ordering the closure of the U.S. consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu.

That adds to strains over trade, technology, Hong Kong and human rights that have sent relations between the two biggest global economies plunging to their lowest level in decades.

Investors also are worried about a rise in U.S. layoffs as spiking coronavirus infections lead more businesses to shut down. Extra unemployment benefits expire this week. Congress has yet to agree on more economic aid.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude lost 7 cents to $41.21 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 22 cents on Friday to settle at $41.29. Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost 16 cents to $43.62 per barrel in London.

The dollar declined to 105.49 yen from Friday's 105.97. The euro declined to $1.1711 from $1.1766.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/coronavirus-is-back-with-a-vengeance-in-places-where-it-had-all-but-vanished/ar-BB17eAg9?li=BBnb7Kz

July 27

Coronavirus is back with a vengeance in places where it had all but vanished

Australia reported only a handful of new coronavirus cases in early June, while **Hong Kong** went three weeks without a single locally transmitted infection that month. **Japan** had already lifted a state of emergency in May after the number of new cases dropped to a few dozen nationwide.

All three reported new high-water marks in daily infection numbers in the past week, showing how difficult it can be to keep the virus at bay, even in places lauded for taking early and decisive action.

The number of infections in all three places are still small in comparison to the world's hardest hit countries, but the fresh waves demonstrate the tricky balancing act authorities face as they attempt to reopen their economies.

...

"We were so close to having eliminated it from the whole of Australia," said Adrian Esterman, professor of biostatistics at the University of South Australia. "We were a fingernail from doing it, and this happens." He said that if new daily cases remained at current levels, it would soon become unsustainable for stretched contact-tracing teams to track infections.

Japan has seen a similar resurgence. **The seven-day average for daily new cases in Tokyo more than quadrupled this month to 258 as of Sunday. Across Japan, there were a record 981 cases recorded Thursday. The government has again moved to secure hotel rooms to quarantine the infected after releasing most of the rooms it had previously requisitioned.**

...

Facing the prospect of a protracted recession after a year of antigovernment protests followed by the pandemic, Hong Kong's government gave every adult permanent resident $1,290 to encourage people to spend and revive the recession-hit economy.

On June 16, city authorities lifted restrictions on indoor gatherings, restaurants and gyms. New local infections ceased—until July 5.

Since then, **Hong Kong has racked up more than 1,300 new cases, 87% of them locally transmitted.** Within days of the cash handouts reaching residents, renewed social distancing saw fresh closures or restrictions on gyms, bars and restaurants.

Local epidemiology experts say they believe missteps by the government, such as exemptions for some foreign arrivals—including pilots, airline and cargo-ship crew—from testing or the 14-day mandatory quarantine, were factors in the latest wave of coronavirus. The city contained an initial outbreak brought by visitors from Wuhan, China, in late January, and then a second wave in March as travelers and students returned from overseas.

Hong Kong has tightened regulations following the latest outbreak—starting July 29, travelers from the U.S. will be added to a list of high-risk countries, requiring them to provide a negative test before flying and proof they have booked a hotel for their quarantine before boarding their flights.

...

Lockdown fatigue also played a part, said infectious-diseases expert Joseph Tsang Kay-yan, as the city's residents have been living under social-distancing restrictions for more than six months.

Most of Australia has enjoyed prolonged spells without locally-transmitted infections. The relative speed at which the initial outbreak was contained and the low mortality rate, public health experts say, may have contributed to a sense of complacency by the time the second wave hit, despite constant government warnings.

Mr. Andrews, Victoria's premier, said last week that a sample from this month's outbreak showed **nearly 90% of people didn't self-isolate between showing symptoms and getting a test. Even after taking a test, he said, more than half didn't self-isolate while awaiting their results.**

"Pretending that it is [over] because we all want it to be over is not the answer," he said. "It is indeed part of the problem."

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https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/morocco-returns-partial-coronavirus-lockdown-live-updates-200726222443290.html

July 27

Global coronavirus deaths pass 650,000

Director of WHO says COVID-19 is 'most severe' health emergency the WHO has faced

- WHO says travel bans cannot be kept up indefinitely, and are also only useful when combined with a wide range of other measures to detect and break chains of transmission.
- The world's biggest COVID-19 vaccine study got under way on Monday with the first of 30,000 planned volunteers helping to test shots created by the US government along with Moderna Inc - one of several candidates in the final stretch of the global vaccine race.
- Hong Kong has announced further restrictions in a bid to curb a surge in coronavirus cases, including a ban on gatherings of more than two people, a ban on restaurant dining and mandatory face masks outdoors.
- Vietnam has ordered the evacuation of at least 80,000 tourists on Monday from the central city of Da Nang following the re-emergence of the coronavirus. The government said it needs four days to implement the evacuation.
- The number of coronavirus infections has hit 16.30 million worldwide, while more than 650,000 people have died, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. More than 10 million patients have recovered.
- Morocco will stop people from entering and leaving some of its biggest cities, including Casablanca, Marrakech and Tangier starting on Monday to contain a surge in coronavirus cases. Earlier, the health ministry reported 633 new cases, one of the biggest daily rises so far.

https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/do-not-plant-them-officials-warn-against-unsolicited-seeds-from-china-reportedly-mailed-to-oklahomans/ar-BB17flQn?li=BBnb7Kz

July 28

‘DO NOT plant them’: Officials warn against unsolicited seeds from China reportedly mailed to Oklahomans

Officials with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry issued a warning Monday after they said they received reports over the weekend of Oklahomans receiving seeds in the mail from China they did not order.

According to the department’s Facebook page, the seed are sent in packages usually stating that the contents are jewelry. Officials said unsolicited seeds could be invasive, introduce diseases to local plants or be harmful to livestock.

If you receive unsolicited seeds from another country, officials said here’s what you need to do:

- DO NOT plant them and if they are in sealed packaging, don't open the sealed package.
- This is known as agricultural smuggling, officials said. Oklahomans are urged to report it to the USDA and maintain the seeds and packaging until the USDA instructs you what to do with the packages and seeds. They may be needed as evidence. The USDA Antismuggling Hotline is 800-877-3835 and their email is SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov. The USDA will make every attempt to protect the confidentiality of any information sources during an investigation within the extent of the law, officials said.
- For Oklahoma Department of Agriculture's records, send an email explaining your location and any additional information about the package to Morgan.vance@ag.ok.gov and Kenny.naylor@ag.ok.gov.
- For additional information, contact ODAFF by calling Kaci Hubbell at 405-522-5971 or Joe Rackley at 405-205-2709.

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa/six-u-s-states-see-record-covid-19-deaths-latinos-hit-hard-in-california-idUSKCN24T2AM

July 29

Six U.S. states see record COVID-19 deaths, Latinos hit hard in California

...**Arkansas, California, Florida, Montana, Oregon and Texas each reported record spikes in fatalities.**

In the United States more than 1,300 lives were lost nation wide on Tuesday, the biggest one-day increase since May, according to a Reuters tally.

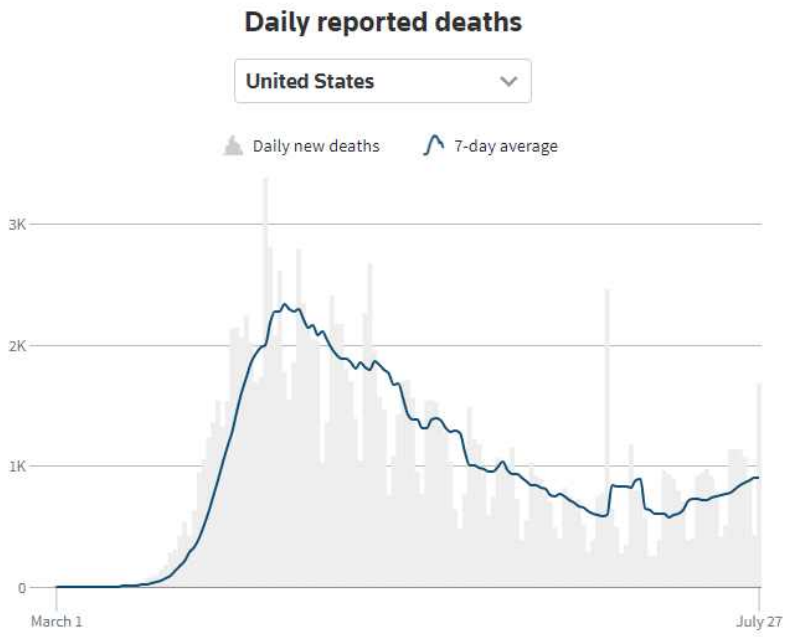
California health officials said Latinos, who make up just over a third of the most populous U.S. state, account for 56% of COVID-19 infections and 46% of deaths. Cases are soaring in the Central Valley agricultural region, with its heavily Latino population, overwhelming hospitals. The state on Tuesday reported 171 deaths.

Florida saw 191 coronavirus deaths in the prior 24 hours, the state health department said.

Texas added more than 6,000 new cases on Monday, pushing its total to 401,477, according to a Reuters tally. Only three other states - **California, Florida and New York - have more than 400,000 total cases**. The four are the most populous U.S. states.

California and Texas both reported decreases in overall hospitalizations as Dr. Anthony Fauci, a top U.S. infectious diseases expert, saw **signs the surge could be peaking in the South and West while other areas were on the cusp of new outbreaks.**

Fauci said **early indications showed the percentage of positive coronavirus tests rising in Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee and Kentucky.**



Note: A spike observed in deaths in New Jersey and nationally in late June is due to New Jersey including over 1,800 probable deaths from earlier this year.

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https://www.marketwatch.com/story/kodaks-stock-triples-as-company-announces-pandemic-plan-to-start-making-pharmaceutical-ingredients-2020-07-28?reflink=mw_share_email

July 29

The pandemic has heightened worries about pharmaceutical ingredients sourced to other countries

The Trump administration's **$765 million loan to the Eastman Kodak Co. for its launch of a business making pharmaceutical ingredients** sent shares of the iconic camera company soaring.

Kodak's stock KODK, +203.05% rallied more than 200% on Tuesday after the news was announced by the Trump administration. The company emerged from a 2011 bankruptcy in 2013, and its shares tumbled from a 10-year high of $37.20 on Jan. 9, 2014, to a low of $1.55 on March 23 of this year.

Kodak, which has a long history of manufacturing chemicals used in photographic film, now **plans to support "America's self-sufficiency in producing the key pharmaceutical ingredients we need to keep our citizens safe,"** Kodak's executive chairman, Jim Continenza, said in a statement.

The Trump administration said the Kodak deal is the first of its kind, and uses powers afforded by the Defense Production Act. The administration previously used these powers to demand that Ford Motor Co. F, +1.15% begin manufacturing respirators and masks and that General Motors Co. GM, +2.45% make ventilators.

It awarded $354 million to Phlow Corp. in May to start producing active pharmaceutical ingredients, or API, among other chemical ingredients, **used in certain essential medications**. A spokesperson for Phlow said that the company can't disclose the list of drugs but that it **includes treatments for pain and blood pressure that can be used by hospitalized COVID-19 patients.** The total contract is worth up to $812 million. Phlow cites a shift toward producing API in China and India as the rationale behind its business model.

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/07/30/experimental-jandj-vaccine-protects-monkeys-in-a-single-dose-study/24576819/

July 30

Experimental J&J vaccine protects monkeys in a single dose - study

CHICAGO, July 30 (Reuters) - **Johnson & Johnson on Thursday kicked off U.S. human safety trials for its COVID-19 vaccine after releasing details of a study in monkeys that showed its best-performing vaccine candidate offered strong protection in a single dose.**

When exposed to the virus, six out of six animals who got the candidate vaccine were completely protected from lung disease and five out of six were protected from infection as measured by the presence of virus in nasal swabs, according to the study published in the journal Nature.

"This gives us confidence that we can test a single-shot vaccine in this epidemic and learn whether it has a protective effect in humans," Dr. Paul Stoffels, J&J's chief scientific officer, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

The U.S. government is backing J&J's vaccine effort with $456 million in funding as part of a spending spree aimed at speeding production of a vaccine to end the pandemic, which has infected millions and killed more than 660,000 people.

Stoffels said prior tests of this type of vaccine in other diseases found that a second shot significantly increases protection. But in a pandemic a single-shot vaccine has a significant advantage, sidestepping a lot of the logistical issues involved in getting people to come back for their second dose.

The company plans to take up the question of one or two doses in its phase 1 trial, which kicked off this week in the United States.

Depending on those results, J&J plans to start large-scale, phase 3 testing with a single-shot regimen in the second half of September. Around the same time, the company will start a parallel phase 3 study testing a two-shot regimen of the vaccine, Stoffels said.

J&J's vaccine uses a common cold virus known as adnovirus type 26 or Ad26 to ferry coronavirus proteins into cells in the body, causing the body to mount an immune defense against the virus.

In the monkey study, scientists from J&J and Harvard's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center studied seven different potential vaccines in 32 animals and compared the results to 20 control animals who got placebo shots.

Six weeks later, all of the animals were exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. All 20 animals that received the placebo developed high levels of virus in their lungs and nasal swabs.

In the best-performing candidate, which J&J selected for human testing, none of the animals had virus in their lungs and only one showed low levels of virus in nasal swabs. Lab tests showed they all had developed antibodies capapable of neutralizing the virus after a single shot.

"This study shows that even just a single immunization with the Ad26 vaccine leads to neutralizing antibody responses and robust protection of monkeys against COVID-19," said Dr. Dan Barouch, a vaccine researcher at Beth Isreal Deaconness who led the research in collaboration with J&J.

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https://www.businessinsider.com/emirates-coronavirus-medical-coverage-funeral-pandemic-2020-7

July 30

Emirates offers free insurance

Emirates has a new strategy for boosting passenger demand in the midst of a global pandemic: coronavirus insurance. **If one of its passengers is diagnosed with COVID-19 during their journey, the Dubai-based airline will cover their medical expenses, up to €150,000 (about $176,000). It will pay €100 ($118) per day for quarantine costs — such as a hotel room — for up to two weeks.**

And if the worst happens, Emirates will offer €1,500 (about $1,765) for a passenger's funeral.

The coverage is available for travel between now and October 31, 2020. It's valid for 31 days from "the moment you take your first flight, and it covers you even if you travel onwards to another city," Emirates said. Testing costs are not covered, and passengers must contact the airline to get expenses approved before paying them.
...
The offering comes as Emirates seeks ways to rally demand and pasenger revenue. The airline has been impacted more than most due to the fact that it only flies internationally: Despite a modest recovery in domestic and some regional travel demand, long-haul travel has just about flatlined.

Emirates has seen demand fall 90%, airline president Tim Clark told Business Insider in an interview earlier this month, though the airline has managed to keep some revenue flowing by pivoting from passenger to cargo operations.

The airline's COVID-19 coverage is provided through NEXtCARE, the airline said, an arm of travel insurance provider Allianz. Emirates said the coverage is free and is applied automatically, no extra registration necessary.

"It is an investment on our part, but we are putting our customers first, and we believe they will welcome this initiative," Emirates Group CEO Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said in a press release.
While Emirates is the first airline to offer medical and quarantine expense coverage linked to the virus, various airlines and travel stakeholders have tried to boost customer confidence during the pandemic. Uzbekistan has offered $3,000 to visitors who contract the virus while traveling, while Cyprus has offered to cover costs of lodging and medication for visitors who develop the virus, CNN reported.

Fear of paying for COVID-19 treatment, though, isn't the only thing limiting international travel. Various border closures, travel restrictions, and quarantine requirements have made trips abroad logistically difficult, if not impossible, for many. At the same time, cancellations of conferences and other events have eliminated the need for much travel.

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https://apnews.com/294c984afd97b369a9d147d406fdbd52

July 31

US consumer spending up 5.6%, but virus could stall gains

American consumers increased their spending in June by a solid 5.6%, helping regain some of record plunge that occurred after the coronavirus struck hard in March and paralyzed the economy. But the virus' resurgence in much of the country could impede further gains.

Last month's rise in consumer spending followed a seasonally adjusted 8.5% surge in May after spending had plunged the previous two months when the pandemic shuttered businesses, caused tens of millions of layoffs and sent the economy into a recession. So deep was the pullback in the spring that even with two months of gains, consumer spending was still down at a record annual rate of 34.6% in the April-June quarter.

Now, with confirmed viral infections rising in a majority of states, many businesses have had to pause their re-openings or close a second time and cut jobs, thereby putting consumers under renewed pressure. The number of laid-off Americans who have applied for unemployment benefits has topped 1 million for 19 straight weeks. All told, roughly 30 million people are out of work, the government says.

And a standoff in Congress over extending further support to struggling households and businesses threatens to hurt millions of the unemployed. That, in turn, would weaken spending by consumers, the primary driver of the economy.

Friday's Commerce Department report showed that the increase in consumer spending in June coincided with a 1.1% drop in personal incomes which followed an even bigger 4.4% decline in incomes in May. The report came against the backdrop of a devastating economic collapse in the spring. The government estimated Thursday that the economy shrank at a dizzying 32.9% annual rate in the April-June quarter — by far the worst quarterly plunge on records going back to 1947 — as the viral outbreak shut down businesses, threw tens of millions out of work and sent unemployment surging to 14.7%.

The economic contraction was driven by a deep pullback in consumer spending, which fell at a record pace as travel froze up and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retailers to close.

So steep was the fall last quarter that most analysts expect a sharp economic rebound for the current July-September period. But the pain will likely continue and potentially worsen in the months ahead as the damage from the virus deepens. Over the past week, the average number of COVID-19 deaths per day in the United States has climbed more than 25%. And the number of confirmed infections has topped 4.4 million, which could be even higher because of limits on testing and because some people are infected without feeling sick.

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http://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/5-ways-the-coronavirus-changed-how-we-eat-fast-food/ar-BB17rYIL?ocid=ientp

Aug 1

5 ways the coronavirus changed how we eat fast food

McDonald's, Chipotle, Dunkin', Starbucks and several others reported earnings in recent weeks, which encompassed the brutal spring quarter when Covid-19 was rearing its head across the United States. In addition to illustrating how their bottom lines were decimated, the companies' quarterly financial updates also show how much we've changed our daily routines.

Here are five ways consumers' habits changed:

1. We're spending more and stocking up
2. Drive-thrus are thriving
3. Digital sales are breaking records
4. Breakfast is a bummer
5. Midday is the new morning

1. We're spending more and stocking up
Rather than coming in for coffee or a sandwich, we're buying lots more food in a single order. Starbucks said its average check size grew 25% in the most recent quarter because customers are purchasing multiple drinks and food items. Dunkin' noticed a similar trend, with its average order amount growing because of "family-size bulk orders." Baskin-Robbins, which it also owns, said this partially offset a sales dip with more expensive orders because people are buying ice cream quarts and cakes.
Stocking up also gave Domino's a bump.
"One of the things that we have heard over the quarter is that customers are actively putting more food in the basket to have leftovers, the next day," CEO Ritch Allison said in a recent earnings call. "They're thinking about not just that evening's meal, but how they're planning for the following day."

2. Drive-thrus are thriving
The shift to a "contactless" experience was a boon for a lot of chains, including McDonald's. The company said roughly 90% of its US sales came through its drive-thru lanes and markets that have a lot of drive-thru locations are recovering faster.

Chipotle has been aggressively expanding its drive-thrus...

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/02/health/gupta-coronavirus-t-cell-cross-reactivity-immunity-wellness/index.html

Aug 2

Do some people have protection against the coronavirus?

... Why do some people get very sick and even die from their illness, while other similar people show no symptoms and may not realize they've been infected at all?

We know some of the big factors that put people at higher risk of having a severe, even fatal, course of disease: being over 60; being overweight or obese; having one or more chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney or lung disease, and cancer; and being a person of color -- Black African American, Latino Latinx or Native American.

But might the opposite also be true: Could certain people actually have some type of protection?

A recently published summary article in the journal Nature Reviews Immunology put forth a tantalizing possibility: **A large percentage of the population appears to have immune cells that are able to recognize parts of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and that may possibly be giving them a head start in fighting off an infection**. In other words, some people may have some unknown degree of protection.

"What we found is that **people that had never been exposed to SARS Cov2 ... about half of the people had some T-cell reactivity,"** co-author of the paper Alessandro Sette from the Center for Infectious Disease and Vaccine Research at La Jolla Institute for Immunology, told CNN.
...
And that brings us to another question raised by Sette and Crotty's paper: because the common circulating coronaviruses (CCC) appear in different places, at different times, could some countries, cities or localities be disproportionately affected (or spared) because the population had less exposure to those CCCs, thus creating less opportunity to develop cross-reactivity?

"If the pre-existing T-cell immunity is related to CCC exposure, it will become important to better understand the patterns of CCC exposure in space and time. It is well established that the four main CCCs are cyclical in their prevalence, following multiyear cycles, which can differ across geographical locations. This leads to the speculative hypothesis that differences in CCC geo-distribution might correlate with burden of COVID-19 disease severity," Sette and Crotty wrote.

So, ultimately can it be said that some people have at least partial natural protection from SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus, if they have T-cell cross-reactivity?

"The biggest problem is that everybody wants a simple answer," said Johns Hopkins' Casadevall. "What **nobody wants to hear is that it's unpredictable, because many variables play together in ways that you can't put together: your history, your nutrition, how you got infected, how much [virus] you got -- even the time of the day you got infected. And all these variables combine in ways that are unpredictable."**

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https://apnews.com/bf77af89c527340793d15a9957d30c84

Aug 2

SpaceX capsule and NASA crew make 1st splashdown in 45 years

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Two NASA astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to close out an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

It was the first splashdown by U.S. astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year.

Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken arrived back on Earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour, less than a day after departing the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm gulf waters about 40 miles off the coast of Pensacola, hundreds of miles from Tropical Storm Isaias pounding Florida's Atlantic coast.

"Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Control from SpaceX headquarters.

"It's a little bit overwhelming to see everybody here considering the things that have gone on the last few months since we've been off planet," Hurley said after arriving back home in Houston Sunday evening where they were greeted by a small masked-gathering of family and officials ...

The astronauts' ride back to Earth was fast, bumpy and hot, at least on the outside.

The spacecraft went from a screaming orbital speed of 17,500 mph (28,000 kph) to 350 mph (560 kph) during atmospheric reentry, and finally to 15 mph (24 kph) at splashdown. Peak heating during descent was 3,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,900 degrees Celsius). The anticipated top G forces felt by the crew: four to five times the force of Earth's gravity.

Within a half-hour of splashdown, the scorched and blistered 16-foot capsule was hoisted aboard a SpaceX recovery ship with a staff of more than 40, including doctors and nurses. To keep the returning astronauts safe in the pandemic, the recovery crew quarantined for two weeks and were tested for the coronavirus.

The opening of the hatch was held up briefly by extra checks for toxic rocket fumes outside the capsule. After medical checkups, the astronauts were flown by helicopter to Pensacola and then to Houston.

There was one unexpected problem that could have endangered the operation: Once the capsule was in the water, private boats "just made a beeline for it," and got too close, said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, promising to do better next time at keeping sightseers on pleasure boats safely away. NASA video showed one vessel flying a large campaign flag for President Donald Trump.

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https://hallboothsmith.com/new-york-federal-judge-strikes-down-several-key-parts-of-covid-19-paid-leave-regulation-including-the-definition-of-health-care-provider/

Aug 3

Federal Judge strikes down key parts of COVID-19 paid leave regulation

Written by: Jacqueline Voronov, Esq. and Jeffrey M. Daitz, Esq.

In a very **pro-employee ruling**, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York struck down four (4) key provisions of the U.S. Department of Labor's ("DOL") regulations implementing the paid leave provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ("FFCRA"). The August 3, 2020 ruling came down in a lawsuit filed by the State of New York, (State of New York v. U.S. Department of Labor, et al., No. 20-CV-3020 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 3, 2020)), which argued that the regulations unlawfully narrow the scope of leave available to workers.

Specifically, **the Court held that the DOL exceeded its authority by:**

1. Declaring that an employer is not obligated to provide FFCRA leave to an employee if the employer does not otherwise have work for the employee;

2. Broadly defining "health care provider" to include virtually all employees of employers that provide health care services;

3. Allowing employees to use intermittent leave in certain cases only if their employer agrees; and,

4. Requiring employees to provide documentation "prior to taking leave" indicating their reason for leave, the duration of the requested leave, and, where relevant, the authority for the isolation or quarantine order qualifying them for leave.

Background

As we previously reported, the FFCRA has two (2) main provisions: the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) and the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA). The EFMLEA requires that employers with less than 500 employees provide up to 12 weeks of leave for employees unable to work or telework because they have to care for their child.

The EPSLA requires employers with less than 500 employees to provide employees up to 80 hours of paid sick time to be used for any of six qualifying reasons. These qualifying reasons are (1) the employee is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19; (2) the employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; (3) the employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis; (4) the employee is caring for an individual who is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19, or the employee is caring for an individual who has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; (5) the employee is caring for his or her son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, or the child care provider of such son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions; or (6) the employee is experiencing any other substantially similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Congress charged the DOL with administering the statute and on April 1, 2020, the DOL released a final, temporary rule interpreting both provisions of the FFCRA. Two (2) weeks later, the State of New York brought suit and challenged the DOL's final rule, claiming that several features of the rule exceeded the agency's authority under the statute and are, thus, invalid.

The Work-Availability Requirement

The Court first addressed the DOL's "work-availability requirement." The DOL final rule's work-availability requirement "is hugely ...

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Aug 4

Wave of evictions expected as moratoriums end in many states

... **The federal eviction moratorium that protects more than 12 million renters living in federally subsidized apartments or units with federally backed mortgages expired July 25**. If it's not extended, landlords can initiate eviction proceedings in 30 days.

"It's going to be a mess," said Bill Faith, executive director of Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, referring to the Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, which found last week that more than **23% of Ohioans questioned said they weren't able to make last month's rent or mortgage payment or had little or no confidence they could pay next month's.**

Nationally, the figure was 26.5% among adults 18 years or older, with numbers in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Nevada, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, New York, Tennessee and Texas reaching 30% or higher. The margins of error in the survey vary by state.

"I've never seen this many people poised to lose their housing in a such a short period of time," Faith said. "This is a huge disaster that is beginning to unfold."

Housing advocates fear parts of the country could soon look like **Milwaukee, which saw a 21% spike in eviction filings in June, to nearly 1,500 after the moratorium was lifted in May. It's more than 24% across the state.**
"...

In **New Orleans**, a legal aid organization saw its **eviction-related caseload almost triple in the month since Louisiana's moratorium ended in mid-June.**...

Along with exacerbating a housing crisis in many cities that have long been plagued by a shortage of affordable options, widespread discrimination and a lack of resources for families in need, **the spike in filings is raising concerns that housing courts could spread the coronavirus.**

Many cities are still running hearings virtually. But others, like New Orleans, have opened their housing courts. Masks and temperature checks are required, but maintaining social distance has been a challenge...

Though the numbers of eviction filings in Ohio and elsewhere are rising and, in some places reaching several hundred a week, they are still below those in past years for July. Higher numbers are expected in August and September.

Experts credit the slower pace to the federal eviction moratorium as well as states and municipalities that used tens of millions of dollars in federal stimulus funding for rental assistance. It also helped that several states, including Massachusetts and Arizona, have extended their eviction moratorium into the fall...

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Aug 4

Isaias spawns wild inland weather, residents urged to use shelters as last resort

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (AP) — Tropical Storm Isaias brought dangerous winds and heavy rain over eastern Virginia early Tuesday after making landfall as a hurricane near Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina.

The hurricane's eye crossed over the coast just after 11 p.m. on Monday with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (136 km/h), and its top winds dropped to 70 miles per hour (117 km/h) by early Tuesday. But forecasters said tornadoes were possible, rainfall would remain a major concern and trees could fall, causing power outages as Isaias moves north along the mid-Atlantic and New England coastline.

"We don't think there is going to be a whole lot of weakening, we still think there's going to be very strong and gusty winds that will affect much of the mid-atlantic and the Northeast over the next day or two,"
...
"All those rains could produce flash flooding across portions of the eastern Carolinas and mid-Atlantic, and even in the northeast U.S.," said Daniel Brown, senior hurricane specialist. A tropical storm warning extended all the way up to Maine, where flash flooding was possible in some areas on Wednesday.

Isaias (pronounced ees-ah-EE-ahs) was upgraded again from a tropical storm to a Category 1 hurricane Monday evening. Early Tuesday the storm, downgraded again, was centered about 25 miles (40 kilometers) northwest of Greenville, North Carolina. It was moving quickly north northeast over eastern North Carolina at 26 mph (41 kph) and this general motion accompanied by an increase in forward speed is expected through Tuesday.
..
As the storm neared the shore, a gauge on a pier in Myrtle Beach recorded its third highest water level since it was set up in 1976. Only Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016 pushed more salt water inland.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper urged those evacuating to turn to shelters as a last resort, citing coronavirus risks and the need to operate shelters at reduced capacity to allow for social distancing.
...
Isaias' passage near Florida over the weekend was particularly unwelcome to authorities already dealing with surging coronavirus caseloads, forcing them to close outdoor virus testing sights, as well as beaches and parks. Officials lashed signs to palm trees so they wouldn't blow away. About 150 people had to keep masks on while sheltering in Palm Beach County.

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https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/the-biggest-monster-is-spreading-globally-and-it-is-not-the-coronavirus/articleshow/77352321.cms

Aug 4

Tuberculosis, H.I.V. and malaria are making a comeback

...t**uberculosis, [is] the biggest infectious-disease killer worldwide, claiming 1.5 million lives each year.**

Until this year, **TB and its deadly allies, H.I.V. and malaria**, were on the run. The toll from each disease over the previous decade was at its nadir in 2018, the last year for which data are available.

Yet now, as the coronavirus pandemic spreads around the world, consuming global health resources, these perennially neglected adversaries **are making a comeback.**

“Covid-19 risks derailing all our efforts and taking us back to where we were 20 years ago,” said Dr. Pedro L. Alonso, the director of the World Health Organization’s global malaria program.

It’s not just that the coronavirus has diverted scientific attention from TB, H.I.V. and malaria. The lockdowns, particularly across parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, have raised insurmountable barriers to patients who must travel to obtain diagnoses or drugs, according to interviews with more than two dozen public health officials, doctors and patients worldwide.

Fear of the coronavirus and the shuttering of clinics have kept away many patients struggling with H.I.V., TB and malaria, while restrictions on air and sea travel have severely limited delivery of medications to the hardest-hit regions.

About 80 percent of tuberculosis, H.I.V. and malaria programs worldwide have reported disruptions in services, and one in four people living with H.I.V. have reported problems with gaining access to medications, according to U.N. AIDS. Interruptions or delays in treatment may lead to drug resistance, already a formidable problem in many countries.

...

According to one estimate, **a three-month lockdown across different parts of the world and a gradual return to normal over 10 months could result in an additional 6.3 million cases of tuberculosis and 1.4 million deaths from [malaria]**

...

Even if governments are prepared, with some help from big aid agencies, to buy drugs months in advance, the global supply may soon run out.

The pandemic has severely restricted international transport, hindering the availability not just of chemical ingredients and raw materials, but also of packaging supplies.

“The disruption of supply chains is really something that worries me — for H.I.V., for TB, for malaria,” said Dr. Carlos del Rio, chair of the scientific advisory board of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief....

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https://apnews.com/1587622775452a3036c1141998984033

Aug 5

City streets drain of life in Australia's toughest lockdown

Melbourne's usually vibrant downtown streets were draining of signs of life on Wednesday on the eve of Australia's toughest-ever pandemic restrictions coming into force.

Many of the stylish boutiques and eateries in a city dubbed Australia's Hipster Capital that prides itself on superior coffee had already closed their doors ahead of a **ban on non-essential businesses that will throw 250,000 people out of work** from Thursday.

Defense personnel in camouflage fatigues and police officers patrolled the streets enforcing pandemic **rules that include mandatory masks**, which the few pedestrians were abiding by.

The closing down of Australia's second-largest city, which usually accounts for a quarter of the nation's economic activity, also coincided with frenetic preparation.

Hairdresser Niki Fiocca said she had been solidly booked by customers in recent days before her salon must close for at least six weeks.

"I just hope that this all works out for us," said Fiocca, revealing she felt "a little bit under stress."

"If everyone did the right thing, maybe this wouldn't have happened," she added, referring to Melbourne's growing COVID-19 infections.

Victoria set a new daily record of 725 cases on Wednesday. Elsewhere in Australia, only 14 new infections were found.

A Victoria state government website crashed on Wednesday when it was overwhelmed by employees in essential services applying for permits that would allow them to leave home for work from Thursday.

...

"It's not only that there is that many people out of a job, they're also telling everybody to stay home and only got out for one hour a day to go shopping or whatever -- I don't understand why we have been told to stay open," Iatrou said.

..

Many Melbourne businesses in this city of 5 million are not expected to survive the second and harshest lockdown.

...

Melbourne residents were evenly split between those who resented the new impositions and those who wholehearted supported them ...

A man wearing a mask walks past Luna Park in the suburb of St Kilda during lockdown in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2020. (AP Photo/Asanka Brendon Ratnayake)

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-casualties/global-coronavirus-deaths-exceed-700000-one-person-dies-every-15-seconds-on-average-idUSKCN2510EN

Aug 5

Global coronavirus deaths exceed 700,000, one person dies every 15 seconds on average

(Reuters) - The global death toll from the coronavirus surpassed 700,000 on Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, with the **United States, Brazil, India and Mexico leading the rise in fatalities.**

Nearly 5,900 people are dying every 24 hours from COVID-19 on average, according to Reuters calculations based on data from the past two weeks.

That equates to 247 people per hour, or one person every 15 seconds.

...

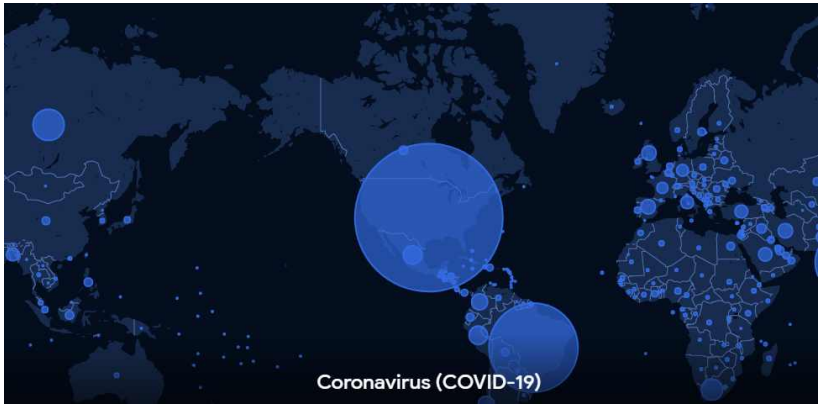
The pandemic was initially slower to reach Latin America, which is home to about 640 million people, than much of the world. But officials have since struggled to control its spread because of the region's poverty and densely packed cities.

More than 100 million people across Latin America and the Caribbean live in slums, according to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Many have jobs in the informal sector with little in the way of a social safety net and have continued to work throughout the pandemic.

Even in parts of the world that had appeared to have curbed the spread of the virus, countries have recently seen single-day records in new cases, signaling the battle is far from over.

Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Bolivia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Belgium, Uzbekistan and Israel all recently had record increases in cases.

Australia also reported a record number of new deaths on Wednesday, taking the country's total to 247.



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/05/well/covid-19-symptoms.html

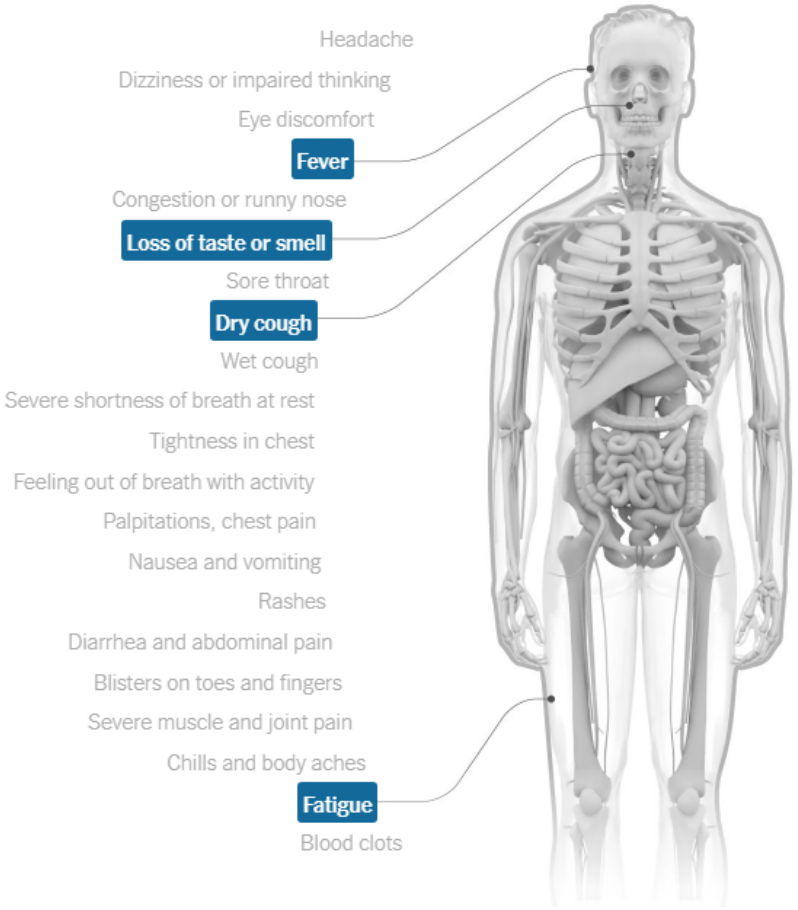
Aug 6

Could My Symptoms Be COVID-19?

Use the live link at the top of the page to access an interactive chart

To the right is a screen capture of some of the content

These four symptoms are **very common** among Covid patients. Unlike flu symptoms, which typically come on fast, Covid-19 symptoms may emerge over several days.



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https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/08/05/899636766/los-angeles-mayor-says-city-may-shut-off-water-power-at-houses-hosting-large-par

Aug 6

Los Angeles may shut off water and power at houses hosting large parties

.Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced on Wednesday that he is authorizing the city to shut off water and power service to properties hosting large house parties, which he said had "essentially become nightclubs in the hills."

In a briefing, Garcetti expressed concerns about reports of large parties and gatherings that violate public health orders, often taking place at homes that are vacant or being used as short-term rentals.

Starting Friday night, he said, houses, businesses and other venues hosting "un-permitted large gatherings" will face tougher consequences.

"If the LAPD responds and verifies that a large gathering is occurring at a property, and we see these properties reoffending time and time again, they will provide notice and initiate the process to request that [the Department of Water and Power] shut off service within the next 48 hours," Garcetti said.

Large gatherings of any kind are prohibited under the county's public health orders aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19, which sharply intensified statewide earlier this summer.

Los Angeles County has more total coronavirus cases than any county in the U.S., according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

And on Wednesday, local health officials said the number of cases has been undercounted due to issues with the state's electronic laboratory system.

Garcetti added that while he hopes residents will avoid gatherings of all sizes, this enforcement will not focus on small or ordinary get-togethers. Rather, it will focus on people he described as "determined to break the rules," who pose a significant threat to public health.

"The consequences of these large parties ripple far beyond just those parties," Garcetti said. "They ripple throughout our entire community because the virus can quickly and easily spread."

...

Such a consequence is not entirely unheard of. In June, the town of Oxford, Mass., shut off water and electricity to a gym after its owner repeatedly defied the state's shutdown order.

Also on Wednesday, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health said that nearly **60% of new COVID-19 cases are occurring in residents between the ages of 18 and 49.**

Individuals between the ages of 30 and 49 have the highest case rate among all age groups in the county, and case rates for this group have almost tripled since the start of June. Health officials said that patients between the ages of 18 and 29 now account for more than twice the proportion of all hospitalizations than they did in April.

Director of Public Health Barbara Ferrer urged younger adults to consider the potential risks that attending a party may pose to their health and the health of older relatives.

"We can and will one day get to the point where hanging out with a group of friends is possible," she said. "But we aren't there yet."

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https://apnews.com/999f2b9c870c48db8f5ca575ade5ff84

Aug 7

India hits 2 million cases as health volunteers strike

NEW DELHI (AP) — As India hit another grim milestone in the coronavirus pandemic on Friday, crossing 2 million cases and more than 41,000 deaths, community health volunteers went on strike complaining they were ill-equipped to respond to the wave of infection in rural areas.

Even as India has maintained comparatively low mortality rates, the disease trajectory varies widely across the country with the burden shifting from cities with relatively robust health systems to rural areas, where resources are scarce or nonexistent.

...**India has the third-highest caseload in the world after the United States and Brazil. It has the fifth-most deaths but its fatality rate of about 2% is far lower than the top two hardest-hit countries. The rate in the U.S. is 3.3%, and in Brazil 3.4%**, Johns Hopkins University figures showed.

The caseload in the world's second-most populous country has quickly expanded since the government began lifting a monthslong lockdown hoping to jump-start a moribund economy. India is projecting negative economic growth in 2020.

Life cautiously returned to the streets of the capital of New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai, which appear to have passed their peaks.
...
But authorities elsewhere in India were reimposing lockdowns after sharp spikes in cases, including in Uttar Pradesh, a state of 220 million residents where infections in every district are weighing heavily on the fragile health system. After fully reopening in June, the state reimposed a weekend lockdown in July.
...
Around 900,000 members of an all-female community health force began a two-day strike on Friday, protesting that they were being roped in to help with contact tracing, personal hygiene drives and in quarantine centers, but weren't given personal protective equipment or additional pay, according to organizer A.R. Sindhu.

The health workers, known as Accredited Social Health Activists, or ASHA, which means 'hope' in several Indian languages, have been deployed in each village on behalf of the Health Ministry. Their work ranges from escorting children to immunization clinics to counseling women on childbirth.

But while their regular work hasn't reduced, they are increasingly being involved by state governments in the fight against the pandemic, said Sindhu.

"But **ASHA workers don't have masks or PPEs or even sanitizers,**" she said.

She added that although the work has increased and become more dangerous, their salaries remain static at roughly 2,000 rupees ($27) per month And the families of at least a dozen women who she said died from the virus didn't receive compensation from India's federal insurance for front-line health care workers because their deaths were not recorded as COVID-19 deaths.

Manisha Verma, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In Mumbai, the capital of central Maharashtra state, cases had plateaued after months of steady growth. But rural parts were seeing an opposite trend.

Dr. S.P. Kalantri, the director of a hospital in the village of Sevagram in Maharashtra, about 74 kilometers (46 miles) from the city of Nagpur, said that **younger people were cavalier about social distancing and masks. Fatigue and increased familiarity with the disease, which has been most fatal to Indians above the age of 60 with comorbidities, had resulted in people not being as vigilant, he said.**

"Everyone thinks it won't be them," he said.

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Aug 7

Russia's race for virus vaccine raises concerns in the West

MOSCOW (AP) — **Russia boasts that it's about to become the first country to approve a COVID-19 vaccine, with mass vaccinations planned as early as October** using shots that are yet to complete clinical trials -- and scientists worldwide are sounding the alarm that the headlong rush could backfire.

Moscow sees a Sputnik-like propaganda victory, recalling the Soviet Union's launch of the world's first satellite in 1957. But the experimental COVID-19 shots began first-in-human testing on a few dozen people less than two months ago, and there's no published scientific evidence yet backing Russia's late entry to the global vaccine race, much less explaining why it should be considered a front-runner.

"I'm worried that Russia is cutting corners so that the vaccine that will come out may be not just ineffective, but also unsafe," said Lawrence Gostin, a global public health law expert at Georgetown University. "It doesn't work that way. ... Trials come first. That's really important."

According to Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russia's Direct Investment Fund that bankrolled the effort, a vaccine developed by the Gamaleya research institute in Moscow may be approved in days, before scientists complete what's called a Phase 3 study. That final-stage study, usually involving tens of thousands of people, is the only way to prove if an experimental vaccine is safe and really works.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said members of "risk groups," such as medical workers, may be offered the vaccine this month. He didn't clarify whether they would be part of the Phase 3 study that is said to be completed after the vaccine receives "conditional approval."

Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova promised to start "industrial production" in September, and Murashko said mass vaccination may begin as early as October.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease specialist, questioned the fast-track approach last week. "I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing a vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone, because claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before you do testing I think is problematic at best," he said.

Questions about this vaccine candidate come after the U.S., Britain and Canada last month accused Russia of using hackers to steal vaccine research from Western labs.

Delivering a vaccine first is a matter of national prestige for the Kremlin as it tries to assert the image of Russia as a global power capable of competing with the U.S. and China. The notion of being "the first in the world" dominated state news coverage of the effort, with government officials praising reports of the first-step testing.

In April, President Vladimir **Putin ordered state officials to shorten the time of clinical trials for** a variety of drugs, including **potential coronavirus vaccines.**

According to Russia's Association of Clinical Trials Organizations, the order set "an unattainable bar" for scientists who, as a result, "joined in on the mad race, hoping to please those at power."

The association first raised concern in late May, when professor Alexander Gintsburg, head of the Gamaleya institute, said he and other researchers tried the vaccine on themselves...

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https://money.yahoo.com/1-3-americans-refuse-covid-190800336.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABGN2_T-jbE0sD3aOwa6LaLjImnIINjI2N3jAI_pSPvLuEvltJdvqXBjrBWzAj1RLkslHF3rlEkr_0zO6osfdefHOGcOMdgNuTkoced4qB-NrCL-hdEnXQmCyDKPVYcHWwbgCH2hfjePrNppAgmLkbGU7nkkWL3Oyj1wsDsTFnts

Aug 7

1 in 3 Americans would refuse COVID-19 vaccine, new Gallup poll finds

One in 3 Americans would refuse an FDA-approved coronavirus vaccine even if it were offered at no cost, a new Gallup poll released Friday found.

The results, based on survey conducted between July 20 and Aug. 2, found that 65% of respondents said they would accept the offer and get themselves vaccinated while **35% said they would not.**

The new poll falls in line with previous Gallup findings suggesting political party preference plays a strong role in Americans' views on COVID-19.

Eighty-one percent of Democrats would be willing to get vaccinated immediately with a free, FDA-approved vaccine, the poll found, compared with **59% of independents and 47% of Republicans.**

Middle-aged Americans seem to be the most wary.

Gallup's pollsters found **70% of senior citizens and 76% of adults under the age of 30 said they're willing to get an approved COVID-19 vaccination right away.**

But only 64% of people between 30 and 50 years old and 59% of people between 50 and 64 years old said they would get the shot.

White Americans, meanwhile, are **more likely than non-white Americans** to say they would be vaccinated — 67% compared with 59%, the poll reported.

Gallup highlighted the disparity, considering Black and Latino Americans have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

"As the situation stands today, the nation's influencers — including health professionals, policymakers and leaders — who see a vaccine as a way forward may have their work cut out for them in persuading Americans to take advantage of such an option," Gallup said in a post announcing the findings.

"Policymakers in government, healthcare, industry and education will need to anticipate that a significant proportion of the population will be hesitant to get a vaccine, even at no

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www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/08/07/sturgis-motorcycle-rally-what-know-masks-attendance-rules/3321223001/

Aug 7

No masks required as 250,000 expected at 10-day Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

One of the largest events since the beginning of the pandemic has begun in South Dakota: More than 250,000 people are expected at the iconic Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

That's scaled down from previous years, where about half-a-million people have descended on the city of about 7,000 for an event that has developed a reputation as an anything-goes festival.

While the 80-year tradition isn't as raucous as it once was, festivalgoers will be largely free of social distancing restrictions common elsewhere in the country during this year's 10-day festival.

Bikers flocking to the small town from around the country won't face quarantining requirements if they are from a coronavirus hot spot.

And **masks? They're encouraged – not required.**

So far, few people are heeding that encouragement, according to an Associated Press reporter at the event. Like in much of the rest of the world, many Indians appeared to be counting on a therapeutic treatment or a vaccine to contain the spread of the disease.

Many who rode their bikes into Sturgis on Friday expressed defiance at the rules and restrictions that have marked life in much of the world during the pandemic.

“Screw COVID,” read the design on one T-shirt being hawked. “I went to Sturgis.”

Local officials have made efforts to scale down the event, but some expect restriction-weary bikers to flock to Sturgis in large numbers.

“It’s the biggest single event that’s going on in the United States that didn’t get canceled,” said Rod Woodruff, who operates the largest campground and concert venue that lies outside the bounds of the city.
...

Gov. Kristi Noem ...supported holding the Sturgis rally, tweeting Thursday: "I trusted my people, they trusted me, and **South Dakota is in a good spot in our fight against COVID-19. The #Sturgis motorcycle rally starts this weekend, and we're excited for visitors to see what our great state has to offer!”**
...
Noem has pointed out that no virus outbreak was documented from the several thousand people who turned out to see President Donald Trump and fireworks at Mount Rushmore last month.

Daily virus cases have been trending upward in South Dakota, but the seven-day average is still only around 84, with fewer than two deaths per day.

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Aug 8

Virus aid talks collapse

... [Yesterday's] negotiations at the Capitol added up to only "a disappointing meeting," declared top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, saying the White House had rejected an offer by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to curb Democratic demands by about $1 trillion. He urged the White House to "negotiate with Democrats and meet us in the middle. Don't say it's your way or no way."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "Unfortunately we did not make any progress today." Republicans said Pelosi was relying on budget maneuvers to curb costs and contended she has overplayed her hand.

Often an impasse in Washington is of little consequence for the public — not so this time. **It means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a $600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty. It denies more than $100 billion to help schools reopen this fall. It blocks additional funding for virus testing as cases are surging this summer. And it denies billions of dollars to state and local governments considering furloughs as their revenue craters.**

Ahead is uncertainty. **Both the House and Senate have left Washington, with members sent home on instructions to be ready to return for a vote on an agreement. With no deal in sight, their absence raises the possibility of a prolonged stalemate that stretches well into August and even September.**

Speaking from his New Jersey golf club Friday evening, **Trump said "if Democrats continue to hold this critical relief hostage I will act under my authority as president to get Americans the relief they need."**

Trump said he may issue executive orders on home evictions, student loan debt and allowing states to repurpose COVID relief funding into their unemployment insurance programs. He also said he'll likely issue an executive order to defer collection of Social Security payroll taxes...

The breakdown in the negotiations is particularly distressing for schools, which have been counting on billions of dollars from Washington to help with the costs of reopening. But other priorities are also languishing, including a fresh round of $1,200 direct payments to most people, a cash infusion for the struggling Postal Service and money to help states hold elections in November.
...
Mnuchin said renewal of a $600 per-week pandemic jobless boost and huge demands by Democrats for aid to state and local governments are the key areas where they are stuck.
"...
"It's clear the economy is losing steam," Schumer said. "That means we need big, bold investments in America to help average folks."

Senate Republicans have been split, with roughly half of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's rank and file opposed to another rescue bill at all. Four prior coronavirus response bills totaling almost $3 trillion have won approval on bipartisan votes despite intense wrangling, but conservatives have recoiled at the prospect of another Pelosi-brokered agreement with a whopping deficit-financed cost.

McConnell has kept his distance from the negotiations while coordinating with Mnuchin and Meadows.

In addition to restoring the lapsed $600-per-week bonus jobless benefit, Pelosi and Schumer have staked out a firm position to extend demanded generous child care assistance and reiterated their insistence on additional funding for food stamps and assistance to renters and homeowners facing eviction or foreclosure....

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https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nation-hits-5-million-coronavirus-cases-few-signs-slowing-n1236231

Aug 9

Nation hits 5 million coronavirus cases with few signs of slowing

As the U.S. surpassed 5 million coronavirus cases this weekend, the milestone was met with little fanfare as some school districts planned to reopen and thousands descended on Sturgis, South Dakota, for the world's largest annual gathering of motorcycle enthusiasts.

There were more than 160,000 deaths in the country as of Saturday, according to NBC News figures. No other nation has approached the United States' infection figures, with Brazil reporting more than half the American numbers: 2,962,442.

The new highs will not likely mark a plateau or peak if the nation continues to face the virus without a cohesive national strategy on mask-wearing and social distancing, said Dr. Gabe Kelen of Johns Hopkins Medicine.

"There just doesn't seem to be enough will in enough parts of the country to deal with this the way other countries have," said Kelen, director of Johns Hopkins' Department of Emergency Medicine. **"We have politicized it tremendously. And a large number of people are in disbelieving mode or fatigued by the idea of staying put."**

On Saturday, **Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot criticized people who packed the city's waterfront without observing social distancing. "Don't make us take steps backwards,"** she tweeted.

In **Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti ordered the Department of Water and Power to turn off utilities at party houses that repeatedly flout the rules** after a woman was fatally shot at a large gathering at a mansion.

"These large parties are unsafe and can cost Angelenos their lives," Garcetti said at a news conference Wednesday.

In Thousand Oaks, California, a pastor vowed to open his church to 1,500 congregants Sunday in violation of a court order to stay shut.

California has the most cases in the nation—553,851—but the state with the most deaths remains New York, with 33,583.

Florida had the second-highest number of cases: 526,577.

President Donald Trump promised economic relief Saturday when he signed executive orders to defer payroll taxes through the end of the year for those earning less than $100,000 a year and provide federally enhanced unemployment benefits of $400 through Jan. 31.

Kelen said **it's possible the pandemic could slow as fall approaches, and there's evidence that older Americans are taking mask-wearing and social distancing more seriously than younger people.**

"There's a little bit of a glimmer that some of the most vulnerable are managing the threat," he said.

What's more, he said, the rapid development of vaccines is reason for optimism.

"That works psychologically," Kelen said. "It certainly gives us hope that somewhere around the corner we're going to have a vaccine."

At this rate, however, it will take about 40 days to reach another milestone in the U.S.: 200,000 deaths.

"Before the year closes out, we're almost sure to see 200,000," Kelen said. "Is the worst behind us? If it's slightly better than the worst, that's still godawful."

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand-appleve/new-zealand-records-100-days-without-domestic-virus-case-but-warns-against-complacency-idUSKCN2550NY

Aug 9

New Zealand records 100 days without domestic virus case

WELLINGTON (Reuters) - New Zealand marked 100 days without a domestic transmission of the coronavirus on Sunday, **but warned against complacency as countries like Vietnam and Australia which once had the virus under control now battle a resurgence in infections.**

New Zealand's successful fight against COVID-19 has made the Pacific island nation of 5 million one of the safest places in the world right now.

New Zealanders have returned to normal life, but authorities are concerned that people were now refusing testing, not using the government contact tracing apps, and even ignoring basic hygiene rules.

"Achieving 100 days without community transmission is a significant milestone, however, as we all know, we can't afford to be complacent," Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield said.

"We have seen overseas how quickly the virus can re-emerge and spread in places where it was previously under control, and we need to be prepared to quickly stamp out any future cases in New Zealand," he said.

New Zealand has 23 active cases in managed isolation facilities, and 1,219 COVID-19 cases in all so far.

Vietnam, which went for three months without detecting any domestic transmission, is now racing to control a new outbreak in Danang.

Neighbouring Australia's second-biggest city, Melbourne, has gone into a six week lockdown due to a surge in cases. The second wave of cases in Melbourne has been largely a result of lapses in quarantining.

"For countries like Australia and New Zealand the source of such outbreaks is likely to be from managed isolation and quarantine facilities because of the large numbers of people held there and the multiple shifts of staff involved in looking after them," said Michael Baker, Professor of Public Health at the University of Otago.

There have been cases of returning New Zealanders sneaking out of quarantine, and other security slip ups.

New Zealand last week ramped up testing at quarantine facilities and clinics, and started work on technology to track people using Bluetooth technology.

Ardern kicked off her re-election campaign on Saturday calling it a 'Covid election'.

But a resurgence of cases due to "Covid fatigue" could spark a backlash against her, and give the opposition a chance to work their way back into the election contest.

https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/10/health/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html

Aug 10

There was a 40% increase in child cases across states and cities studied

More than 97,000 children in the US tested positive for coronavirus in the last two weeks of July, a new report says.

The report, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association, said in those two weeks, there was a 40% increase in child cases across the states and cities that were studied.

The age range for children differed by state, with some defining children as only those up to age 14 and one state -- Alabama -- pushing the limit to 24.

The compiled data comes during back-to-school season as health officials are trying to understand the effects of the virus on children and the role young people play in its spread. Some schools have begun welcoming crowds back to class and others have had to readjust their reopening plans in response to infections.

In one Georgia high school that made headlines after a photo of a crowded school hallway went viral, nine coronavirus cases were reported, according to a letter from the principal. Six of those cases were students and three were staff members, the letter said.

While some US leaders -- including the President -- have said the virus doesn't pose a large risk to children, **one recent study suggests older children can transmit the virus just as much as adults. Another study said children younger than 5 carry a higher viral load than adults**, raising even more questions about their role in transmission.

At least 86 children have died since May, according to the new report. Last week, a 7-year-old boy with no pre-existing conditions became the youngest coronavirus victim in Georgia. In Florida, two teenagers died earlier this month bringing the state's death toll of minors to seven.

And Black and Hispanic children are impacted more severely with higher rates of infections, hospitalizations and coronavirus-related complications, recently published research shows.

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Aug 10

Schools mull outdoor classes amid virus, ventilation worries

... Schools around the country are facing similar problems as they plan or contemplate reopening this fall, dealing with aging air conditioning, heating and circulation systems that don't work well or at all because maintenance and replacement were deferred due to tight budgets. **Concerns about school infrastructure are adding momentum to plans in some districts, even in colder climates, to take classes outdoors for the sake of student and teacher health.**

Nationwide, **an estimated 41% of school districts need to update or replace their heating, ventilation and cooling systems in at least half their schools**, according to a federal report issued in June.

There is no evidence that the disease can spread through ventilation systems from one classroom to the next, according to Dr. Edward Nardell, a Harvard Medical School professor who specializes in airborne diseases. The danger, Nardell said, is from ineffective systems that don't remove floating viruses and let them linger in classrooms after they are expelled in an infected person's breath, sneeze or cough.

"Most schools are designed for comfort, not for infection control. So there is a danger that if you put 20 kids in a room, that if one of them has asymptomatic COVID and is infectious, you now have 19 more kids who are exposed," Nardell said. Healthy children almost always recover from COVID, if they become ill at all, but they can pass the disease to teachers, parents and other adults.

...

Some, including Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, say **one solution to air circulation problems may be teaching classes outdoors, which was done during tuberculosis and influenza outbreaks in the early 1900s, even in cold weather. The coronavirus spreads less efficiently outdoors and students could more easily sit 6 feet (2 meters) apart.**

Having classes outdoors has other benefits, said Sharon Danks, CEO of Green Schoolyards America, a Berkeley, California, nonprofit that advocates for outdoor education. Children actually are less distracted and feel better emotionally when taught outdoors, she said.

"Nature has been shown to restore the ability to pay attention," she said.

Several schools in the Northeast have bought large event tents like those used at outdoor weddings and plan to use them to teach outside through November.

The White River Valley Middle School in Bethel, Vermont, spent $50,000 on tents and another $20,000 on port-a-potties, hand-washing stations and other equipment. While some schools have equipped tents with propane heaters, White River Valley Principal Owen Bradley said his students can handle the expected November daytime temperatures in the 30s (about 0 Celsius) without them...

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Aug 11

Russia clears virus vaccine despite scientific skepticism

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia on Tuesday became the first country to clear a coronavirus vaccine and declare it ready for use, despite international skepticism. **President Vladimir Putin said that one of his daughters has already been inoculated.**

Putin emphasized that the vaccine underwent the necessary tests and has proven efficient, offering a lasting immunity from the coronavirus. However, scientists at home and abroad have been sounding the alarm that the rush to start using the vaccine before Phase 3 trials — which normally last for months and involve thousands of people — could backfire.

Speaking at a government meeting Tuesday, Putin said that the vaccine has undergone proper testing and is safe.

“I know it has proven efficient and forms a stable immunity, and I would like to repeat that it has passed all the necessary tests,” he said. “We must be grateful to those who made that first step very important for our country and the entire world.”
...
The Health Ministry said in Tuesday’s statement that the vaccine is expected to provide immunity from the coronavirus for up to two years.

Putin emphasized that vaccination will be voluntary,
...
Russian officials have said that large-scale production of the vaccine will start in September, and mass vaccination may begin as early as October.

Russia has registered 897,599 coronavirus cases, including 15,131 deaths.

When the pandemic struck Russia, Putin ordered state officials to shorten the time of clinical trials for potential coronavirus vaccines.

Becoming the first country in the world to develop a vaccine was a matter of national prestige for the Kremlin as it tries to assert the image of Russia as a global power. State television stations and other media have praised scientists working on it and presented the work as the envy of other nations.

[Professor Alexander Gintsburg, head of the Gamaleya Institute that developed the vaccine] raised eyebrows in May when he said that he and other researchers tried the vaccine on themselves.

Human studies started June 17 among 76 volunteers. Half were injected with a vaccine in liquid form and the other half with a vaccine that came as soluble powder. Some in the first half were recruited from the military, which raised concerns that servicemen may have been pressured to participate.

Amid Russia’s rush to become the first to create a vaccine, **the U.S., Britain and Canada last month accused Russia of using hackers to steal vaccine research from Western labs.**

As the trials were declared completed, questions arose about the vaccine’s safety and effectiveness. Some experts scoffed at Russian authorities’ assurances that the vaccine drug produced the desired immune response and caused no significant side effects, pointing out that such claims need to be backed by published scientific data.

The World Health Organization said all vaccine candidates should go through full stages of testing before being rolled out. **Experts have warned that vaccines that are not properly tested can cause harm in many ways — from a negative impact on health to creating a false sense of security or undermining trust in vaccinations.**

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/mask-test-duke-covid/2020/08/10/4f2bb888-db18-11ea-b205-ff838e15a9a6_story.html

Aug 11

Wearing a neck gaiter may be worse than no mask at all, researchers find

... as face coverings have become increasingly commonplace in American life, so have questions about efficacy — and now a group of researchers from Duke University are aiming to provide some answers.

...

IUsing a simple contraption that harnesses the power of a laser, which can be easily purchased online for less than $200, and a cell phone camera, Fischer created a device that allowed his team to track individual particles released from a person's mouth when they are speaking. The rest of the setup includes a box that can be made out of cardboard and a lens.

...

A fitted N95 mask, which is used most commonly by hospital workers, was the most effective, Warren said, noting that the mask allowed "no droplets at all" to come out. Meanwhile, a breathable neck gaiter, well-liked by runners for its lightweight fabric, ranked worse than the no-mask control group. The gaiter tested by the researchers was described in the study as a "neck fleece" made out of a polyester spandex material, Warren said.

"**These neck gaiters are extremely common in a lot of places because they're very convenient to wear," he said. "But the exact reason why they're so convenient, which is that they don't restrict air, is the reason why they're not doing much of a job helping people."**

A number of prominent activewear companies make neck gaiters, and they are generally not designed for medical use. In April, for example, Buff, a company known for multifunctional head and neckwear, issued a public statement emphasizing that its products are not scientifically proven by the CDC and the World Health Organization to be a useful form of protection during the pandemic.

"Buff performance head and neckwear are not intended to be used as medical-grade face masks or as a replacement for N95 respirators as effective measures to prevent disease, illness, or the spread of viruses," the statement said.

Another neck gaiter manufacturer, however, cautioned against writing off every variation of the face covering based solely on the Duke study's findings.

"All gaiters are not created equal," Chris Bernat, co-founder of South Carolina-based Vapor Apparel, said. "There's a segment of this category that's of a much higher quality that's engineered to be layered."

Although the study did not provide detailed specifics about the material of the neck gaiter that was tested, Bernat raised doubts about the material's quality. "Chances are it was a promotional quality, like a lower-quality fabric, and based on that I'm sure it didn't perform well," said Bernat, who has been making neck gaiters for more than a decade.

The high droplet count observed in the study could be linked to the porous fabric of the neck gaiter that was tested breaking up bigger particles into many little ones that are more likely to hang around in the air longer, Fischer said in the video. This effect makes wearing some gaiters possibly "counterproductive," he added.

"It's not the case that any mask is better than nothing," he said. "There are some masks that actually hurt rather than do good."

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https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2020-08-11/argentina-death-toll-from-coronavirus-tops-5-000-as-new-cases-spike

Aug 12

Argentina death toll from coronavirus tops 5,000 as new cases spike

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentina's death toll from the coronavirus has topped 5,000, the government said on Tuesday, as cases have skyrocketed in recent weeks, **pushing the South American nation up in the global charts despite months of lockdown and a promising start.**

Argentina has been **under quarantine since March 20, although officials previously relaxed restrictions in many parts of the nation, a move blamed for the recent spike in cases.**

The country recorded 7,043 new cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday, pushing the total confirmed infections to 260,911, surpassing the total caseload in Italy. The latest government data shows 5,004 people have died from the disease.

The capital Buenos Aires and the surrounding province have been bound by the strictest quarantine measures but have nonetheless emerged as the focal point of the country´s outbreak.

The World Health Organization earlier on Tuesday expressed special concern for the spike in cases in Argentina after months in which the country appeared to have the outbreak under control. More than 100,000 cases of C0VID-19 are being reported daily in the Americas, the global health organization said.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_Argentina

...On 3 March 2020, the virus was confirmed to have spread to Argentina. ...

On 7 March, the Ministry of Health confirmed the country's first documented death, a 64-year-old man who had travelled to Paris, France, who also had other health conditions; the case was only confirmed as positive after the patient's demise.

On 19 March a nation-wide lockdown until 31 March was established in Argentina.The government later extended the lockdown to mid April, then 26 April; and on 25 April, President Alberto Fernández announced that the lockdown would be extended in major cities until 10 May. The lockdown was lifted throughout all the country, excepting the Greater Buenos Aires urban area, on 10 May, with Greater Buenos Aires locked down until 24 May, later extended to 7 June, and then 28 June, after a big jump in the number of new cases in this area.

On 26 June, Fernández announced that the restrictions on movement in this area that were previously eased would be tightened again until 17 July due to a large spike in cases on the previous days.

Finally, on 17 July, the President announced that the lockdown would be gradually loosened in several stages to lead to the return to normality, although the restrictions were extended again until 16 August...

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https://hallboothsmith.com/since-the-celebration-at-studio-417-it-has-been-mudpie-in-the-sky-for-covid-19-business-interruption-claimants/#_ftn8

Aug 12

Western District of Missouri denied insurer-defendant's motion to dismiss

because the hair salon and restaurant plaintiffs (Studio 417) had appropriately alleged facts in their Complaint that may prove recoverable.[2]

While no decision has been made on the merits of this case, the important takeaways from the District Court's findings are that

(1) there was no virus exclusion in policy and

(2) Studio 417's allegation COVID-19 likely infiltrated their business premises plausibly alleged facts meeting the "direct physical loss" requirement for policy coverage.

In his opinion, the judge found the presence of COVID-19 was not a benign condition," and that the Studio 417's allegations COVID-19 particles were a "physical substance" that attached to and damaged their property and rendered them unsafe and unstable were credible enough to allow the suit to proceed.

[2] Studio 417, Inc. v. Cincinnati Ins. Co., No. 20-CV-03127-SRB, 2020 WL 4692385, at *1 (W.D. Mo. Aug. 12, 2020). The District Court relied on The Merriam-Webster's definitions for defining "direct," "physical," and "loss."

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https://apnews.com/4eea43638d495f106782b7298e2dbca3

Aug 13

Thai scientists catch bats to trace virus origins

KANCHANABURI, Thailand (AP) — Researchers in Thailand have been trekking though the countryside to catch bats in their caves in an effort to trace the murky origins of the coronavirus.

Initial research has already pointed to bats as the source of the virus that has afflicted more than 20.5 million people and caused the deaths of over 748,000 worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University data. The closest match to the coronavirus has been found in horseshoe bats in Yunnan in southern China.

Thailand has 19 species of horseshoe bats but researchers said they have not yet been tested for the new coronavirus.

Thai researchers hiked up a hill in Sai Yok National Park in the western province of Kanchanaburi to set up nets to trap some 200 bats from three different caves.

The team from the Thai Red Cross Emerging Infectious Diseases-Health Science Center took saliva, blood and stool samples from the bats before releasing them. They worked through the night and into the next day, taking samples not only from horseshoe bats but also from other bat species they caught in order to better understand pathogens carried by the animals.

The team was headed by Supaporn Wacharapluesadee, the center's deputy chief, who has studied bats and diseases associated with them for more than 20 years. He was part of the group that helped Thailand confirm the first COVID-19 case outside China in January.

She believes it is likely they will find in Thailand's bats the same virus that causes COVID-19.

"The pandemic is borderless," she said. "The disease can travel with bats. It could go anywhere."

Researchers putting on PPE suits and standing in front of cave prepare catch bat inside Sai Yok National Park in Kanchanaburi province, west of Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, July 31, 2020. Researchers in Thailand have been trekking though the countryside to catch bats in their caves in an effort to trace the murky origins of the coronavirus.(AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

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https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/08/12/california-is-turning-a-corner-on-coronavirus-pandemic-newsom-says/

Aug 13

California is ‘turning a corner’ on coronavirus pandemic, governor says

... **Hospitalizations have dropped to the lowest point in nearly six weeks, new caseloads have slowed down and the death toll has begun to level off** — all “encouraging” signs ...

“In early July, Californians who got sick in the early weeks of summer began flooding hospital beds — prompting Newsom to shut down more sectors of the economy by the middle of the month. Hospitalizations statewide quickly ramped up to an all-time peak with more than 7,000 patients by July 21st; since then, California has shed a whopping 22% of patients and hitting 5,549 as of Tuesday.
...

On Wednesday, California counties reported 8,346 new cases and 161 new deaths, according to data compiled by this news organization.

“It’s a little bit more optimistic,” Newsom said of the declining case numbers. “Again, another indication that we’re turning a corner on this pandemic.”

Even so, California is hovering in the highest plateau of COVID-19 deaths since the pandemic began. After reporting the most deaths ever in a single day — 215 — on July 31st, the state’s seven-day average of deaths has remained above 125 for the past two weeks. Before mid-July, that average had never scraped 100.

Those numbers are likely to stabilize throughout August and the sickest patients among the dwindling wave of hospitalizations pass away, said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an epidemiologist with University of California, San Francisco. The seven-day average for weekly deaths already dropped down to 135 as of Tuesday.

After that, Chin-Hong said, new cases and hospitalizations will hit another trough — before people get antsy to go out, schools and businesses reopen and parties resume, all of which could lead to yet another peak of infections in the early fall.

“It’ll be the unfortunate roller coaster of COVID,” Chin-Hong said.

Newsom, for his part, seemed determined to avoid that fate. When asked about the next potential wave of reopenings, he said that his office will use a “much more intentional and deliberate mindset” to promote safe practices and behaviors.

How many of those decisions will play out, however, remains largely up in the air. Even as **California has seen about 7.31 million workers file for unemployment since mid-March,** the state hasn’t delivered payments to more than 1 million of them whose claims remain stuck in the bureaucratic process. That burden only increased with the loss of the $600 weekly federal unemployment dollars at the end of July.

At the same time, the f**uture of the statewide eviction moratorium is in flux after the Judicial Council of California said it would likely end the ban on September 1st — potentially leaving millions of renters on the hook.**

Even as Newson rattled off various strategies Wednesday his team will consider to jumpstart the economy — like streamlining small business permits and developing a new tax credit — the governor offered no immediate promises on either front. His team plans to process unemployment dollars “as quickly and efficiently as possible” while waiting for the federal government to step up, he said.

Economist Stephen Levy, director of the Palo Alto-based Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, said that Newsom’s biggest focus ought to be on stemming coronavirus’ spread. Until cases are consistently low, full economic recovery is impossible, Levy added.

“He can’t mint money, and we don’t have the budget resources to put up four hundred or six hundred dollars ourselves,” Levy said. “He has really limited options besides getting the pandemic under control — and he’s kind of limited there, too.”

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/health/covid-vaccine-update-coronavirus/

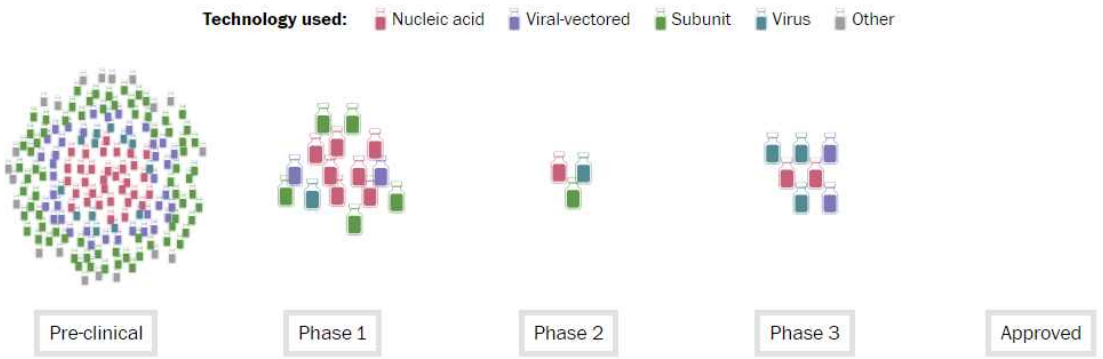
Aug 13

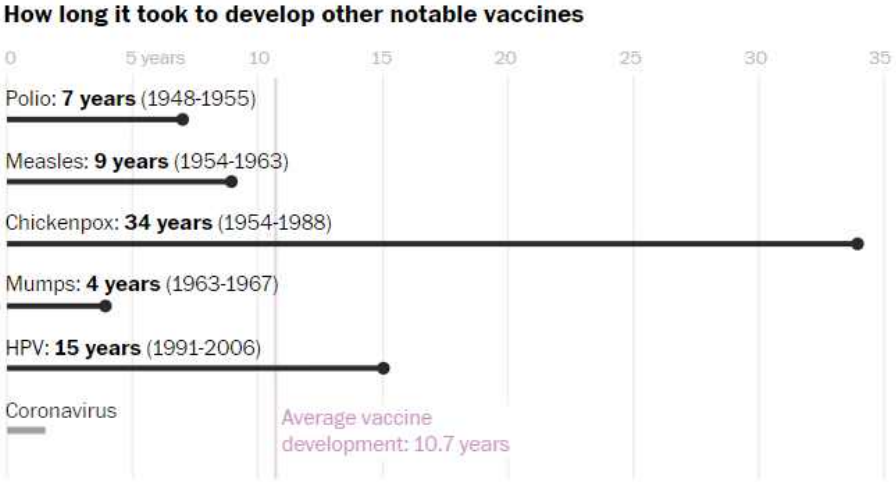
These are the top coronavirus vaccines to watch

The worldwide effort to create a vaccine for the novel coronavirus kicked off in January, soon after scientists in China posted online the genome of a virus causing a mysterious pneumonia. Vaccine development usually takes years and unfolds step by step. Experimental vaccine candidates are created in the laboratory and tested in animals before moving into progressively larger human clinical trials.

These steps are now overlapping in the race to find a vaccine for a global disease that has killed hundreds of thousands of people. Human testing began in some cases before animal studies were finished. As companies launch small Phase 1 trials intended to establish the correct dose, they already are planning the Phase 3 trials that evaluate whether the vaccines are effective and safe.

No steps are being skipped, top government officials have repeatedly promised, and vaccines will not be considered for approval in the United States until after a large, Phase 3 trial. The Food and Drug Administration, which has the ultimate say on whether a vaccine has been proved safe and effective, says a vaccine for covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, will need to prevent disease or decrease symptoms in at least 50 percent of those who receive it. The effectiveness of the flu vaccine ranges from 40 to 60 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention...





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https://starherald.com/news/national/govt-and-politics/biggest-daily-jump-sends-nevadas-virus-death-toll-past-1k/article_01b0fa9e-b19f-5891-b149-eb386bbeef22.html

Aug 13

Biggest daily jump sends Nevada's virus death toll past 1K

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Nevada's biggest daily jump in coronavirus fatalities has pushed the state's COVID-19 death toll past 1,000, a grim milestone that Gov. Steve Sisolak said Thursday should reinforce the seriousness of the pandemic and the need to do more to help slow its spread.

"These deaths are a sobering reminder that we must remain vigilant and do all that we can to slow the spread while we're in the throes of this horrific pandemic," Sisolak said.

"I implore all Nevadans to do your part. Wear a face covering, practice social distancing, and above all, take seriously our personal responsibility to help slow the spread and protect those around us," the Democrat said in a statement.

The state recorded 602 new cases of the virus Thursday to bring the total to 58,650. **The death toll grew 34 to 1,030, surpassing the previous record of 29 deaths reported on July 31 and equaled Aug. 7.**

The state's cumulative positivity rate remained virtually unchanged at 10.5%. It's generally been rising since it hit a low of 5.2% on June 17.

The number of patients hospitalized with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 stood at 982 on Thursday, down from the previous two weeks when hospitalizations were at about 1,100.

Those in intensive care units also continued to drop to 260 on Thursday, down from a peak of 339 on Aug. 1. Before that, ICU beds filled with COVID-19 patients had generally been on the rise since July 1.

Caleb Cage, the state's COVID-19 response chief, said Wednesday that **the number of new cases reported has been slowing since Aug. 1.**

The 528 new cases that were added on Wednesday marked the lowest daily growth since July 7, but came with a warning from health officials against complacency.

"We are fortunately in a down trend," Washoe County Health District Officer Kevin Dick said Wednesday. **"We are still at levels that are very, very high and far above where we were in June."**

"What we've seen before is while we had some trends that moved in the direction, then people have stopped being vigilant and let up on their efforts to prevent the spread," he said.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested. Studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms for up to three weeks. But older adults and people with existing health problems can face severe illness and death. The vast majority of people recover.

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https://www.barrons.com/articles/trump-tiktok-wechat-tencent-bans-crackdown-51596815783

Aug 13

Global coronavirus deaths top 750,000

The coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 750,000 people worldwide since it first emerged in China in December, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources at 1210 GMT on Thursday.

A total of 750,003 deaths have been recorded, out of 20,667,684 cases across the globe.

Latin America and the Caribbean were the hardest hit region with 228,572 fatalities.

Almost half of the deaths reported worldwide were in the **four worst hit countries:**

United States: 166,038

Brazil: 104,201

Mexico: 54,666

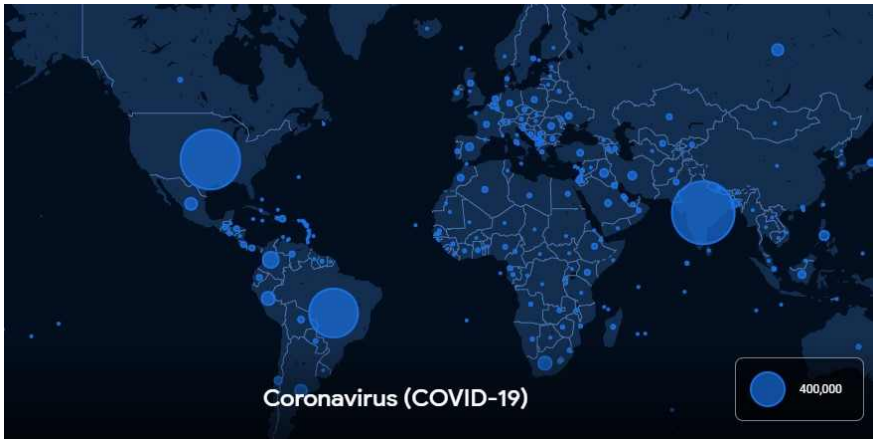
India: 47,033

In total, the number of people killed by the virus has doubled since June 2, while 100,000 people have died in the last 17 days alone.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 18,600 deaths have occurred in the past week, ahead of Canada and the United States at over 8,000, Asia at 7,800, Africa with nearly 2,700 and Europe with almost 2,600.

Overall, Oceania has been the least affected in terms of deaths with just under 400 for 24,000 infections.

And of almost 1.1 million people confirmed infected in Africa, so far just over 24,000 have died.



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/08/14/902271822/13-states-make-contact-tracing-data-public-heres-what-they-re-learning

Aug 14

13 states make contact tracing data public. Here's what they're learning

When everyone who tests positive for coronavirus in your community gets a call from a public health worker asking them about their contacts, and those contacts are then asked to quarantine, that can be a powerful way to keep the virus from spreading.

But contact tracing can do more than that: At scale, the data gathered in those calls also offers vital information about where transmission is happening in a community. That data can drive policy, and even guide individuals in assessing what's more or less safe to go out and do in their communities.

NPR has surveyed the health departments of all U.S. states and territories three times to ask about contact tracing capacity — first in April, then again in mid-June, and most recently in late July. The latest survey, done in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, also asked states about contact tracing data: what they were gathering and what they're making public.

The data states are gathering includes how many contacts are reached and how quickly and where people were exposed — whether it was out in public or at home. The few states analyzing and sharing this data represent "a good start," says Crystal Watson, senior scholar at the Center for Health Security who collaborated with NPR on the survey. "It's a little bit scattershot right now."

What's needed, she says, is for states to share contact tracing data "more, more widely and more consistently."

She acknowledges that states are limited by a lack of resources. "Health departments are really stretched to the limit right now, and it's not a trivial thing to put together the data infrastructure to report [this data] publicly," Watson says. Some federal guidance on "what states should be aiming to report publicly" could be really helpful, she says...

Source: NPR survey of state public health departments, NPR and member station reporting, local media reports and National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Credit: Ruth Talbot/NPR

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Aug 14

‘Impossible’: School boards are at heart of reopening debate

ROCK HILL, S.C. (AP) — Helena Miller listened to teachers, terrified to reenter classrooms, and parents, exhausted from trying to make virtual learning work at home. She heard from school officials who spent hundreds of hours on thousands of details — buses, classrooms, football, arts, special education. She spent countless nights, eyes wide open, her mind wrestling over the safety and education of the 17,000 children she swore to protect.

She thought of her own kids, two in high school and one middle-schooler — the reasons she ran for Rock Hill’s school board six years ago.

And she made the hardest decision of her life: a vote to reopen schools amid the coronavirus pandemic, splitting students into two groups that would each spend two days a week in classrooms, with virtual learning the other school days.

“We have an impossible decision to make. And we still have to make it,” Miller said from a tiny box on Zoom at the board’s July meeting.

This Board of Trustees in suburban South Carolina is like **thousands of school boards nationwide, where members are tackling a simple but hefty question — do we return to school amid a pandemic? — with no right or even good answers, in the face of inconsistent testing and a near-constant increase in confirmed coronavirus cases.**

Behind that question is pressure.

Pressure from teachers and bus drivers and janitors, scared to return to work but in need of a paycheck.

Pressure from parents and guardians, who need to return to their own jobs but fear for their children’s safety.

Pressure from a president who declares on Twitter “OPEN THE SCHOOLS!!!” but whose administration provides little tangible guidance for doing so.

In Rock Hill, everyone has an opinion. The district has more than 17,000 students, and that means about 17,000 proposals on how to go back to school, trustees say, only half-joking.

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Aug 14

North Korea lifts lockdown in city, rejects flood, virus aid

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un lifted a lockdown in a major city near the border with South Korea where thousands had been quarantined for weeks over coronavirus worries, state media said Friday.

But Kim, during a key ruling party meeting on Thursday, also insisted the North will keep its borders shut and rejected any outside help as the country carries out an aggressive anti-virus campaign and rebuilds thousands of houses, roads and bridges damaged by heavy rain and floods in recent weeks.

...

Entering the last year of an ambitious five-year national development plan, Kim Jong Un in December declared a "frontal breakthrough" against international sanctions while urging his nation to stay resilient in a struggle for economic self-reliance.

But experts say the COVID-19 crisis likely thwarted some of Kim's major economic goals by forcing the country into a lockdown that shut the border with China — the North's major ally and economic lifeline — and potentially hampered his ability to mobilize people for labor.

During Thursday's meeting, Kim said it was clear after three weeks of isolation measures and "scientific verification" that the virus situation in Kaesong was stable and expressed gratitude to residents for cooperating with the lockdown, KCNA reported.

Kim said his country now faces a dual challenge of fending off COVID-19 amid a worsening global pandemic and repairing damage from torrential rain that lashed the country in past weeks...

"The situation, in which the spread of the worldwide malignant virus has become worse, requires us not to allow any outside aid for the flood damage but shut the border tighter and carry out strict anti-epidemic work," KCNA paraphrased Kim as saying.

...

In late July, Kim ordered a total lockdown of Kaesong and had the nation shift into a "maximum emergency system" after the North reported it found a person with COVID-19 symptoms.

The North's state media said the suspected case was a North Korean who had earlier fled to the South before slipping back into Kaesong. But South Korean health authorities say the 24-year-old hadn't tested positive in South Korea and never had contact with any known virus carrier.

North Korea later said the person's test results were inconclusive and still maintains it is virus-free, a status widely doubted by outsiders. Some experts said the North was likely trying to shift the blame over a possible spread of the virus to South Korea.

In an email to The Associated Press last week, Dr. Edwin Salvador, the World Health Organization's representative to North Korea, said the North has told the U.N. agency it quarantined 64 first contacts of the suspected Kaesong case and 3,571 secondary contacts in state-run facilities for 40 days.

Since the end of December, North Korea has quarantined and released 25,905 people, 382 of them foreigners, Salvador said.

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https://apnews.com/69873f8f604f11545fde3b692ad2b8b5

Aug 15

Virus flareups in Europe lead to club closings, mask orders

...The continent's hardest-hit countries, **Britain, Italy, France and Spain, have recorded about 140,000 deaths in all.**

In addition to clubs and alcohol-fueled street parties, large family gatherings – usually abounding with hugs and kisses -- have been cited as a source of new outbreaks in several European countries.

A new public awareness campaign by Spain's Canary Islands depicts a family gathering for a grandfather's birthday, with people taking off masks and embracing. The grandfather ends up in a hospital bed with COVID-19.

In France, thousands of vacationing Britons scrambled to return home Friday to avoid having to self-quarantine for 14 days following Britain's decision to reimpose restrictions on France because of a resurgence of infections there. Ferries added extra trips back to England, and trains were running out of space.
...
Italy's Health Ministry said 574 new COVID-19 cases were recorded on Friday — the highest daily number since May 28.

In France, amid growing fears of a second spike of contagion, the head of the country's national health service said Paris and Marseille have been declared at-risk zones. "The situation is deteriorating from week to week," the official, Jérôme Salomon, said on France Inter radio.

The British government said it was compelled to impose the quarantine requirement on people returning from France in light of a 66% increase in infections in France in the past week. The requirement applied to anyone returning after 4 a.m. on Saturday.
...
The quarantine decision is a big blow to France's tourism industry, which relies heavily on travelers from Britain.

There also were worrisome developments in other parts of the world:

--**India**'s death toll overtook Britain's to become the fourth-highest in the world, with another single-day record increase in cases Friday. The number of dead hit more 48,000, behind the United States, with over 167,000; Brazil, with more than 105,000; and Mexico, with over 55,000.

--**New Zealand**'s government extended a lockdown of its largest city, Auckland, for 12 more days as it tries to stamp out its first domestic outbreak in more than three months, involving 30 people. Until the cluster was discovered Tuesday, New Zealand had gone 102 days with no reports of infections spreading in the community. The only known cases involved travelers arriving from abroad.

--A man in his 20 became the youngest person to die of the coronavirus in **Australia**. He was among 14 new deaths and 372 new infections reported by Victoria state health officials in an outbreak centered in Melbourne....

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https://in.news.yahoo.com/birthday-candles-ball-pits-11-133900208.html

Aug 15

11 things we may never do the same way again

Early in the pandemic, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said something that grabbed a lot of attention: Handshakes should become a thing of the past.

It sounded far-fetched.

But as the outbreak drags on, and we have become more conscious of germs and hygiene, "some of the changes we made are likely to be really durable," said Malia Jones, who researches social environments and infectious disease exposure at the Applied Population Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

1. **Blowing Out the Candles on Your Cake ...**
2. **Taking a Drag From a Friend's Vape ...**
3. **Letting Your Kid Jump Into a Ball Pit ...**
4. **Getting a Quick After-Work Makeover ...**
5. **Fumbling Around an Escape Room ...**
6. **Bumping Elbows at a Loud, Crowded Bar ...**
7. **Plunging a Handful of Straws Into a Giant Party Cocktail ...**
8. **Hosting a Poker Game or a Settlers of Catan Night**
9. **Passing the Microphone at Karaoke**
10. **Shopping Aimlessly**
11. **Shaking Hands, Hugging a Friend, Kissing a Cheek ...**

Back to Fauci and handshakes. What are the alternatives? The elbow bump — in all its clunky, awkward glory — could be a long-term alternative, Hassig said.

But there is good news about **hugging: It is less risky than a peck on the cheek and even a handshake,** Nolan said, because we normally turn our faces away from each other while hugging.

Even so, all these greetings bring people in close contact when it is often unnecessary.

"There are greetings that have worked for centuries" that don't involve touching one another, Hassig said, citing the wai in Thailand, which involves putting your hands together in a prayer-like fashion and bowing slightly.

She also suggested waving from a distance.

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/08/15/nba-yale-covid-testing-breakthrough/24591171/

Aug 16

FDA grants an emergency authorization for another saliva-based test

In a significant turn of events in COVID-19 testing, the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted an emergency authorization for the public to begin employing a saliva-based test expected to significantly increase the availability, turnaround time and affordability of combating the coronavirus epidemic in the United States.**

Developed by Yale University and jointly funded by the NBA and NBA Players Association, the testing method was granted approval by the FDA on Saturday.

The test — coined SalivaDirect — was developed to throttle up the screening process for a wide swath of Americans. The FDA approval marks a significant turn for testing in the U.S., creating the opportunity to make regular testing more readily available.

The retail pricing and companies that will carry the testing into the public domain are yet to be determined. The **developers have revealed that testing could be done for as little as $4, although retail pricing is expected to be higher** than that due to the cost of production, marketing, supply lines and retail outlet markups.

The test is **expected to be a boon for the general public and professional sports as well.** The testing of players and team employees would become an affordable and consistent occurrence, and it could help fans keep themselves safe before and after event attendance. Multiple NFL general managers told Yahoo Sports in early June that medical advisers told them a fast and affordable saliva test would be a game-changer for the league's fall season.

"There we go," one NFL general manager said on Saturday afternoon, reacting to the news. "I hope that ends up being the route the league goes!"

The peer review process has yet to take place on the SalivaDirect findings, but the data produced by Yale showed nearly identical results between groups of NBA players and staffers who were given both nasal swab testing and saliva testing. With the funding and backing of the NBA and the players union, that testing took place as the league began to ramp up preparations to finish its season in its Orlando bubble.

While other saliva tests for COVID-19 have been developed — and also received FDA approval — there have been complications with costs from $75 to $150 per test at the retail level. Turnaround times have also been as long as 48 hours. Those are two significant hurdles that the Yale research was hoping to dramatically change, aiming to make the test more affordable and the resting results more rapid. The driving theory behind that reach is that if more Americans can be tested faster and more affordably, the ability to respond to positive tests, while limiting exposure to others, will be dramatically increased.

The Yale test is also aimed at making the processing of tests more widespread in laboratories that meet the standards of an approval process developed by the university. Essentially, if any testing labs can show that they have the equipment to process the results safely, quickly and accurately, they can be considered for approval. That could rapidly expand the network of labs processing results, which could speed up turnaround times and also keep costs at a lower level.

While some professional sports teams are already using the pricier saliva testing methods and the NFL and NFL Players Association approved aggressive nasal swabbing protocols, all sports leagues that hope to host fans would be aided by faster testing methods in the population. Additionally, a fast saliva test could create the opportunity financially and structurally for the NFL and other leagues to have every employee orbiting their operations tested on a regular basis.

Return to Timeline

https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/food/story/cheesecake-factory-dennys-restaurant-chains-facing-bankruptcy-amid-72371882

Aug 16
The impact on US restaurants

...name-brand U.S. restaurant chains are facing significant unpaid debts and potential bankruptcy filings linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report by S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Restaurants aren't getting the same foot traffic with many states shuttering, or at least restricting, indoor dining, social distancing measures being enforced and fewer customers willing to make the trip out. And with unemployment above 10%, many who ordinarily would spend money at restaurants simply don't have that option.

Bloomin' Brands and Denny's Corp., the companies behind Outback Steakhouse and Denny's, respectively, are the largest publicly traded American restaurant companies that S&P reported would be most likely to default on loans.

Applebee's and The Cheesecake Factory also are on the shortlist of chains that may not be able to pay down their debts. Businesses that default on loans often are forced to file for bankruptcy protection, close locations, liquidate assets or some combination thereof.

California Pizza Kitchen Inc. recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and entered into a restructuring agreement with senior lenders to reduce long-term debt.
...

S&P found that while the odds of chains defaulting has eased in some cases, **the greater problem lies with consumer spending -- or, in this case, lack of spending.**

"The odds that the largest publicly traded U.S. restaurants will default fell in recent months as states allowed businesses closed by the coronavirus pandemic to reopen," S&P said in its new report. "But the ongoing financial hits from the virus and uncertainty over whether laid-off consumers will receive expanded unemployment benefits continue to pressure the industry as more companies enter bankruptcy."

In June restaurant and bars sales fell 26% compared to the same period last year, according to S&P.

More than 16,000 restaurants across the country that closed since the start of the pandemic in March have been permanently shuttered.

Staying open while serving fewer and fewer customers only exacerbates the problem for many restaurants. **TGI Friday's, Denny's and IHOP are among the chains that previously announced they were eliminating hundreds of locations.**

Both industry leaders and restaurant owners also are concerned that the worst is yet to come, as winter weather in many areas will put an end to outdoor dining, a lifeline for many eateries during the pandemic.

In a statement to ABC News, Bloomin' Brands said it's in "strong financial health."

“Bloomin’ Brands has strong financial health and recent sales performance," the statement reads. "We have more than $500 million in the bank, solid sales with positive cash flow and a proven takeout and delivery business. Additionally, we have not laid off or furloughed any employees and provided relief pay when our dining rooms were closed.”

Return to Timeline

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/16/world/coronavirus-covid-19.html?name=styln-coronavirus-national&region=TOP_BANNER&variant=1_Show&block=storyline_menu_recirc&action=click&pgtype=Article&impression_id=1c43f280-e097-11ea-b354-c3af32bea128#link-2f7e6633

Aug 17

Even mild COVID-19 cases confer ‘durable immunity,’ new studies find

Scientists who have been monitoring immune responses to the coronavirus for months are now starting to see encouraging signs of strong, lasting immunity, even in people who developed only mild symptoms of Covid-19, a flurry of new studies has found.

Disease-fighting antibodies, as well as immune cells called B cells and T cells capable of recognizing the virus, appear to persist months after infections have resolved — an encouraging echo of the body’s robust immune response to other viruses.

“This is exactly what you would hope for,” said Marion Pepper, an immunologist at the University of Washington and an author on one of the new studies, which is currently under review at the journal Nature. “All the pieces are there to have a totally protective immune response.”

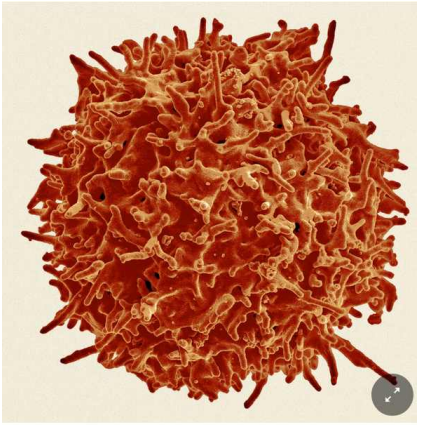
“This is very promising,” said Smita Iyer, an immunologist at the University of California, Davis, who is studying immune responses to the coronavirus in rhesus macaques and was not involved in these papers. “This calls for some optimism about herd immunity, and potentially a vaccine.”

Research on the coronavirus is proceeding so quickly, and in such volume, that the traditional review process often cannot keep pace. For the studies discussed here — as with un-peer-reviewed studies in general — The Times arranged for several experts to read and evaluate them.

Although researchers cannot forecast how long these immune responses will last, many experts consider the data a welcome indication that the body has a good chance of fending off the coronavirus if exposed to it again.

“Things are really working as they’re supposed to,” said Deepta Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona and an author on one of the new studies, which has not yet been peer reviewed.

T cell



More (good news) on the T cell.
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/health/coronavirus-immune-cells.html

Eight months ago, the new coronavirus was unknown. But to some of our immune cells, the virus was already something of a familiar foe.

A flurry of recent studies has revealed that a large proportion of the population — 20 to 50 percent of people in some places — might harbor immunity assassins called T cells that recognize the new coronavirus despite having never encountered it before.

These T cells, which lurked in the bloodstreams of people long before the pandemic began, are most likely stragglers from past scuffles with other, related coronaviruses, including four that...

Return to Timeline

https://oklahoman.com/article/5669377/jury-trials-resume-in-oklahoma-county-most-dont-last-the-day?utm_source=SFMC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Oklahoman%20daily%202020-08-18&utm_content=GTDT_OKC&utm_term=081820

Aug 17

Jury trials resume in Oklahoma County

Oklahoma County Court Clerk Rick Warren began greeting potential jurors bright and early Monday morning. Before long, Warren started to sound like a broken record.

"Good morning. Please stand six feet apart," he said. "Thank you for your service. We're doing all we can to keep you safe."

He meant it.

On a day when **jury trials resumed in Oklahoma's largest county for the first time since March,** Warren and Presiding Judge Ray Elliott finally got to put their COVID-19 safety plans to use.

"I assure you they're as safe here as they would be anywhere," Warren said. "This has nothing to do with seating jurors. It has to do with bringing them in and keeping them safe."

For months, the court clerk and the judge worked to devise a courthouse plan to keep jurors six feet apart and supplied with masks, gloves and other personal protective equipment.

Before entering the county building, which connects to the courthouse, **prospective jurors had their temperatures taken. Once they entered the jury assembly room, they didn't sit around and wait for their names to be randomly selected. Instead, the names of judges were drawn and a pool of jurors were assigned based on time of arrival.**

The first 30 who showed up were assigned to Elliott's courtroom on the seventh floor for a white collar case. The second 35 were assigned to District Judge Natalie Mai, who was set to hear a murder case.

"We got 'em spread out very quickly and efficiently," Elliott said Monday after about 350 possible jurors were placed within an hour or so of walking through the front door.

Courtroom seating was limited, with every other row of benches marked off as well as every other chair to keep spectators and jurors socially distanced.

Start times, lunch times and evening recesses were to be staggered to limit the number of people in hallways, and courtrooms were to be disinfected twice a day.

However, **only one of the eight trials scheduled to begin Monday morning lasted until afternoon. Defendants in four of the cases pleaded guilty, while defendants in two other cases didn't show up for court**, Elliott said.

Mai continued her murder trial until the end of September so the defendant could spend more time with his new lead attorney.

Elliott called it "kind of a sundry of variables.""I believe the jurors being there helped resolve a vast majority of those cases," he said.

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https://apnews.com/ae2b6d71bdc3a9391ae02910d8f0491f

Aug 18

Report: Nursing home cases up nearly 80% in COVID-19 rebound

WASHINGTON (AP) — COVID-19 cases in U.S. nursing homes jumped nearly 80% earlier this summer, driven by rampant spread across the South and much of the West, according to an industry report released Monday.

“The case numbers suggest the problem is far from solved,” said Tamara Konetzka, a research professor at the University of Chicago, who specializes in long-term care. She was not involved with the study.

Long-term care facilities account for less than 1% of the U.S. population, but more than 40 percent of COVID-19 deaths, according to the COVID Tracking Project...

“The reality is that **(a) facility’s infection control practices is the number one factor leading to the spread of COVID** within these facilities,” Verma said in a statement. Inspectors “have seen staff forgetting to wash their hands, congregating in break rooms, and wearing (protective equipment) improperly. All the testing in the world is for naught if staff don’t adhere to the basic, longstanding infection control practices that the federal government has had in place for years.”

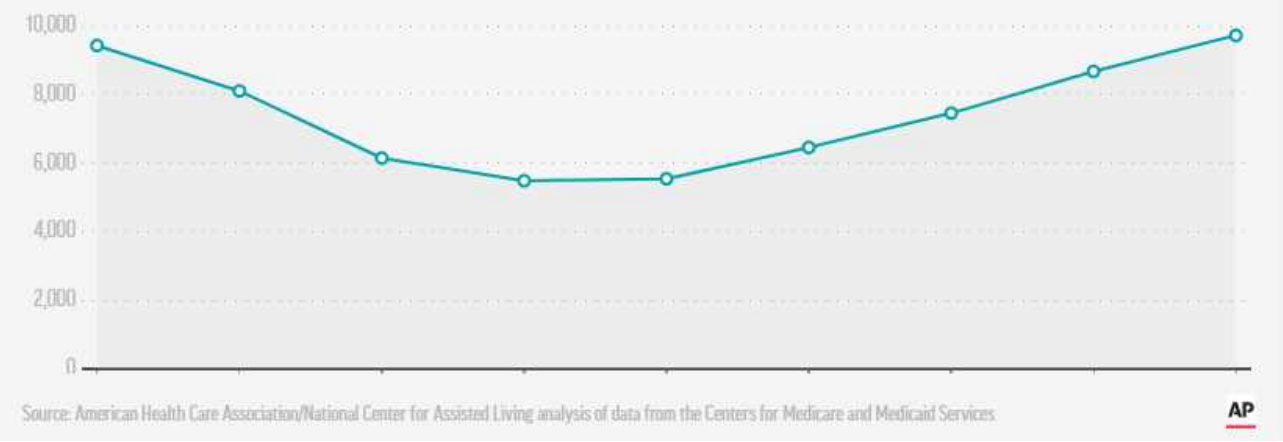
Mark Parkinson, head of the nursing home trade group that produced the study, said the problem is bigger.

“The data indicate that this virus is spread by asymptomatic carriers and that even perfect infection control wouldn’t have stopped it,” he said. **“The challenge with this virus is that because it is spread by asymptomatic carriers the prior infection control procedures didn’t work.”**

...

The **nursing home association is urging** states struggling with the latest coronavirus surge to enact mandates **for people to wear masks, saying it would indirectly benefit residents cloistered in such facilities.** “There’s a direct link between COVID in the community and COVID in the building,” Parkinson said.

Weekly confirmed cases: has been climbing since mid-June, hitting a peak at the end of July



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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/18/us/politics/biden-dnc.html

Aug 18

Democratic Party holds their national convention virtually

Democrats formally nominated Joseph R. Biden Jr. for the presidency on Tuesday night, anointing him as their standard-bearer against President Trump with an extraordinary virtual roll call vote that showcased the cultural diversity of their coalition and exposed a generational gulf that is increasingly defining the party.

Denied the chance to assemble in Milwaukee because of the coronavirus pandemic, Democratic activists and dignitaries cast their votes from locations across all 50 states, the American territories and the District of Columbia — from the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., to the iconic welcome sign in Las Vegas and far beyond to the shores of Guam, “where America’s day begins.” They offered a grand mosaic of personal identities and experiences, many speaking in raw terms about their aspirations and adversities.

Appearing with his wife in a Delaware school after his home state put him over the top, Mr. Biden was feted by his grandchildren, who burst in with balloons and streamers and wore T-shirts bearing the words “No Malarkey” — one of his favorite phrases — in what amounted to a miniature version of the celebrations that typically ensue after roll call votes. “See you on Thursday,” he said, speaking briefly to thank the delegates, and referring to the day he will formally accept the nomination.

The second night of the Democratic National Convention straddled themes of national security, presidential accountability and continuity between the past and future leaders of the party. Like the opening night on Monday, it took the form of a kind of political variety show. Hosted by the actress Tracee Ellis Ross, the program skipped between recorded tributes from political luminaries, personal testimonials from activists and voters, and various forms of music and entertainment.

...

It was in the middle of the program that Democrats unspooled a virtual version of a venerable convention tradition, the roll call vote, and gave Mr. Biden his long-sought prize.

The presentation read as a state-by-state catalog of many of the most dangerous crises facing the country, as local activists and elected leaders were assigned to detail their own experiences with Trump-era crises as they cast their delegate votes.

There was an Alaskan fisherman who laid out the threat of climate change, a New York nurse who spoke on behalf of health care employees working in dangerous conditions, and a Puerto Rican legislator who denounced Mr. Trump’s treatment of the island.

Casting Florida’s votes for Mr. Biden, Fred Guttenberg, the father of a young student slain in the Parkland school shooting, recalled Mr. Biden’s phone call to him after the tragedy and predicted that once in office Mr. Biden and Ms. Harris would vanquish the National Rifle Association. Not every state offered a sober-minded video, though ...

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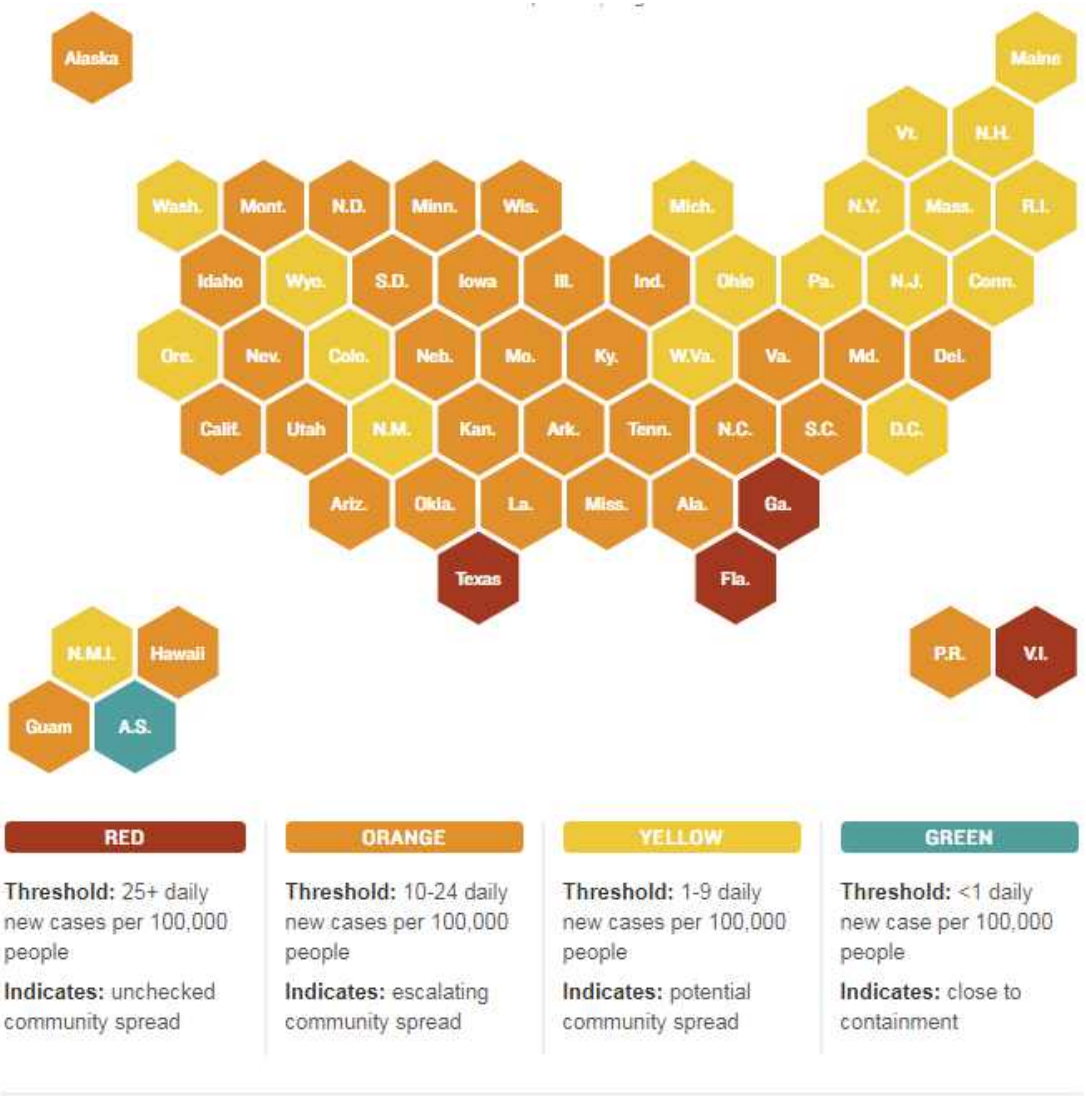
https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/16/816707182/map-tracking-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus-in-the-u-s

Aug 19

Which places have the most the most new daily cases?

More than 5 million people in the U.S. have tested positive for the coronavirus and more than 170,000 have died. Tens of thousands of new cases are confirmed daily. State by state, the picture is varied...



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https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/08/how-coronavirus-covid-vaccine-mandate-would-actually-work-cvd/

Aug 20

COVID-19 vaccines could become mandatory. Here's how it might work.

After a COVID-19 vaccine is available, you may need to get inoculated to go to the office, attend a sporting event, or even get a seat at a restaurant.

YOU WALK TOWARD the arena, ready for a big game, tickets in hand. But what you see is a long line wrapping around the corner of the building and a bottleneck at the entrance as people search their pockets and purses for a small piece of paper. To be cleared to enter, you'll also need that document—proof that you've received a COVID-19 vaccination.

This is the future as some experts see it: a world in which you'll need to show you've been inoculated against the novel coronavirus to attend a sports game, get a manicure, go to work, or hop on a train.

"We're not going to get to the point where the vaccine police break down your door to vaccinate you," says Arthur Caplan, a bioethicist at New York University's School of Medicine. But he and several other health policy experts envision vaccine mandates could be instituted and enforced by local governments or employers—similar to the current vaccine requirements for school-age children, military personnel, and hospital workers.

In the United States, most vaccine mandates come from the government. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) makes recommendations for both pediatric and adult vaccines, and state legislatures or city councils determine whether to issue mandates. These mandates are most commonly tied to public school attendance, and all 50 states require students to receive some vaccines, with exemptions for medical, religious, and philosophical reasons.

Adult vaccine mandates—compelling employees and the public to inoculate themselves—aren't nearly as widespread, but they're not unheard of. U.S. states and cities can and have forced compulsory vaccinations on citizens. In 1901, for example, Cambridge, Massachusetts, adopted a law that required all citizens aged 21 and older to get vaccinated against smallpox. Failure to comply could lead to a five-dollar fine, or the equivalent of $150 today. Those who challenged the order in court lost. (The last outbreak of smallpox in the U.S. occurred in 1949.)

Today, the U.S. military requires troops to be immunized against multiples diseases, including tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, and polio. Several states require workers at healthcare facilities to be vaccinated against diseases such as pertussis, chickenpox, measles, mumps, and rubella. Hospital systems often require additional vaccinations as a condition of employment. And legally, all employers, in any industry, can compel their employees to get vaccinated.

The mandates can be directed toward customers, as well. Just as business owners can bar shoeless and shirtless clients from entering their restaurants, salons, arenas, and stores, they can legally keep people out for any number of reasons, "as long as they're not running afoul of any antidiscrimination laws," says Dorit Rubinstein Reiss, a professor of health and vaccine law at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

When a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, some experts think states will require targeted industries to enforce vaccine mandates for their employees, especially those we've come to know as "essential workers."

"Grocery store workers get exposed to a lot of people, but also have the chance to infect a lot of people because of the nature of their work and the fact that virtually everybody needs to buy food," says Carmel Shachar, executive director of the Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology, and Bioethics at Harvard Law School. Hospitality industry workers—those who work in restaurants, bars, and coffee shops, for example—could also see similar mandates.

"It's in an employer's interest to make sure that their workplace is ...

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/20/coronavirus-germany-spain-record-highest-daily-cases-since-april.html

Aug 20

Germany, Spain record highest daily coronavirus infection rate since April

... with other countries in the region also reporting a sharp rise in new cases.

Several European countries have imposed travel restrictions, social-distancing measures and mask-wearing procedures to prevent the spread of the virus.

However, the World Health Organization cited a relaxation of public health measures, in addition to people "dropping their guard," as possible explanations for the resurgence in the number of new Covid-19 infections across the region.

Germany recorded 1,707 new cases of the coronavirus in the last 24 hours, reflecting its highest daily toll since April. The country has now reported 228,261 cases of the virus, with **9,253 related deaths**, according to data compiled from the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases.

Spain has seen another 3,715 new cases of the virus confirmed in the past 24 hours, **with an additional 127 deaths** [**28,797 deaths total**]. As in Germany, Spain's daily infection rate has not been this high since late April.

Elsewhere, **Italy reported 642 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, notching its highest jump in new infections since late May**. The country has recorded a total of 255,278 cases, with **35,412 deaths**.

Meanwhile, **France**'s health ministry reported **3,776 new** Covid-19 infections on Wednesday, with the daily tally going above 3,000 for the third time in the last five days. France has recorded a similar number of cases to Italy, with **30,434 deaths**.

Hans Kluge, regional director for Europe at the WHO, said on Thursday that the **"epicenter" of the pandemic was now in the Americas, but the European region was "on a trajectory of its own, showing a different trend compared to the rest of the world."**

The United Nations health agency estimates that around 3.9 million people have contracted the coronavirus in the European region, corresponding to 17% of the global total.

To date, more than 22.4 million people have contracted the coronavirus worldwide, with 788,015 related deaths, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

"**The risk of resurgence has never been far away. In the last two months, new cases have been steadily increasing every week in the region. There were 40,000 more cases in the first week of August, compared to the first week of June, when cases were at their lowest,**" Kluge said during an online press briefing.

"Every day now the European region reports an average of over 26,000 new Covid-19 cases. This is due in part to the relaxation of public health and social measures, where authorities have been easing some of the restrictions and people have been dropping their guard," he added.

Earlier this week, the WHO's regional director for the Western Pacific, Dr. Takeshi Kasai, **warned that the pandemic was now being driven by people in their 20s, 30s and 40s who may be "unaware" they are infected.**

...

"According to a recent study, **globally among those aged 15 to 24, cases of Covid-19 have increased from a rate of 4.5% at the end of February to 15% in mid-July. Low risk does not mean no risk,"** he continued. **"No one is invincible and if you do not die from Covid, it may stick with your body like a tornado with a long tail."**...

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https://apnews.com/7b997d73f036f86b538573631fc55190

Aug 21

Lebanon sees spike in cases 17 days after massive blast

BEIRUT (AP) — **Lebanon on Friday began a two-week partial lockdown and nighttime curfew after coronavirus cases increased sharply following an explosion in Beirut that killed and injured thousands of people.**

Confirmed cases of the virus have increased from 5,417 a day after the massive blast on Aug. 4 to nearly 11,000 on Friday, leading officials to announce the lockdown.

On Thursday, Lebanon's Health Ministry tallied a record 605 confirmed new cases in the previous 24 hours, raising the total registered cases since late February to 10,952.

The pandemic has killed 113 people in the tiny country, which was successful in limiting the spread of the virus during the early months.

Many businesses were closed Friday morning in Beirut even though some sectors, including banks, groceries, book shops and pharmacies were allowed to open. Restaurants, night clubs, beaches and clothes shops are among the businesses ordered to close by the Ministry of Interior.

Virus cases had already been on the rise since the beginning of July, when an earlier lockdown was lifted and Lebanon's only international airport was reopened. At the end of June, Lebanon registered 1,778 cases. That number has since multiplied more than five times in seven weeks.

But the numbers shot up dramatically following the Aug. 4, explosion of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at Beirut's port. More than 180 people were killed, more than 6,000 injured and a quarter of a million people were left with homes unfit to live in. The blast overwhelmed the city's hospitals and also badly damaged two that had a key role in handling virus cases.

After the blast, medical officials have warned of increased risk of catching the virus because of crowding at hospitals and funerals, or as people searched through the rubble. Protests and demonstrations also broke out after the blast as Lebanese vented their anger at authorities.

The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most people, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death, particularly in older patients or those with underlying health problems.

Lebanon's health sector has been challenged by the pandemic that hit amid an unprecedented economic and financial crisis....

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/3-day-music-festival-underway-oklahoma-amid-coronavirus-pandemic-n1237689

Aug 22

3-day music festival underway in Oklahoma amid coronavirus pandemic

A three-day music festival in Stillwater, Oklahoma, kicked off Thursday that has city officials concerned will further the spread of the coronavirus.

The annual Weedstock Festival is expected to attract thousands of people to Stillwater, located about 62 miles west of Tulsa, according to NBC affiliate KJRH. The festival, held at the Tumbleweed Dance Hall, will have three days of live music performances. A recorded message at the Tumbleweed Dance Hall noted **"we are committed to following the CDC guidelines" on "social distancing" and "face covers and personal hygiene. Do your part in keeping others and yourself safe."**

Singer Parker McCollum, who was to have been the headliner for Friday's show, said in a statement Wednesday that he was canceling his performance after testing positive for the coronavirus.

"After realizing this morning that I could not taste or smell anything at breakfast, I went to get tested for COVID and results came back showing I was positive for the virus," he said in a tweet. "My deepest apologies to the fans and the venues who were counting on me to perform. I absolutely believe that the shows should go on and I wish more than anything I could be there to play them."

On Wednesday, Stillwater Mayor Will Joyce revised an emergency declaration limiting the number of people who can be inside bars and nightclubs. The guidelines also state that tables and chairs need to be positioned to allow at least 6 feet of space between groups, and dance floors are to remain closed.

Masks must be worn at all times when patrons are not seated. The declaration is in effect until Nov. 30.

In a series of tweets last week, the mayor said that he did not think it was the right time to have a music festival.

"Because it's outside the city limits, city officials have reached out to @TumbleweedOK management, talked with Payne Co Commissioners, Payne Co Health and others about this event. It is not the right time for thousands of people to gather for a 3-day music festival," he wrote in a tweet Aug. 10.

Cary McBride, the owner of the Tumbleweed, told the Stillwater News Press, “I told the Chamber (of Commerce), ‘We either put this thing together or we just shut the doors for good." His venue had already canceled one major music festival this year. The venue told the newspaper that it had hired additional security to keep groups from clustering together.

Mayor Joyce tweeted that the festival, which ends Saturday, could disrupt local schools and universities from in-person teaching, and could put a strain on the hospital and the police department. According to the state Department of Health, there have been 51,746 coronavirus cases and 715 deaths as of Friday. There have been 687 cases in Stillwater.

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-coffins-idUSKBN25I08Z

Aug 22

COVID-19 scary? Japan group offers coffins, chainsaws for stress relief

TOKYO (Reuters) - Finding the pandemic scary? A **Japanese group is trying to take people's minds off COVID-19 - by putting them in coffins surrounded by chainsaw-wielding zombies.**

Customers this weekend in Tokyo can lie in a 2-metre (6 1/2-foot) windowed box, listening to a horror story, watching actors perform and getting poked with fake hands and squirted with water.

"The pandemic is stressful, and we hope people can get a bit of relief by having a good scream," said Kenta Iwana, coordinator of production company Kowagarasetai - "Scare Squad" - which is putting on the 15-minute shows.

As Japan experiences a COVID-19 upswing - with 1,034 infections of the new coronavirus on Friday - Iwana, 25, is scrambling to find work for his actors, who normally perform at venues such as theme parks.

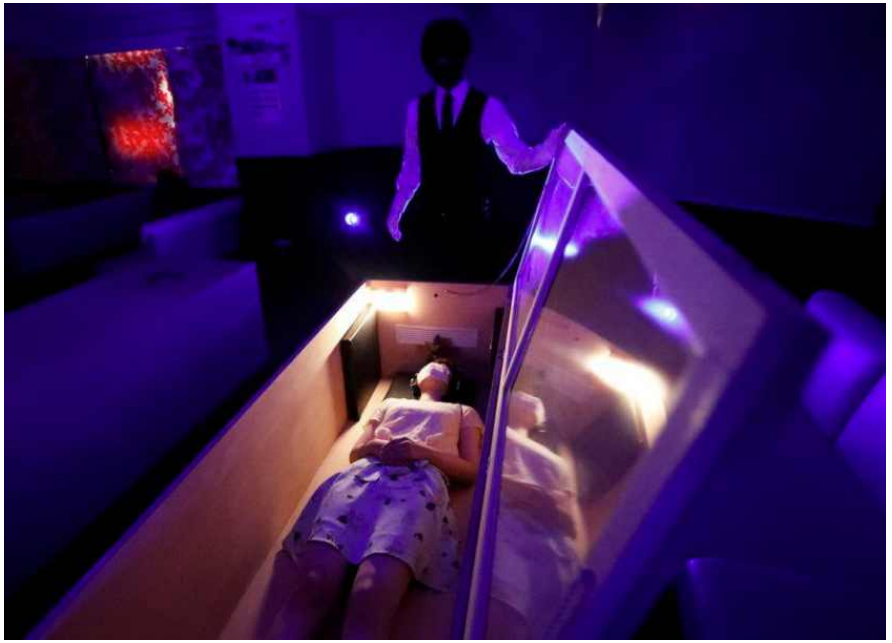
Last month Kowagarasetai offered drive-in horror shows.

Customers, too, are looking for alternatives - and a way to blow off steam.

"Lots of events have been cancelled because of the coronavirus, and I was looking for a way to get rid of my stress," said Kazushiro Hashiguchi, 36, said after lying through the 800-yen ($7.60) show. "I feel relaxed now."

Customers for the shows, held in a rest lounge usually used by passengers arriving in the capital on overnight bus trips, include shopping mall owners and operators of other venues who Iwana hopes will host his mobile shows.

"We needed to have something that we could take anywhere, and coffins are easy to move. All you need to do is put them in a dark room," said Iwana. "It's good business for us and satisfying for our customers."



A participant lies inside a mock of coffin with plastic shields to maintain social distancing amid the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), during a coffin horror show, performed by Kowagarasetai (Scare Squad), in Tokyo, Japan August 22, 2020. REUTERS/Issei Kato

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https://english.alarabiya.net/en/coronavirus/2020/08/22/Worldwide-coronavirus-death-toll-surpasses-800-000-AFP-COVID-19-tally

Aug 22

Global coronavirus deaths top 800,000

The number of deaths from the new coronavirus has surpassed 800,000 around the world, according to an AFP tally based on official sources at around 1100 GMT on Saturday.

In total, 800,004 fatalities have been recorded globally, out of 23,003,079 declared infections.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region the most affected with 254,897 deaths. More than half of global fatalities have been reported in four countries: the United States with 175,416, Brazil with 113,358, Mexico 59,610 and India 55,794.

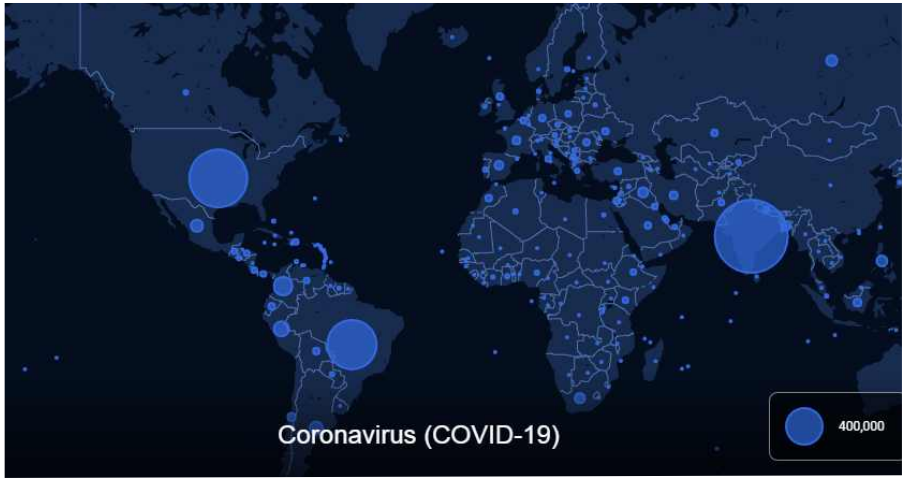
The number of deaths has doubled since June 6, and 100,000 have been recorded in the last 17 days alone.

Latin America and the Caribbean, which have a total of 6,575,960 declared cases, reported 17,095 new deaths over the past seven days, slightly below the previous week.

Asia reported 8,501 new deaths over the week, Canada and the United States 6,964, Europe 2,550, Africa 2,227, the Middle East 2,188 and Oceania 99.

After Latin America, Europe has 212,533 deaths from 3,681,448 cases, ahead of Canada and the United States (184,516 deaths, 5,749,093 infections), Asia (86,288, 4,410,622) and the Middle East (33,930, 1,389,619).

Africa, with 27,319 fatalities out of 1,169,204 declared cases, is the least affected continent after Oceania (521 deaths, 27,133 cases).



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/korea-elevates-distancing-epidemic-nears-spring-levels-72550343

Aug 23

South Korea elevates distancing as virus nears spring levels

SEOUL, South Korea -- **Churches were closed and professional baseball games were played in empty stadiums on Sunday** as South Korea stepped up measures nationwide to fight a resurgence in coronavirus cases that has raised concerns that the epidemic is getting out of control.

The 397 new cases reported by South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or the KCDC, **marked the 10th straight day of triple-digit increases and indicated that the speed of the virus's spread was nearing levels seen during the worst of the outbreak in the spring.**

The resurgence, which began in the densely populated Seoul area before reaching practically every major city and provincial town over the past week, is a major setback for a country that had been eager to tout its hard-won gains against the virus.

After avoiding stringent social distancing measures because of concerns about hurting the economy, officials stepped up restrictions nationwide on Sunday.

They banned gatherings of more than 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors and shut nightclubs, karaoke rooms, buffet restaurants and computer-gaming cafes. Churches can hold online services only, while fans were removed from professional sports, just weeks after baseball and soccer teams had been allowed to sell limited portions of their seats.

Such measures were first implemented in the greater Seoul area on Wednesday, but officials announced Saturday that they would be expanded nationwide after it became clear that the outbreak was spreading throughout the country.

KCDC Director Jeong Eun-kyeong said things will probably get worse before they get better. **The daily jumps could become even bigger in the coming days because health workers are increasingly struggling to keep up with the pace of infection, scrambling to trace and test the contacts of virus carriers**, she said.

...

The Seoul city government announced Sunday that it will require people to wear masks in public — indoors and outdoors — starting Monday. It wasn't immediately clear how the capital could effectively enforce such requirements. Seoul has been mandating masks on mass transport since May, but enforcement has been relatively lax as it depends on bus drivers and subway station workers.

...

Sunday's jump in infections marked the third consecutive day they've crossed 300. Most of the new cases have come from the Seoul area, home to half of the country's 51 million people. Cases were also reported in other major cities such as Busan, Gwangju, Daejeon and Daegu, the epicenter of the previous major outbreak in late February and March.

The country managed to stabilize the situation in the Daegu area by April through aggressive testing and contact tracing. That approach worked because many of the infections had been tied to a single church congregation with thousands of members.

But it's unclear if the formula will be as effective now, with the virus spreading nationwide.

South Korea has 17,399 confirmed cases overall, including 309 deaths.

"With the number of virus patients rising rapidly, it has become difficult for anti-virus measures alone to contain the outbreak — the reduction of human-to-human contact is crucial, ...

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https://apnews.com/76f2a9d689d179879fd6dd39ea997165

Aug 24

Residents flee as Gulf Coast sees possible tandem hurricanes

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Gulf Coast braced Sunday for a potentially devastating hit from twin hurricanes as two dangerous storms swirled toward the U.S from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Officials feared a history-making onslaught of life-threatening winds and flooding along the coast, stretching from Texas to Alabama.

A storm dubbed Marco grew into a hurricane Sunday as it churned up the Gulf of Mexico toward Louisiana. But, **Marco's intensity was fluctuating, forecasters said, and the system was downgraded to a tropical storm Sunday night.**

Another potential hurricane, **Tropical Storm Laura**, lashed the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and was **tracking toward the same region of the U.S. coast, carrying the risk of growing into a far more powerful storm.**

Experts said computer models show **Laura could make landfall with winds exceeding 110 mph (177 kph), and rain bands from both storms could bring a combined total of 2 feet (0.6 meters) of rain to parts of Louisiana and several feet of potentially deadly storm surge.**

"There has never been anything we've seen like this before, where you can have possibly two hurricanes hitting within miles of each over a 48-hour period," said Benjamin Schott, meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service's Slidell, Louisiana, office.

The combination of the rain and storm surge in a day or two means "you're looking at a potential for a major flood event that lasts for some time," said weather service tropical program coordinator Joel Cline. "And that's not even talking about the wind."
...

Because of strong winds from the southwest, Marco may attain and then lose hurricane status before it hits land, meteorologists said. But those winds could be gone when Laura ventures to the central Gulf, where the usually bathtub-warm water is a degree or 2 (0.5 to 1 degree Celsius) warmer than normal, Klotzbach said.

The warmer the water, the stronger the fuel for a hurricane.

"It, unfortunately, might peak in intensity about landfall. That's the one thing I worry about with this one," MIT meteorology professor Kerry Emanuel said of Laura. His **multiple computer simulations show a decent chance of winds of more than 110 mph (177 kph) for Laura at landfall**, as do other computer models.

The key for Laura's future is how it survives Cuba. Originally forecast to rake over almost the entire length of the island and potentially weaken, the storm late Sunday moved further south, skirting the island. If that continues, it is more likely to come out strong enough to power up over the favorable environment of the Gulf of Mexico, Klotzbach said.

If that continues, Laura could hit further west in the Gulf, possibly into Texas instead of Louisiana, he said. If it hits Louisiana that would break the record for two named storms hitting the state so close together. The current record is five days apart in 1885, Klotzbach said.

And there's one long-term possibility that adds to the risk. **As Laura moves north after landfall into Oklahoma, there's a chance it will be caught up into the jet stream, travel east and emerge over North Carolina** and return to tropical storm status, McNoldy and Klotzbach said.
...

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/world/covid-19-coronavirus.html#link-4b468050

Aug 24

Work by researchers in Hong Kong finds that reinfection may be possible

Researchers in Hong Kong are reporting the first confirmed case of reinfection with the coronavirus.

“An apparently young and healthy patient had a second case of Covid-19 infection which was diagnosed 4.5 months after the first episode,” University of Hong Kong researchers said Monday in a statement.

The report is of concern because it suggests that immunity to the coronavirus may last only a few months in some people. And it has implications for vaccines being developed for the virus.

The 33-year-old man had only mild symptoms the first time, and no symptoms this time around. The reinfection was discovered when he returned from a trip to Spain, the researchers said, and the virus they sequenced closely matched the strain circulating in Europe in July and August.

“Our results prove that his second infection is caused by a new virus that he acquired recently rather than prolonged viral shedding,” said Dr. Kelvin Kai-Wang To, a clinical microbiologist at the University of Hong Kong.

Given that there are millions of cases worldwide, it is not unexpected that a few, or even a few dozen, people might be reinfected with the virus after only a few months, experts have said.

Doctors have reported several cases of presumed reinfection in the United States and elsewhere, but none of those cases have been confirmed with rigorous testing. Recovered people are known to shed viral fragments for weeks, which can cause tests to show a positive result in the absence of live virus.

But the **Hong Kong researchers sequenced the virus from both rounds of infection and found significant differences in the two sets of virus, suggesting that the patient was infected a second time.**

Common cold coronaviruses are known to cause reinfections in less than a year, but **experts had hoped that the new coronavirus might behave more like its cousins SARS and MERS, which seemed to produce longer-lasting immunity of a few years.**

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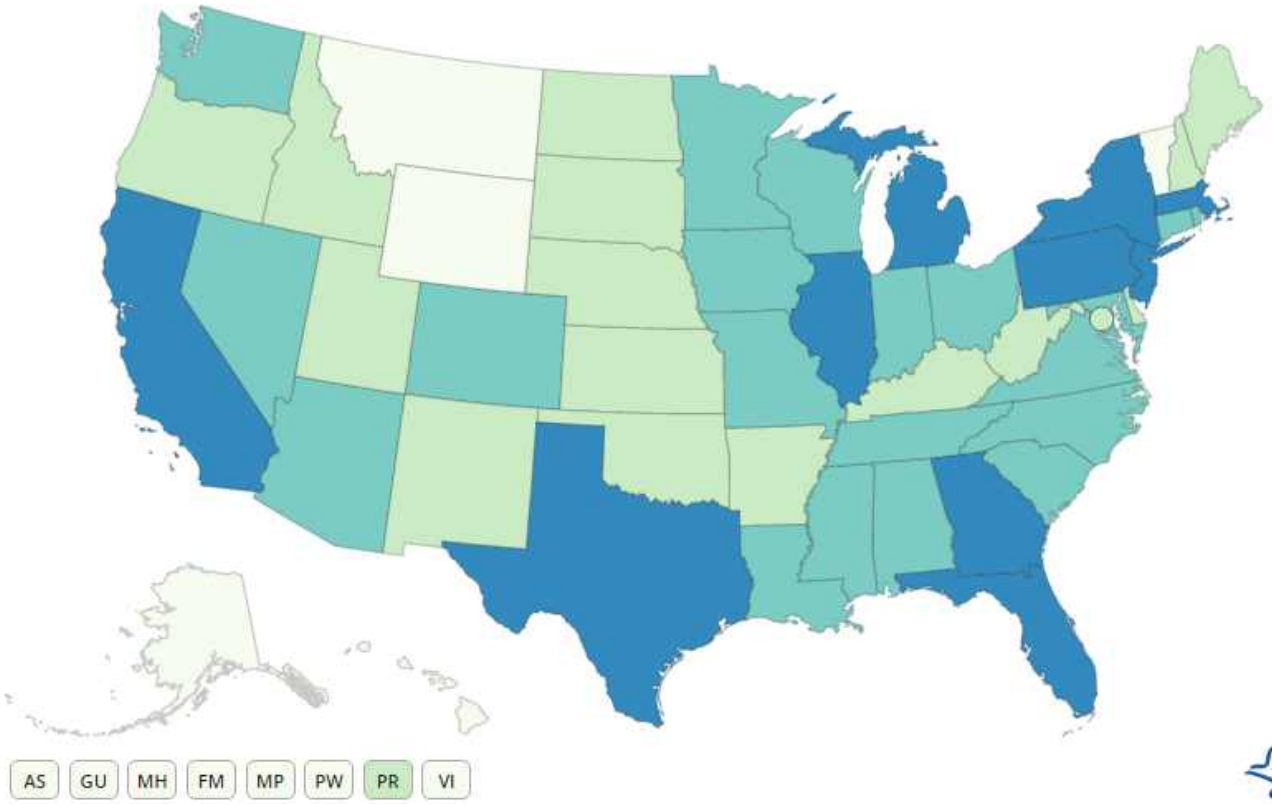
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html

Aug 24

CDC maps US deaths by jurisdiction

This map shows COVID-19 cases reported by U.S. states, the District of Columbia, New York City, and other U.S.-affiliated jurisdictions as of today.

Use the live link at the top of this page to access the latest information and interactive features.



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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/new-thinking-on-covid-lockdowns-overly-blunt-and-costly/ar-BB18jmd8?li=BBnb7Kz

Aug 25

New Thinking on Covid Lockdowns: Overly Blunt and Costly

In response to the novel and deadly coronavirus, **many governments deployed draconian tactics never used in modern times: severe and broad restrictions on daily activity that helped send the world into its deepest peacetime slump since the Great Depression.**

The equivalent of **400 million jobs have been lost world-wide, 13 million in the U.S. alone. Global output is on track to fall 5% this year,** far worse than during the financial crisis, according to the International Monetary Fund.
...
Five months later, the evidence suggests lockdowns were an overly blunt and economically costly tool. They are politically difficult to keep in place for long enough to stamp out the virus. **The evidence also points to alternative strategies that could slow the spread of the epidemic at much less cost.** As cases flare up throughout the U.S., some experts are urging policy makers to pursue these more targeted restrictions and interventions rather than another crippling round of lockdowns.

“We’re on the cusp of an economic catastrophe,” said James Stock, a Harvard University economist who, with Harvard epidemiologist Michael Mina and others, is modeling how to avoid a surge in deaths without a deeply damaging lockdown. “We can avoid the worst of that catastrophe by being disciplined,” Mr. Stock said.

The economic pain from pandemics mostly comes not from sick people but from healthy people trying not to get sick: consumers and workers who stay home, and businesses that rearrange or suspend production. A lot of this is voluntary, so some economic hit is inevitable whether or not governments impose restrictions.
...
Prior to Covid-19, lockdowns weren’t part of the standard epidemic tool kit, which was primarily designed with flu in mind.

During the 1918-1919 flu pandemic, some American cities closed schools, churches and theaters, banned large gatherings and funerals and restricted store hours. But none imposed stay-at-home orders or closed all nonessential businesses. No such measures were imposed during the 1957 flu pandemic, the next-deadliest one; even schools stayed open.

Lockdowns weren’t part of the contemporary playbook, either. Canada’s pandemic guidelines concluded that restrictions on movement were “impractical, if not impossible.” **The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in its 2017 community mitigation guidelines for pandemic flu, didn’t recommend stay-at-home orders or closing nonessential businesses** even for a flu as severe as the one a century ago.

So when China locked down Wuhan and surrounding Hubei province in January, and Italy imposed blanket stay-at-home orders in March, many epidemiologists elsewhere thought the steps were unnecessarily harmful and potentially ineffective.

By late March, they had changed their minds. The sight of hospitals in Italy overwhelmed with dying patients shocked people in other countries. Covid-19 was much deadlier than flu, it was able to spread asymptomatically, and it had no vaccine or effective therapy.

Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong set early examples of how to stop Covid-19 without lockdowns. Their reflexes trained by SARS in 2003, MERS and avian flu, they quickly cut travel to China, introduced widespread testing to isolate the infected and traced contacts. Their populations quickly donned face masks.

Sweden took a different approach. Instead of lockdowns, it imposed only modest restrictions to keep cases at levels its hospitals could handle.

Sweden has suffered more deaths per capita than neighboring Denmark but fewer than Britain, and it has paid less of an economic price than either, according to JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Sweden’s current infection and death rates are as low as the rest ...

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/25/business/office-space-remote-work-pandemic/index.html

Aug 25

The office, as you know it, [may be] dead

Bustling skyscrapers and office parks packed with workers could be a relic of the pre-pandemic world.

The health crisis has forced millions of Americans to abandon their offices in favor of working from home, for better or worse. Now there are signs this may not be a short-term phenomenon, but more of a permanent shift in favor of remote work even after a Covid-19 vaccine is in place.

More than two-thirds (68%) of large company CEOs plan to downsize their office space, according to a survey released Tuesday by KPMG.
...
Nearly three-quarters of the CEOs surveyed said they plan to spend more on the digitization of operations and the creation of a next-generation operating model. Two-thirds of the CEOs plan to invest more on the creation of a new workforce model, increasing the use of automation and artificial intelligence alongside human workers.

"This is a longer-term trend. It's here to stay," said Knopp, who said everything from human resources and sales to customer service is being digitized. "Companies are focused on reducing real estate footprints."

Employees have mixed feelings about working from home. Some feel liberated by ditching their long commutes and stuffy office attire. Others are struggling to work from home while taking care of children and elderly parents.

But, for companies, embracing remote work can be a way to save money and simultaneously deepen their talent pool.

For decades, major companies have spent heavily on prized office buildings in major cities. By shrinking their office footprint, those real estate costs can go down, in some cases dramatically.

At the same time, companies no longer need to exclusively hire people who live or are willing to relocate to major cities where their offices are.

Seventy-two percent of CEOs surveyed by KPMG said working remotely has widened their potential talent pool.
...
"The CEOs I speak with can now interview, onboard and integrate workers into companies completely virtually, never having physically met the new employees," Knopp said.
T...
While some companies such as Twitter (TWTR) have said employees who want to work from home permanently can, KPMG said **most companies will embrace a hybrid model in the future. That means offices will get a makeover to create more space for team meetings and less for individuals to work.**

"The trend will be towards much less reliance on physical office space to get our work done and more reliance on digital collaboration tools," said Knopp, the KPMG boss. "Employees will come into physical offices for team meetings and to collaborate, but most days of the week many employees will work remotely."

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https://www.aol.com/article/finance/2020/08/25/american-airlines-plans-19000-furloughs-layoffs-in-october/24599521/

Aug 26

Airlines' plans for furloughing employees

DALLAS (AP) — **American Airlines** said Tuesday it **will cut more than 40,000 jobs, including 19,000 through furloughs and layoffs**, in October as it struggles with a sharp downturn in travel because of the pandemic.

American executives said the furloughs can only be avoided if the federal government gives airlines another $25 billion to help them cover labor costs for six more months.

The airline said 23,500 employees have accepted buyouts, retired early or taken long-term leaves of absence, but that was not enough to avoid involuntary cuts. The furloughs of union workers and layoffs of management staff announced Tuesday will fall heaviest on flight attendants, with 8,100 being terminated in October.

American began the year with about 140,000 employees but expects fewer than 100,000 to remain in October.

U.S. air travel plunged 95% by April, a few weeks after the first significant coronavirus outbreaks in the United States. **Passenger traffic has recovered slightly since then but remains down 70% from a year ago,** and carriers say they need fewer workers.

American's announcement comes one day after Delta Air Lines said it will furlough 1,941 pilots in October unless it reaches a cost-cutting deal with the pilots' union.

In March, passenger airlines got $25 billion from the government to save jobs for six months, and American was the biggest beneficiary, receiving $5.8 billion. The money, and **an accompanying ban on furloughs, expire after Sept. 30**, although airlines and their labor unions are lobbying Congress for another $25 billion and a six-month reprieve from job cuts.

When the federal relief was approved, "it was assumed that by Sept. 30, the virus would be under control and demand for air travel would have returned. That is obviously not the case," ...
...
American's cuts include jobs at affiliates that operate American Eagle regional flights. The number of furloughs of union employees with rehiring rights and layoffs of management and support staff is less than the 25,000 who got warnings in July. American said they will be paid through September to comply with terms of the federal aid.

United Airlines warned 36,000 employees in July that they could lose their jobs in October. The airline has not updated that figure.

Southwest Airlines has said it doesn't expect to impose furloughs this year, although like others, Southwest **is encouraging employees to take buyouts or early retirement.**

Delta plans to furlough all pilots with less than about three years of experience at the Atlanta-based airline. Delta's senior vice president of flight operations, John Laughter, said the airline has known that early retirements alone wouldn't be enough to reduce the pilot ranks.

"We are six months into this pandemic and only 25% of our revenues have been recovered," he said in a memo to pilots this week. "Unfortunately, we see few catalysts over the next six months to meaningful change this trajectory."

The Air Line Pilots Association accused Delta of using the threat of furloughs to force the union to grant concessions – the airline has proposed a 15% cut in pilots' minimum guaranteed pay. Union spokesman Chris Riggins said that furloughs and voluntary departures will total nearly 4,000 pilots, which will undermine Delta's ability to rebound when air travel recovers.

Pilots are the only Delta employees represented by a union and the only one for which the airline has announced furloughs. A spokesman said Delta hopes to avoid furloughs among other groups.

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/25/new-cases-of-the-coronavirus-are-falling-in-most-of-the-us.html

Aug 26

New cases of the coronavirus are down across most of the U.S.

Epidemiologists credit a more unified health message in the U.S. that has more people following social distancing rules. They also say that keeping some businesses closed has helped slow the outbreak. And President Donald Trump started endorsing masks in late July, bringing the White House in line with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after months of resistance.

The number of daily new cases in the U.S. peaked on July 22 at about 70,000 new infections and have steadily fallen to about 42,600 per day, based on a seven-day average, according to a CNBC analysis of data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. **The percent of all tests coming back positive has also steadily fallen, from a high of 8.5% in late July to 6.2% this week, according to Hopkins data. That, along with the four weeks of sustained decline and the falling number of Covid-19 hospitalizations, has epidemiologists feeling more confident that the U.S. is finally getting a grip on its outbreak.**

...

Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Robert Redfield warned last week that while cases are falling nationally, driven by the former hot spots, there are some worrying signs in the middle of the country.

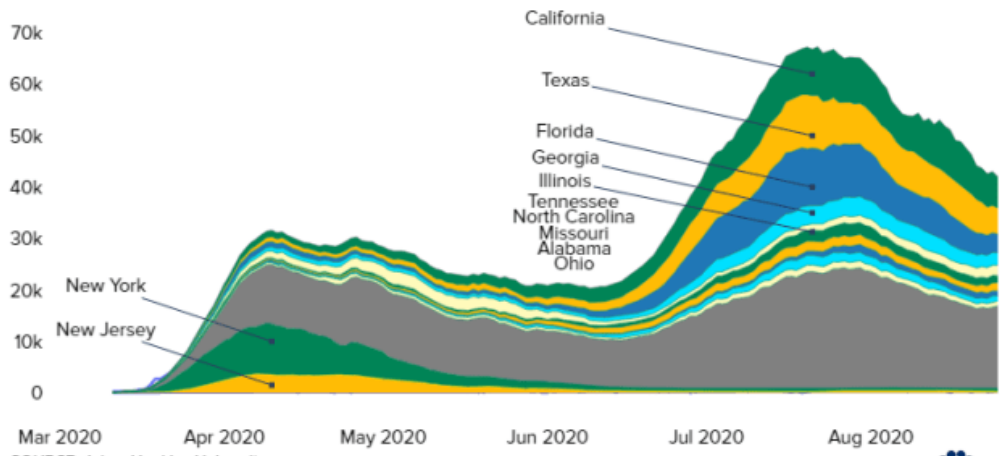
"We're starting to see some of the cases now in the red zone areas are falling, but if you look at those states that are in what we call the yellow zone, between 5% and 10%, they're not falling, so **middle America right now is getting stuck**," Redfield said in an interview with Dr. Howard Bauchner of the Journal of the American Medical Association. "This is why it's so important for middle America to recognize the mitigation steps that we talked about, about masks, about social distancing, hand washing, closing bars, being smart about crowds."

He said cases are not rising substantially in the region, but the fact that cases appear to be plateauing could be cause for concern, especially as the country enters the colder months of the year and seasonal influenza spreads. Redfield has repeatedly warned that the confluence of a major flu outbreak along with the Covid-19 pandemic could overwhelm hospitals and cause preventable deaths. He encouraged Americans to get this year's flu vaccine as soon as it's available to mitigate the risk of an

U.S. coronavirus cases

New reported cases daily,
7-day moving average
as of Aug. 26, 2020

Source: John Hopkins University



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https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/laura-now-forecast-catastrophic-category-hurricane-72618721

Aug 26

Laura now forecast to be a catastrophic Category 4 hurricane

... e**ven stronger than previously expected**, as it churns toward Texas and Louisiana, gathering wind and water that swirls over much of the Gulf of Mexico.
...
"We could see storm surge heights more than 15 feet in some areas," Stewart said. "What doesn't get blown down by the wind could easily get knocked down by the rising ocean waters pushing well inland."

Laura has grown nearly 70% in power in just 24 hours, with maximum sustained winds increasing to 110 mph (175 kph) with higher gusts, forecasters said early Wednesday.
...
A Category 4 hurricane will do catastrophic damage: "Power outages will last weeks to possibly months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months," the weather service says.

In the largest U.S. evacuation of the pandemic, more than half a million people were ordered Tuesday to flee from an area of the Gulf Coast along the Texas-Louisiana state line.
...
In Galveston and Port Arthur, Texas, mandatory evacuation orders went into effect shortly before daybreak Tuesday. "If you decide to stay, you're staying on your own," Port Arthur Mayor Thurman Bartie said.

Forecasters expect the storm's top winds to increase to 130 mph (209 kmh) before landfall, pushing water onto more than 450 miles (724 kilometers) of coast from Texas to Mississippi. Hurricane warnings were issued from San Luis Pass, Texas, to Intracoastal City, Louisiana, and storm surge warnings from the Port Arthur, Texas, flood protection system to the mouth of the Mississippi River.

Laura also is expected to dump massive rainfall over a short period of time as it moves inland, causing widespread flash flooding in states far from the coast. **Flash flood watches were issued for much of Arkansas**, and forecasters said the risk of **heavy rainfall will move to parts of Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky** late Friday and Saturday.

Fearing that people would not evacuate in time, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said those in southwest Louisiana need to reach wherever they intend to ride out the storm by noon Wednesday, when the state will start feeling the storm's effects.

Officials urged people to stay with relatives or in hotel rooms to avoid spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Buses were stocked with protective equipment and disinfectant, and they would carry fewer passengers to keep people apart, Texas officials said.
...
The hurricane is threatening a center of the U.S. energy industry. The government said 84% of Gulf oil production and an estimated 61% of natural gas production were shut down. Nearly 300 platforms have been evacuated.

While oil prices often spike before a major storm as production slows, consumers are unlikely to see big price changes because the pandemic decimated demand for fuel.

Laura passed Cuba after killing nearly two dozen people on the island of Hispaniola, including 20 in Haiti and three in the Dominican Republic, where it knocked out power and caused intense flooding. The deaths reportedly included a 10-year-old girl whose home was hit by a tree and a mother and young son crushed by a collapsing wall.

Laura's arrival comes just days before the Aug. 29 anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which breached the levees in New Orleans, flattened much of the Mississippi coast and killed as many as 1,800 people in 2005. Less than a month later, Hurricane Rita struck southwest Louisiana as a Category 3.

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https://apnews.com/45ba32bafe5da34b5691544ecb3e5492

Aug 27

Laura, now a Category 2 hurricane, still extremely dangerous

LAKE ARTHUR, La. (AP) — Hurricane Laura pounded the Gulf Coast for hours with ferocious wind, torrential rains and rising seawater as it roared ashore over southwestern Louisiana near the Texas border early Thursday, threatening the lives of people who didn't evacuate.

Authorities had ordered coastal residents to get out, but not everyone did in an area devastated by Rita in 2005.
...
"There are some people still in town and people are calling ... but there ain't no way to get to them," Tony Guillory, president of the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, said early Thursday morning over the phone as he hunkered down in a Lake Charles government building that was shaking from the storm.

Guillory said he hopes stranded people can be rescued later Thursday but fears that blocked roads, downed power lines and flooding could get in the way. Officials said search missions and damage assessments would begin when conditions allow it.

With more than 290,000 homes and businesses without power in the two states, near-constant lightning provided the only light for some.

The National Hurricane Center said Laura slammed the coast with winds of 150 mph (241 kph) at 1 a.m. CDT as a Category 4 hurricane near Cameron, a 400-person community about 30 miles (48 kilometers) east of the Texas border.

"Unsurvivable storm surge with large and destructive waves will cause catastrophic damage," forecasters warned. They said the storm surge could reach 15-20 feet in Port Arthur, Texas, and a stretch of Louisiana including Lake Charles.
"This surge could penetrate up to 40 miles inland from the immediate coastline, and flood waters will not fully recede for several days," the hurricane center said.

Hours after landfall, Laura was still a Category 2 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 110 mph (175 kph). Its center was past Lake Charles, moving north at about 15 mph (24 kph), but with damaging winds that stretched over much of Louisiana and parts of eastern Texas.

More than 580,000 coastal residents were ordered to join the largest evacuation since the coronavirus pandemic began and many did, filling hotels and sleeping in cars since officials didn't want to open mass shelters and worsen the spread of COVID-19.
...
Forecasters expected a weakened Laura to cause widespread flash flooding in states far from the coast. After turning eastward and reaching the Atlantic Ocean, it could again become a tropical storm and threaten the Northeast.

Laura hit the U.S. after killing nearly two dozen people on the island of Hispaniola, including 20 in Haiti and three in the Dominican Republic, where it knocked out power and caused intense flooding.

Laura was the seventh named storm to strike the U.S. this year, setting a new record for U.S. landfalls by the end of August. The old record was six in 1886 and 1916, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

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https://bgr.com/2020/08/27/coronavirus-lockdown-honolulu-new-stay-at-home-order-for-oahu/

Aug 28

Oahu in lockdown

Hawaii has become the latest example of a couple of difficult yet fundamental truths about the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the coronavirus-inspired lockdown that was set to begin Thursday on the island of Oahu — which also encompasses the state capital of Honolulu.

Time was, Hawaii was regarded as one of the few so-called "safe" corners of the US. Its status as an island and the relative difficulty in getting to it seemed to make it a bit harder for the coronavirus to spread to it from the US mainland compared to, say, between adjacent states like New York and New Jersey. And yet, as of T**hursday, the state's capital was set to return once again to a lockdown status, with a stay-at-home order meaning the closure of non-essential businesses like retail stores and gyms. They'll have to stay closed for two weeks, and this order also keeps public spaces like beaches and parks, as well as bars, closed, too.**

The lockdown order went into effect across Oahu following local media reporting **215 new cases of the virus in Hawaii on Tuesday.** And there are a few major differences with this new lockdown, compared to what the area experienced previously, back in March.

For one thing, **churches will still be able to provide services.** Also, local officials are gearing up for a major effort to keep cases low once Oahu comes out of the stay-at-home order — which will happen two weeks from now, at the earliest.

A news release about the return to shutdown states the following:

The order "requires all individuals anywhere on Oahu to shelter in place — that is, stay at home and work from home — except for certain essential activities and for all businesses within the city to cease activities, except for certain essential businesses, healthcare operations, essential infrastructure, and essential government functions."

The plan for the prevention effort post-lockdown includes conducting at least 5,000 tests each day. Additionally, as many as 500 contact tracers will be hired, and a **Waikiki hotel will be used to quarantine anyone who doesn't have another option where they can do so. Moreover, the coronavirus tests will be free, and participants won't need insurance or a referral to get one.**

This news comes as the latest data from John Hopkins University shows that there have been more than 5.8 million confirmed coronavirus cases in the US since the pandemic began, along with more than 180,000 deaths.

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https://www.foxnews.com/travel/asymptomatic-coronavirus-carriers-disease-flights-cdc-study

Aug 28

Study suggests, asymptomatic virus carriers can spread disease on flights

A new report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has suggested the novel coronavirus can be spread on airplanes by asymptomatic carriers.

In the study, featured in the peer-reviewed journal Emerging Infections Diseases, researchers examined evidence of in-flight transmission of COVID-19 by asymptomatic patients, as prior data was inconclusive. In-flight transmission by those symptomatic for COVID-19, meanwhile, has been well established.

The **studied evacuation flight** flew from Milan, Italy, to South Korea in late March on an **11-hour trip; 310 passengers** were initially scheduled to board, but 11 were denied entry after showing symptoms for COVID-19. Both on the ground and in the high skies, the flight crew followed strict infection control procedures by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

In the high skies, all passengers wore N95 respirator masks, except while eating and using the restroom. After arriving in South Korea, the 299 passengers were quarantined for 2 weeks at a government quarantine facility, in complete isolation from one another, where they were frequently examined for symptoms of COVID-19.

On April 2, the first day of the quarantine, **six passengers tested positive for COVID-19 and were hospitalized.** Two weeks later, the six passengers showed no symptoms of the viral disease and were said to be asymptomatic.

On April 15, the **14th day of the quarantine, however, a woman who initially tested negative after deplaning tested positive for the coronavirus. The traveler wore the N95 mask throughout the flight, except while using the restroom**, which was shared by nearby passengers – including someone who was asymptomatic. The woman who tested positive for COVID-19 on April 15 was **seated three rows behind the asymptomatic passenger.**

To that end, the researchers suspect that the woman's infection was likely transmitted by in-flight contact.
...

The authors concluded that it remains unclear exactly how the virus was transmitted on the airplanes, **suggesting that contaminated surfaces or infected persons may have a "critical role" in the in-flight transmission of infectious disease** and that further research was needed.

"Our findings suggest the following strategies for the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 transmission on an aircraft," they wrote. **"First, masks should be worn during the flight. Second, because contact with contaminated surfaces increases the risk for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among passengers, hand hygiene is necessary to prevent infections," they wrote.**

"Third, physical distance should be maintained before boarding and after disembarking from the aircraft."

In close, the authors urged that "stringent global regulations for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission on aircraft" could help prevent such public health emergencies in the future.

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-26/coronavirus-in-vacant-apartment-suggests-toilets-role-in-spread?utm_campaign=news&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews

Aug 28

Coronavirus in vacant apartment implicates toilet in spread

The discovery of coronavirus in the bathroom of an unoccupied apartment in Guangzhou, China, suggests the airborne pathogen may have wafted upwards through drain pipes, an echo of a large SARS outbreak in Hong Kong 17 years ago.

Traces of SARS-CoV-2 were detected in February on the sink, faucet and shower handle of a long-vacant apartment, researchers at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said in a study published this month in Environment International. **The contaminated bathroom was directly above the home of five people confirmed a week earlier to have Covid-19.**

The scientists conducted “an on-site tracer simulation experiment” to see whether the virus could be spread through waste pipes via tiny airborne particles that can be created by the force of a toilet flush. They found such particles, called aerosols, in bathrooms 10 and 12 levels above the Covid-19 cases. Two cases were confirmed on each of those floors in early February, **raising concern that SARS-CoV-2-laden particles from stool had drifted into their homes via plumbing.**

The new report is reminiscent of a case at Hong Kong’s Amoy Gardens private housing estate almost two decades ago, when 329 residents caught severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, in part because of faulty sewage pipelines. Forty-two residents died, making it the most devastating community outbreak of SARS, which is also caused by a coronavirus.

“Although transmission via the shared elevator cannot be excluded, this event is consistent with the findings of the Amoy Gardens SARS outbreak in Hong Kong in 2003,” Song Tang, a scientist with the China CDC Key Laboratory of Environment and Population Health, and colleagues wrote in the study, which cited unpublished data from the health agency.

Apartments in multistory buildings may be linked via a shared wastewater system, said Lidia Morawska, director of the International Laboratory for Air Quality and Health at Australia’s Queensland University of Technology. While solids and liquids descend the network, sewer gases -- often detectable by their odor -- sometimes rise through pipes in the absence of sufficient water, said Morawska, who wasn’t part of the research team.

“If there’s smell, it means that somehow air has been transported to where it shouldn’t go,” Morawska said in an interview.

...

A 28-year-old woman developed Covid-19 symptoms about a week after the flight, during which she wore an N95 respirator mask, except when she used a toilet. The toilet was shared by other passengers, including one seated three rows away who was infected but had no symptoms. Because of strict infection control procedures implemented immediately before and during the flight, the authors concluded that **the most plausible explanation for the infection is that it was acquired via indirect contact with an asymptomatic passenger while using an onboard toilet.**

Previous investigations confirmed that SARS-CoV-2 genetic material was found on toilets used by Covid-19 patients, in the air in hospital nurses’ stations, on air outlet vents, and multiple other sites. The extent to which fecal aerosol plumes are infecting people with the SARS-CoV-2 virus isn’t known, said Queensland’s Morawska.

“There are lots of situations where things happen and are pretty unusual,” said Morawska, who was part of a team that studied the Amoy Gardens contagion. Scientists should investigate the “unusual situations” because, by understanding them, they may find “they’re not that unusual.”

https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/nevada-man-had-covid-19-twice/ar-BB18tZF0?li=BBnb7Kz

Aug 29

First documented case of reinfection in the US

A 25-year-old Nevada man appears to be the first documented case of Covid-19 reinfection in the United States.

Genetic tests indicate the patient was **infected with two different varieties of the virus**, a team at the University of Nevada Reno School of Medicine and the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory reported.

The patient was **first diagnosed with coronavirus in April after he had a sore throat, cough, headache, nausea and diarrhea**, the researchers wrote in a pre-print study posted Thursday. **He got better around April 27, and he tested negative for the virus twice afterwards.**

He continued to feel well for about a month. Then **on May 31 he sought care for fever, headache, dizziness, cough, nausea and diarrhea. Five days later, he was hospitalized and required ongoing oxygen support. He was tested again for Covid-19 and the results were positive.**

The Nevada researchers examined genetic material from both coronavirus specimens collected from the man. Their **analysis suggests he had two distinct viral infections.**

The pre-print study has not yet been peer-reviewed by a journal, but the researchers noted that the findings suggest humans can catch Covid-19 multiple times.

It's not the first case documented globally.

Earlier this week, Hong Kong researchers said they found the first documented case of coronavirus reinfection in a 33-year-old man. He tested positive for Covid-19 twice this year.

The pre-print study -- which the University of Hong Kong said on Monday has been accepted by the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases -- found that **the man was reinfected with two different versions of the virus 142 days apart.**

"After one recovers from COVID-19, we still do not know how much immunity is built up, how long it may last, or how well antibodies play a role in protection against a reinfection," Mark Pandori, the director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory, said in a news release Thursday.

"If reinfection is possible on such a short timeline, there may be implications for the efficacy of vaccines developed to fight the disease. It may also have implications for herd immunity," Pandori said. "It is important to note that this is a singular finding. It does not provide any information to us with regard to the generalizability of this phenomenon."

In the Hong Kong case, researchers said the man experienced coronavirus symptoms during his first bout of Covid-19, but that he didn't have any obvious symptoms the second time.

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/08/28/mgm-resorts-to-lay-off-18000-furloughed-workers-in-us/24603278/

Aug 29

MGM Resorts to lay off 18,000 furloughed workers in U.S.

Casino operator MGM Resorts International informed its staff on Friday it would lay off 18,000 furloughed employees in the United States as the coronavirus-induced travel curbs hurt its operations.

The company will **start the process on Monday,** according to a letter from Chief Executive Officer Bill Hornbuckle to employees and seen by Reuters. MGM employed nearly 52,000 fulltime and 18,000 part-time people in the United States as of Dec. 31.

"Federal law requires companies to provide a date of separation for furloughed employees who are not recalled within six months. Regrettably, August 31, marks (that) date," Hornbuckle said in the letter.

Many companies have decided to cut jobs as **the U.S. economy recorded its sharpest contraction in at least 73 years in the second quarter due to pandemic-led disruptions, with corporate profits sinking deeper.**

MGM was forced to close all of its casinos and furlough about 62,000 of its workforce in the United States in March due to the lockdowns.

It brought back tens of thousands of employees when many of its casinos opened for business as the restrictions eased, but it still had to leave out 18,000 of them.

Hornbuckle said that employees who will be laid off will remain in the company's recall list and if hired back by the end of 2021, they shall retain their seniority and benefits.

Earlier in the day, **Coca-Cola** said it would cut thousands of jobs as sales had slumped, while **United Airlines** confirmed it was preparing for the biggest pilot furloughs and will need to remove 2,850 pilots this year.

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https://apnews.com/69cfa5356010fa7b414093bb775f8f52

Aug 30

India records world's biggest single-day jump in virus cases

NEW DELHI (AP) — I**ndia registered 78,761 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, the biggest single-day spike in the world since the pandemic began**, just as the government began easing restrictions to help the battered economy.

The surge raised India's tally to over 3.5 million, and came as the government announced the reopening of the subway in New Delhi, the capital. It also will move ahead with limited sports and religious events next month.

A country of 1.4 billion people, India now has the fastest-growing daily coronavirus caseload of any country in the world, reporting more than 75,000 new cases for four straight days.

One of the reasons is testing: India now conducts nearly 1 million tests every day, compared with just 200,000 two months ago.

A significant feature of India's COVID-19 management, however, is the growing rate of recovered patients. On Sunday, the **recovery rate reached nearly 76.5%.**

The Health Ministry credited its strategic policy of "testing aggressively, tracking comprehensively and treating efficiently" in supervised home isolation and hospitals.

But COVID-19 fatalities continue to mount and **soon India will have the third-largest death toll, after the United States and Brazil, even though it has had far fewer deaths than those two countries.**

India is now reporting around 1,000 COVID-19 deaths every day. So far, more than 63,000 Indians have died from the disease.

Even as eight states remain among the worst-hit regions and contribute nearly 73% of the total infections, the virus is now spreading fast in the vast hinterlands, with health experts warning that September could be the most challenging month yet. Early last week, members of a small secluded tribe in the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands tested positive for the coronavirus.

So far, the biggest contributor to the new surge has been the western state of Maharashtra, home to the commercial capital of Mumbai. It alone has accounted for more than 24,000 deaths and nearly 21% of all cases.

India's economy — the fifth largest in the world — has been severely hit by the pandemic. But despite the surging cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team have been pushing for a return to normalcy to ease the pain.

The federal government on Saturday said the crowded subway, a lifeline for millions of people in New Delhi, will reopen gradually starting Sept. 7. Schools, colleges and movie theaters will remain closed until the end of September.

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/wellness/the-cdc-just-issued-these-new-face-mask-rules/ss-BB18uE6C?li=BBnb7Kz#image=11

Aug 30

CDC issues new face mask rules

1. When You Should Wear a Mask
Basically, whenever you are in public or around anyone who doesn't live with you, mask up. "CDC recommends that you wear masks in public settings around people who don't live in your household and when you can't stay 6 feet away from others. Masks help stop the spread of COVID-19 to others,"

2. Masks Should Meet This Criteria
Per the CDC, masks with two or more layers are most effective when it comes to stopping the spread of coronavirus. However, how you wear your mask is also important. "Wear the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin," they instruct. Also make sure it fits snuggly against the side of your face and don't have gaps.

3. Avoid These Mask Mistakes
The CDC suggests avoiding masks that are made from materials that might make it difficult to breath, such as vinyl. They also ask that you avoid wearing any masks meant for medical professionals, such as N95s. Additionally, they warn against masks with valves, as the vents will allow virus particles to escape.

4. Wear These Masks with Caution
The effectiveness of gaiters and face shields is "unknown at this time," the CDC warns.

5. If You Wear Glasses
If you wear glasses, the CDC recommends finding a mask that fits snuggly over your nose or one that has a nose wire to avoid fogging.

6. The Guidelines for Children
Masks should be worn by people two years and older, the CDC explains. However, they should NOT be worn by children younger than two, people who have trouble breathing, or people who cannot remove the mask without assistance, they point out. If you are able to, they suggest finding a mask made especially for children. If you can't, make sure it fits snugly over the nose, mouth, and under the chin.

7. How to Wear Your Mask
The CDC asks that you wear a mask "correctly and consistently" for the best protection. "Be sure to wash your hands before putting on a mask," they warn. "Do NOT touch the mask when wearing it."

8. Mask 'Don't's'
Do not wear your mask around your neck, on your forehead, under your nose, only on your nose, on your chin, dangling from one ear, or on your arm, the CDC states.

9. How to Take Off Your Mask
First, carefully untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops. Second, handle only by the ear loops or ties. Third, fold outside corners together. Lastly, be careful not to touch your nose, eyes, and mouth when removing and be sure to wash your hands immediately after removing.

10. How to Clean Your Mask
The CDC urges the importance of mask hygiene, making sure to wash them regularly. To clean them, simply throw your mask in with your regular laundry. "Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask," they suggest. "Use the highest heat setting and leave in the dryer until completely dry."

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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/08/30/health-officials-say-30000-enrolled-in-covid-19-vaccine-trials-so-far/24604728/

Aug 31

More than 30,000 volunteers have been enrolled in two vaccine trials U.S.

..."We feel we're **absolutely on track, if not a little bit ahead" of the goal of developing a safe, effective vaccine and producing tens of millions of doses by the end of the year,** Paul Mango, deputy chief of staff for policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, said during a call with reporters.

The two vaccine manufacturers, **Moderna and Pfizer, aim to enroll a total of 60,000 volunteers for their phase 3 trials.** Mango said **enrollment is about halfway complete**, but he did not say how many people are in each trial. **AstraZeneca, in partnership with the UK's University of Oxford, has also begun phase 3 trials on its COVID-19 vaccine, with study sites in the U.S.**

Still, "there are no guarantees in science," Mango noted. It's always possible that the vaccines being tested will not be effective.

President Donald Trump promised quick work on a vaccine during his speech Thursday evening at the Republican National Convention, saying the nation "will produce a vaccine before the end of the year, or maybe even sooner."

Officials predicted the research would stay on track even if Trump loses re-election.

"The vast majority of folks who are working on Operation Warp Speed are not political appointees to the Trump administration," Mango said.

It's clear that one vaccine will not be enough to meet the anticipated demand. Some vaccines may turn out to be better suited for certain populations, such as older people or people with compromised immune systems, said Dr. Gregory Poland, an infectious diseases expert who directs the Mayo Clinic's Vaccine Research Group in Rochester, Minnesota.

"Young children are different than adults and different than elderly adults," Poland said, adding that groups such as pregnant women and people who are immunocompromised or have autoimmune diseases may also react differently.

The phase 3 trials should help answer those questions.

Mango said officials feel "very good" about diversity in enrollment. "We have a very large number of folks over age 65. We have a lot of folks with multiple chronic issues. We have Hispanic participation, we have African American participation," he said.

Half of the study participants will receive the vaccine, and the other half will get a placebo. Who gets which version will be unknown to both the researchers and participants.

Mango predicted additional vaccines could enter larger trials, perhaps by next month.

In the meantime, **Poland offered a reminder that tried-and-true protection measures still work: "If people would follow the simple guidance of wearing a mask, physical distancing and sanitizing your hands, you can be protected against this."**

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https://www.marketwatch.com/story/this-university-created-its-own-covid-19-test-and-is-testing-students-twice-a-week-experts-are-watching-to-see-if-its-enough-to-prevent-an-outbreak-11598648724

Aug 31

University engages in a 'Manhattan Project-style effort' to reopen its campus

... As colleges across the country have sent students home or back to remote classes amid COVID outbreaks, officials at the University of Illinois are hopeful that their approach to mitigating the pandemic's spread on campus — which includes **a test developed at the school that is now being performed under the Federal Drug Administration's emergency use authorization** — will be enough to keep students in some in-person classes through November. It's not a small undertaking. The school had 51,000 students in the fall of 2019.

Since July 6, the school has processed 121,333 COVID tests and in the five days leading up to Friday, which marked the end of the first week of classes, t**he school administered 47,075 tests and had a 0.75% positivity rate.** For context, there were roughly 730,000 COVID tests administered in the entire U.S. on a recent August day, according to Johns Hopkins University's Coronavirus Resource Center. On Aug. 24, U of I administered more than 17,000 tests alone.

So far, the number of positive cases is in line with what the school's modelers predicted — well under 400 cases in the week before classes began. The next couple of weeks will be a "defining moment" for U of I as it works to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on campus and in the community, said Robert Jones, the school's chancellor.
"...
"We're going to be keeping track of how well we're doing going from test results to isolation to contact tracing and quarantine," Smith said. They'll also be looking out for new positive cases, a sign of community spread. The outcome that they're hoping for "is to minimize the infections, get it under control and to protect the health of campus and the community," Smith said.

The school began working to prepare for the fall semester shortly after classes went remote in the spring, said Martin Burke, a chemistry professor at the University of Illinois and chair of the SHIELD committee, the team that is guiding the university's approach to reopening. They realized relatively quickly that in order to bring students back to campus, they would need to test frequently and get results back rapidly, something that wasn't going to be possible with a nasal swab test.

That led to what Burke described as a "Manhattan Project-style effort," at **the university to develop their own test. Ultimately they were able to do so in about six weeks,** he said. Now the school is working to expand access to the test to the rest of the state of Illinois and even to other areas of the country and around the world.

"Testing is not a silver bullet, but it's a very powerful component," Burke said.

In addition to the testing, the school developed an app where students, faculty and staff receive test results and reminders, and a boarding pass-style image indicating a negative COVID test that allow them access to campus buildings. Users can also enable the app to notify them when they've been in close proximity to someone who tested positive for COVID through the use of an anonymized Bluetooth scanning system.

U of I is also taking many of the same steps as other campuses — moving large lecture courses online, moving smaller in-person courses to large rooms to allow for social distancing requiring masks. The school also has "every high expectation ...

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https://apnews.com/f0a14d77bcbaa97fe57e2efc700a333e

Sep 1

Russia's virus cases exceed 1 million, globally 4th highest

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's tally of confirmed coronavirus cases surpassed 1 million on Tuesday as authorities reported 4,729 new cases.

With a total of 1,000,048 reported cases, Russia has the fourth largest caseload in the world after the U.S., Brazil and India. Over 815,000 people have so far recovered, authorities said, and more than 17,000 have died.

Experts say the true toll of the pandemic is much higher than all reported figures, due to limited testing, missed mild cases and concealment of cases by some governments, among other factors.

As of Tuesday, Russia has lifted most lockdown restrictions in the majority of the country's regions.

Last month, Russian authorities announced approval of the first ever COVID-19 vaccine — a move that Western experts met with skepticism and unease as the shots were only tested on a few dozen people. Last week, officials announced starting advanced trials of the vaccine among 40,000 people.

It remains unclear whether vaccination of risk groups — such as doctors and teachers — announced earlier this year will be part of the trials or carried out in parallel.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said last month one of his daughters had already been vaccinated.

LOCATION	CONFIRMED CASES ▼	RECOVERED	DEATHS
United States	6,031,065	2,184,825	183,601
Brazil	3,908,272	3,268,591	121,381
India	3,691,166	2,839,882	65,288
Russia	997,072	813,603	17,250
Peru	647,166	455,457	28,788
South Africa	627,041	540,923	14,149
Colombia	615,094	459,460	19,662
Mexico	599,560	496,222	64,414
Spain	462,858	150,376	29,094
Argentina	417,735	301,195	8,660
Chile	411,726	383,879	11,289
Iran	375,212	323,233	21,571
United Kingdom	338,083	1,682	41,589
France	318,986	86,790	30,640
Saudi Arabia	315,772	290,796	3,897

Table updates hourly. Figures are as reported by governments and health authorities and may include probable positive cases and deaths.

Source: Esri; Johns Hopkins / Graphic Phil Holm & Nicky Forster

AP

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https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/08/4d2e8f836238-breaking-news-japan-to-lift-re-entry-ban-on-foreign-residents-from-sept-1-abe.html

Sep 1

Japan lifts re-entry restrictions on foreign residents

...Under the new policy, around 2.4 million foreigners in Japan with resident status, including permanent residents, business people, students and their families, can now leave Japan and be allowed back in.

Around 29,000 foreigners who have already left Japan to countries and regions designated as areas subject to entry denial after April 3, will also be allowed to return.

Currently, re-entry of foreigners is permitted only to those who had left Japan before April 3, even if they have resident status, except under "special exceptional circumstances," such as the death of a family member.

Returning residents will be required to take a polymerase chain reaction test within 72 hours before departing for Japan and provide the result to authorities upon arrival.

If the test indicates they are infected with the novel coronavirus, they will be denied entry, according to government officials.

If permitted to enter Japan, they will be required to self-isolate for two weeks to monitor their health and to refrain from using public transportation during that period, they said.

... **Japan will continue to deny entry to all foreign nationals in principle who have recently been to any of 146 countries and regions, including the United States, China and all of Europe.**

Thirteen more -- Bhutan, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Ethiopia, Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Nigeria, Malawi, South Sudan, Rwanda and Lesotho -- will be added to the list on Sunday, the government said.

The lifting of restrictions on foreign residents will be welcome but considered long overdue by those who had been unable to travel to their native countries or did so and have been stuck outside Japan.

Many took social media to vent their frustrations, and organizations such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan have issued statements asking that the policy be reviewed.

Regarding the timing of the latest decision, another **Japanese government official said the government is aware of the need to resume cross-border travel, and the lifting of entry restrictions was made possible due to expanded testing capacity at airports, including Narita, Haneda and Kansai airports.**

As for those newly coming to Japan, the government has started talks with 16 economies, including China and South Korea, to gradually ease restrictions for long-term residents such as expatriates and those making short-term business trips.

Japan resumed accepting long-term residents from Thailand and Vietnam in July, while agreeing to start the same easing measures with Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar from September, at the earliest.

The eligible businesspeople will be exempt from a 14-day self-quarantine period after arriving, provided they submit an itinerary of their stay, limit their travel to between where they are staying and the workplace, do not use public transportation and avoid random contact with people....

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https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/09/01/covid-19-news-fauci-labor-day-weekend-safety-iowa-state-football/3447396001/

Sep 1

Updates for today

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said he is wary of a COVID-19 spike as displaced Hurricane Laura victims scatter across the state and first-responders and volunteers flow into the most damaged areas to help.

Edwards' concern comes as the state's case numbers drop below the red line. Louisiana reported its lowest single-day number of new COVID-19 cases – 326 – since June 8 and the White House Coronavirus Task Force reduced the state from red to yellow in new infections.

... **Iowa**: Despite the state being coronavirus hot spot, Iowa State University is planning to have around 25,000 fans at its home opener Sept. 12. White House coronavirus experts warned Iowa leaders Sunday that the state has the country's steepest outbreak, and the state should close bars in 61 counties and test all returning college students.
...
August was the deadliest month of the COVID-19 pandemic in **California** despite the state's progress in reducing infections, hospitalizations and deaths, a Los Angeles Times analysis found. California reported 3,707 deaths connected to COVID-19 in August, up 18% over July. California has experienced more than 700,000 cases, the most in the U.S. However, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi are among numerous states with more infections per capita, according to federal data. California's infection and hospitalization rates have fallen steadily for more than a month, and the average number of daily deaths is also in decline, the Times notes.

[**Nationally**] Dr. Anthony Fauci said **Labor Day weekend will be key in determining whether the U.S. gets a "running start" at containing the coronavirus this fall.** Fauci said Monday that he has a "great deal of faith in the American people" to wash their hands, practice social distancing, wear masks, avoid crowds and congregate outside during the weekend celebrations. He said it's important to avoid a surge in coronavirus cases like those seen after the Memorial Day and July 4th holidays.
...

Hawaii's government is requiring all travelers to fill out its online "Safe Travels" application beginning Tuesday. The forms collect health and contact information to assist in public health monitoring. It's part of a screening process that includes temperature checks and secondary screening for travelers with symptoms or temperatures of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
...
Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp on Monday extended the state's coronavirus restrictions, including a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people unless they can maintain six feet apart, until Sept. 15. The governor also extended Georgia's state of emergency to Oct. 10. "COVID-19 hospitalizations in Georgia are at their lowest since July 6. Cases reported yesterday were at their lowest point since June 22," Kemp said in a statement.

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http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/01/c_139334160.htm

Sep 1

Global coronavirus deaths top 850,000

NEW YORK, Sept. 1 (Xinhua) -- Global COVID-19 deaths surpassed 850,000 on Tuesday, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University.

The global case count reached 25,484,767, with a total of 850,535 deaths worldwide as of 12:28 a.m. (0428 GMT), the CSSE data showed.

The **United States** reported the highest caseload and death toll across the world, with 6,030,587 cases and **183,597 deaths, making up more than 20 percent of the global death toll.**

Brazil recorded 3,908,272 cases and **121,381 deaths**, both the world's second largest numbers.

India followed with 3,691,166 cases and **65,288 deaths**.

Other countries with **over 30,000 fatalities include:**

Mexico

Britain

Italy

France

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/left-behind-because-of-covid-19-a-tiny-dog-travels-10000-miles-to-rejoin-her-owners/ar-BB18D13H?li=BBnb7Kz

Sep 2

Left behind because of Covid-19, a tiny dog travels 10,000 miles to rejoin her owners

All the best dogs find their way home eventually. Sometimes, like **Pipsqueak the wiener dog,** they've **got to embark on a journey of more than 10,000 miles to get there.**

Little Pip was stranded in South Carolina at the height of the pandemic after her owners were forced to abandon their round-the-world sailing trip and fly home to Australia.

With borders closing quickly, Zoe and Guy Eilbeck, and their sons Cam and Max, had less than 48 hours to pack up everything from their 40-foot yacht after docking in Hilton Head Island.

Australia's tough pet import rules meant their loyal dachshund Pip couldn't come with them.

That's OK, they thought. They'd be able to return in no time at all for a tail-wagging reunion before heading back out on the ocean.

So Zoe made a few last-minute phone calls to arrange for Pip to be looked after by a friend, and the family said goodbye for what they hoped would be just six short weeks.

But that's not quite how it worked out.

...

Pipsqueak's journey home

March 27: The Eilbeck family dock their boat at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Zoe Eilbeck drives to North Carolina, where she hands Pip over to her friend Lynn Williams.

April 4: Pip moves into Ellen Steinberg's home in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

July 19: With pet rescuer Melissa Young as her companion, Pip flies to Charlotte, North Carolina, and then on to Los Angeles.

July 21: After a night in a hotel suite, Pip takes a 13-hour flight in cargo from Los Angeles to Auckland, New Zealand.

July 24: Pip flies from Auckland to Melbourne, Australia, where she goes into mandatory quarantine for 10 days.

August 11: Pip flies from Melbourne to Sydney, and is finally reunited with the Eilbecks.

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https://apnews.com/2c20001339073239f8f8d1e57c36794d

Sep 2

Florida and South Carolina announce it will lift ban on nursing home visits

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Tuesday that he will lift the state's ban on visiting nursing homes that has cut off vulnerable seniors from family since mid-March over fears of spreading the new coronavirus.

...

"Part of having a healthy society is understanding that human beings seek affection," DeSantis said. **"Many of the folks understand that they have loved ones who are in the last stage of their life. They're not demanding a medical miracle. They're not having unrealistic expectations. They just would like to be able to say goodbye or to hug somebody."**

...

The governor's order is expected to allow family members to visit their loved ones **no more than two at a time, wearing protective gear including masks. Facilities would need to go 14 days without any new cases of COVID-19 among staff or residents to allow the visits. Children under the age of 18 are not yet allowed.**

The task force appointed by the governor recommended a lengthy set of rules last week, giving wide leeway for wary nursing homes on how to implement them. Critics were quick to express concern over what will likely be a patchwork approach, varying greatly among facilities statewide.

South Carolina took a similar step Tuesday, with Gov. Henry McMaster announcing visitations at nursing homes could resume after nearly six months, but **only outdoors and with no hugs or kisses.**

... Task force member Mary Daniel pleaded on behalf of hugs for residents, who she said are dying from loneliness. Daniel took a part-time job as a dishwasher just to be allowed to visit her husband, who has Alzheimer's.

"I'm turning in my two weeks' notice today. I'm not going to be a dishwasher anymore. I'm going back to being just a wife," Daniel said Tuesday. She represents the group Caregivers for Compromise Because Isolation Kills Too.

All parties agreed on the terrible toll isolation has taken on residents, who have now gone almost six months without seeing loved ones.

...

The head of Florida Health Care Association, which represent 82% of the nursing homes in Florida, said many facilities told him they are very wary about allowing visitors, while others are eager to do so.

...

Mayhew said Tuesday that she felt confident visitors would adhere to the rules knowing the stakes were high.

"Human touch is absolutely critical," said Mayhew, whose 87-year-old mother has been living with her for several months during the pandemic. "I understood how much my mother craved the interaction. No one should be going this long without a hug."

Hospitalizations and new confirmed cases in Florida's summer outbreak of COVID-19 have trended downward...

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https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/thailand-hits-100-days-local-virus-transmissions-72768854

Sep 2

Thailand hits 100 days with no local virus transmissions

BANGKOK -- Thailand's prime minister on Wednesday congratulated his countrymen on the nation having achieved 100 days without a confirmed locally transmitted case of the coronavirus, even as security along the border with Myanmar is being stepped up as a measure against the disease.

Health officials did not highlight the milepost, but Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha described it as a "good accomplishment" toward making the country safe. He used the occasion to urge the government and people to work together to bring the country out of the COVID-19 crisis.

"If we don't help each other, none of us can move forward and the country can't move forward, and the people will suffer more than they already have," he said.

Thailand has sustained relatively light health damage from the pandemic, even though in January it was the first country outside China to confirm a case. But its economy has been devastated by the absence of foreign tourists, who are banned from entry, and a drop in exports.

Thai health authorities reported eight new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, all from abroad, bringing the country's total to 3,425, including 58 deaths.

The country's last locally transmitted case was confirmed on May 24 and announced on May 25. According to the Department of Disease Control, it involved a 56-year-old Thai woman who had end-stage kidney disease, diabetes and hypertension as underlying conditions. She was admitted to the hospital with difficulty breathing and tested positive for the coronavirus, dying the same day as the test results. Only one more person has been listed as dying from the disease since then.

...

Thailand has gradually eased most of the virus-fighting restrictions it imposed starting in March, with the significant exception of continuing to bar most foreign visitors. The government has been wary of reopening the country, scuttling or postponing several plans. However, **there is the possibility that a pilot project allowing a small number of foreign tourists into the southern tourist island of Phuket under strict conditions may soon be implemented.**

Most recently, Thai authorities have been alarmed by surges in cases in neighboring Myanmar.

Thai officials announced this week that they were temporarily closing several checkpoints on the border with Myanmar in the north and west that have been open mostly for trade. Security was ordered stepped up as well against possible illegal entry across the river that marks much of the border. Controls were also ordered tightened at Thai camps near the border that house thousands of refugees from Myanmar.

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/09/02/sturgis-rally-death-coronavirus/

Sep 3

First COVID-19 death linked to Sturgis Motorcycle rally reported in Minnesota

... **A Minnesota biker who attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally has died of covid-19 — the first fatality from the virus traced to the 10-day event that drew more than 400,000 to South Dakota.**

The man was in his 60s, had underlying conditions and was hospitalized in intensive care after returning from the rally, said Kris Ehresmann, infectious-disease director at the Minnesota Department of Health. The case is among at least 260 cases in 11 states tied directly to the event, according to a survey of health departments by The Washington Post.

Epidemiologists believe that figure is a significant undercount, due to the resistance of some rallygoers to testing and the limited contact tracing in some states. As a result, the true scope of infections stemming from the event that ran from Aug. 7 to Aug. 16 is unlikely to ever be known. Public health officials had long expressed concern over the decision to move forward with the annual event, believed to be the largest held anywhere in the U.S. since the pandemic shelved most large-scale gatherings.

Now, just over two weeks after the conclusion of the rally, the Midwest and the Dakotas in particular are seeing a spike in coronavirus cases even as infections decline or plateau in the rest of the country. Besides the fallout from Sturgis, Ehresmann and other health officials attribute much of the increase in the Midwest to people not following public health guidelines, not wearing masks and attending social gatherings such as weddings and funerals.

But Sturgis was unique in drawing people from across the nation to one small town, where they crowded into bars, restaurants, tattoo shops and other businesses, many without masks. An analysis of anonymized cellphone data, conducted by a firm called Camber Systems, found that 61 percent of all U.S. counties had been visited by a rallygoer.

Those participants then returned home “perhaps to locations that weren’t seeing as much transmission to begin with,” Ehresmann said. “You have the potential to amplify...

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https://apnews.com/71e616bb423c6d3e97fbaa7a97bca7e7

Sep 3

CDC tells states: Be ready to distribute vaccines on Nov. 1

...In a letter to governors dated Aug. 27, Robert Redfield, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said states "in the near future" will receive permit applications from McKesson Corp., which has contracted with CDC to distribute vaccines to places including state and local health departments and hospitals.

"**CDC urgently requests your assistance in expediting applications for these distribution facilities and, if necessary, asks that you consider waiving requirements that would prevent these facilities from becoming fully operational by November 1, 2020,"** Redfield wrote.

He wrote that any waivers will not compromise the safety or effectiveness of the vaccine. The Associated Press obtained the letter, which was first reported by McClatchy.

The CDC also sent three planning documents to some health departments that included possible timelines for when vaccines would be available. The documents are to be used to develop plans for early vaccination when the supply might be constrained, according to one of the documents, which outlined a scenario in which a vaccine could be available as soon as the end of October.

"The COVID-19 vaccine landscape is evolving and uncertain, and these scenarios may evolve as more information is available," the document reads.

Another of the documents says that limited COVID-19 vaccine doses may be available by early November and that supply will increase substantially in 2021.

It also states that initially available vaccines will either be approved by the Food and Drug Administration or authorized by the agency under its emergency powers.
The documents encourage health officials to work out now which groups to prioritize for a vaccine, identify providers who will administer vaccine, and take other steps to prepare. The planning documents were first reported by The New York Times.

Redfield told Yahoo Finance that officials were preparing "for what I anticipate will be reality, is that there'll be one or more vaccines available for us in November, December."

James S. Blumenstock, a senior vice president at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, said the CDC was offering "an aggressive but necessary timetable" and that public health agencies were mobilizing to prepare detailed plans.

Several public health experts pointed out that final stage trials of experimental vaccines are still recruiting, and are at best halfway through that process. The vaccines are two doses, and each is given a month apart. The experts told the AP they did not understand how there could be adequate data on whether the vaccines work and are safe before Nov. 1.

"Being ready is reasonable. Cutting short phase 3 trials before you get the information you need isn't," said Dr. Paul Offit, a Children's Hospital of Philadelphia immunization expert who sits on the FDA's vaccine advisory committee.

Peter Hotez, dean of Baylor University's tropical medicine school, said he was "very concerned" about whether the FDA would use an emergency use authorization to approve a vaccine before knowing whether it works and is safe.

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https://www.vox.com/2020/9/2/21418812/covid-19-coronavirus-us-cases-midwest-surge

Sep 3

4 Midwestern states are seeing COVID-19 spikes

... **"The Midwest is taking off,"** William Hanage, a Harvard epidemiologist, told me over email. "It's not going to skyrocket, but there is a clear signal there and it is close to making up for the gains across the Sun Belt."

This is yet another warning against focusing too much on national trends. There were nearly 70,000 new cases every day in late July; today, the number of daily new cases is closer to 40,000.

Most of that improvement can be explained by falling case numbers in Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas, the summer's hottest hot spots. But it's being partially offset by accelerating spread in the Midwest, concentrated primarily in four states: Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

South Dakota ... daily new cases is up 192 percent over the last two weeks.. Daily new cases per million people is 354, **the highest rate of new infections in the country.**
...
Those numbers look small, but remember, South Dakota is a state of fewer than 900,000 people. ...

It's hard to be sure what's behind this spike in cases. South Dakota still doesn't have a mask mandate, and Gov. Kristi Noem has said she won't issue one, nor will she impose a stay-at-home order. The state has not placed meaningful restrictions on businesses or other public activities, according to Boston University's state policy database.
There was also the Sturgis motorcycle rally last month, ...

North Dakota ... daily new cases is up 77 percent over the last two weeks ... Daily new cases per million people is 332, **the second-highest rate of new infections in the country** ...
Like South Dakota, North Dakota does not and has never had a mask mandate. The state did close some businesses in March, when the outbreak was largely contained to the New York City area, but they began reopening in May and no new restrictions have been put into place.

Iowa ... daily new cases is up 90 percent over the last two weeks
Daily new cases per million people is 300, **the fourth-highest rate of new infections in the country**
...
Gov. Kim Reynolds is declining to impose any new mitigation measures. Iowa is another one of the 16 states without a mask mandate. Most business restrictions were lifted in May. And now Iowa State says it will allow 25,000 people to attend its season-opening football game on September 12.

Asked about having such a large crowd amid a worsening outbreak, Reynolds told reporters: "If you don't feel safe, don't go."

Kansas ... daily new cases is up 26 percent over the last two weeks. Daily new cases per million people is 206, **the eighth-highest rate of new infections in the country** ...

The state has been more aggressive about trying to contain the virus than some of its neighbors. Gov. Laura Kelly imposed a mask mandate on July 1 and she waited until the end of June to allow bars to reopen. Still, the metrics in the state suggest the virus has started spreading in the community again....

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-03/fauci-warns-seven-midwest-states-to-be-on-alert-over-labor-day?utm_campaign=pol&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews

Sep 4

Fauci warns seven midwest states to be on alert over Labor Day

Anthony Fauci, the U.S.'s top infectious disease expert, said that **seven states that have seen upticks in Covid-19 cases should be particularly vigilant over the Labor Day holiday**, and warned that if Americans are "careless" there could be another jump in cases this fall.

"There are several states that are at risk for surging, namely North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Arkansas, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois," Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in an interview this week. **"Those states are starting to see an increase in the percent positive of their testing; that is generally predictive that there's going to be a problem."**

Memorial Day marked a turning point for many newly reopened states, which saw previously moderate Covid-19 outbreaks start to spread. July 4th came just a few weeks before the worst of the U.S. spike, with new cases regularly topping 60,000 later that month. While new infections are down significantly, the daily death toll is still hovering near 1,000, based on a seven-day average.

That has many worried about how the country will fare over the long Labor Day weekend, as the U.S. outbreak tops 6 million confirmed cases and 185,000 deaths.

Fauci joined Vice President Mike Pence on a call with governors this week to urge them to tell their residents to follow guidance on masks, social distancing and other measures to lower the risks of contagion to ensure there aren't repeats of the surges following the Memorial Day and July 4th weekends.

"If we're careless about it, then we could wind up with a surge following Labor Day," Fauci said. "It really depends on how we behave as a country."

There's particular concern since the holiday comes as more Americans are going back to schools, colleges and work, and commercial travel expands.

"There is a lot of potential to see a huge explosion of infections in September and October," said Eleanor Murray, an assistant professor of epidemiology at Boston University School of Public Health who has called for more nuanced social-distancing guidelines. "We seem to go back and forth between people actually realizing that this is a thing that exists and taking precautions and then deciding it's all over."

While infections are tapering in recent hot spots including Arizona, Texas and Florida, a major challenge has been...

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https://apnews.com/ff2ffb798a36fd0ad8a3e89374c58cd4

Sep 4

India adds another 83K, nears 2nd most in world

The number of people confirmed to be infected with the coronavirus in India rose by another 80,000 and is near Brazil's total, the second-highest in the world.

The 83,341 cases added in the past 24 hours pushed India's total past 3.9 million, according to the Health Ministry. Brazil has confirmed more than 4 million infections while the U.S. has more 6.1 million people infected, according to Johns Hopkins University.

India's Health Ministry on Friday also reported **1,096 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 68,472.**

India's case fatality rate of 1.75% is well below the global average of 3.3%, the ministry said. Experts have questioned whether some Indian states have undercounted deaths.

India added nearly 2 million coronavirus cases in August alone. Pune, Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai are its worst-hit cities, but new hot spots continue to feed surges in cases in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states.

In a country of 1.4 billion people, only those places most affected by the virus remain under lockdown. People are crowding markets and other public spaces with potential safety measures like masks and social distancing largely unenforced.

Justifying lifting of lockdown restrictions while infections are surging, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the testing capacity has been ramped up and safety procedures put in place.

"While lives are important, livelihoods are equally important," Bhushan said.

India's economy contracted by 23.9% in the April-June quarter, its worst performance in at least 24 years.

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https://nypost.com/2020/09/05/wall-street-could-empty-out-post-covid-19-pandemic/

Sep 5

Wall Street could empty out post-COVID-19 pandemic

Wall Street could soon become a home office and a computer.

The big brokerage firms and banks that are headquartered in New York City aren't going to admit this publicly, at least not yet. With the COVID pandemic waning here in the Big Apple, banks have announced that their return-to-work plans will begin roughly after Labor Day, with about half their employees returning to the city by the end of the year, and the rest sometime in possibly early 2021.

Privately, however, bank executives are much more tentative about when they expect to operate at full force, and it's not just worries about a second wave of COVID that's causing this reassessment.

Like most of Corporate America, the banks did just fine with most of its employees working from home during the pandemic. And banks are brutally efficient at cutting costs — which is why every major bank, whether they admit it or not, is rethinking how many of its people really need to work from an office, and how much rent they have to pay.

The financial sector (banks, securities firms, real estate and insurance) employs around 500,000 people according to the New York State Comptroller's office, and nearly all the big banks are headquartered in Manhattan. Even a modest shift in employment out of the city could have severe economic implications on top of the ones the city faces with rich people (that is, the people who pay most of the taxes) leaving in droves.

To be fair, Wall Street hasn't really been Wall Street for a long time; most of the big firms moved from their lower Manhattan digs long ago. They've found better real estate in Midtown, or, in the case of Goldman Sachs, a posh new headquarters along the Hudson River just north of Battery Park.

Yes there's still the New York Stock Exchange, the iconic facade on the corner of Wall and Broad. But inside the beautiful edifice, only a handful of traders remain; most of its stock sales are executed electronically on servers located in New Jersey. The floor of the Big Board has been largely transformed (at least before social distancing) into a studio for financial news.

Technology played a role in this transition — there was no...

https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/06/health/us-coronavirus-sunday/index.html

Sep 6

The Labor Day gatherings health experts warned against during the coronavirus pandemic are popping up all over the US

Labor Day weekend celebrations are in full swing -- and many include the large crowds health experts feared.

Covid-19 doesn't have to stop Labor Day celebrations, health experts said this week. But with more than 6.2 million Americans infected with the virus and 188,538 killed by it, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, the festivities should look a lot different this year. To avoid outbreaks, experts including Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said people should continue to distance, wear masks and avoid groups as they enjoy the weekend.

"We don't want to see a repeat of the surges that we have seen following other holiday weekends," Fauci said, referring to the outbreaks that followed Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. "We don't want to see a surge under any circumstances, but particularly as we go on the other side of Labor Day and enter into the fall."

Still, many gathered in large groups Saturday. Throngs of people are expected at Tybee Island beaches in Georgia over the weekend, CNN affiliate WTOC reported. And images from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, show umbrellas lined up side by side down the beach.

In Pennsylvania, the amusement park Kennywood is expected to have its busiest weekend of the season, CNN affiliate KDKA reported.
And in Atlanta, many weekend Labor Day parties are on the schedule including "The Biggest Labor Day Weekend Party in the City" hosted by rapper Gucci Mane and a "Sunday Funday" rooftop party advertised with an image of people standing close together, some without masks.

Fauci pleaded with Americans before the weekend to keep gatherings small and outside and said he will be spending the weekend on a hike with his spouse.

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/colleges-coronavirus-students.html#after-top

Sep 6

A new front in America's pandemic: College Towns

The coronavirus is spiking around campuses from Texas to Iowa to North Carolina as students return.

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Last month, facing a budget shortfall of at least $75 million because of the pandemic, the University of Iowa welcomed thousands of students back to its campus — and into the surrounding community.

Iowa City braced, cautious optimism mixing with rising panic. The university had taken precautions, and only about a quarter of classes would be delivered in person. But each fresh face in town could also carry the virus, and more than 26,000 area residents were university employees.

“Covid has a way of coming in,” said Bruce Teague, the city's mayor, “even when you're doing all the right things.”

Within days, students were complaining that they couldn't get coronavirus tests or were bumping into people who were supposed to be in isolation. Undergraduates were jamming sidewalks and downtown bars, masks hanging below their chins, never mind the city's mask mandate.

Now, Iowa City is a full-blown pandemic hot spot — one of about 100 college communities around the country where infections have spiked in recent weeks as students have returned for the fall semester. Though the rate of infection has bent downward in the Northeast, where the virus first peaked in the U.S., it continues to remain high across many states in the Midwest and South — and evidence suggests that students returning to big campuses are a major factor.

In a New York Times review of 203 counties in the country where students comprise at least 10 percent of the population, about half experienced their worst weeks of the pandemic since August 1. In about half of those, figures showed the number of new infections is peaking right now.

Despite the surge in cases, there has been no uptick in deaths in college communities, data shows. This suggests that most of the infections are stemming from campuses, since young people who contract the virus are far less likely to die than older people. However, leaders fear that young people who are infected will contribute to a spread of the virus throughout the community.

The surge in infections reported by county health departments comes as many college administrations are also disclosing clusters on their campuses...

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https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/09/07/910401174/india-moves-into-2nd-place-for-covid-19-cases

Sep 7

India moves into 2nd Place for COVID-19 Cases

India's recorded coronavirus case total has surpassed that of Brazil, making India the **second worst-affected country in the world after the United States.**

India overtook Brazil on Monday after registering 90,802 fresh cases — the highest single-day increase any country has recorded so far during the pandemic. India's total cases are now more than 4.2 million.

The caseload is lower than that of the U.S. by about 2 million but India is where the virus is spreading at the fastest pace. For about a month, India has been recording the largest number of new cases of any country.

About 1,000 people are dying every day in India after testing positive for the coronavirus. The country's total COVID-19 death toll is 71,642 — the third highest in the world after the U.S. and Brazil. India's coronavirus mortality rate of 1.7% is among the lowest of the worst-hit countries. But only about one in five deaths in India is medically certified so COVID-19 deaths could be substantially under-counted.

On Monday, as India reached the milestone of having the second-most cases in the world, commuters in the capital New Delhi rode the subway for the first time in over 5 months as the system reopened.

The trains have social distancing stickers on alternate seats and only those who don't show any symptoms of COVID-19 are allowed to travel. Face masks are mandatory and passengers are thermally screened.

Several other cities have also resumed metro train service, including the tech hub Bengaluru in southern India. Bars reopened there last week. Later this month, public gatherings of up to 100 people will also be permitted across the country, with social distancing rules.

India continues to reopen public places to revive the economy, despite the sharp increase in cases. Between April and June, when India was under a strict coronavirus lockdown, its GDP shrank by 23.9% compared to the same period last year. It is the biggest economic contraction since India started keeping records in 1996.

In late March, when India had only about 500 confirmed cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered all 1.3 billion Indians to stay home. But millions lost their jobs and poor day laborers were hit particularly hard, prompting the government to lift the lockdown in June. The virus has been surging ever since and has now reached India's rural villages where medical facilities are scarce.

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https://apnews.com/21cd5dc6c8be6e06eab1e004a4eb2a59

Sep 8

Alabama county delays capital trials, citing pandemic

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — A north Alabama county is delaying all capital murder trials **because the courthouse doesn't have enough room for would-be jurors to stay away from each other during the pandemic.**

Attorneys typically call a larger-than-normal number of potential jurors for capital cases, and the presiding judge in Madison County, Ruth Ann Hall, told WHNT-TV the courthouse in Huntsville doesn't have enough space to allow for proper social distancing in those instances.

So **capital cases will be on hold until 2021**, delaying justice for both crime victims and defendants.

"I indicated to the judges that we simply could not try any capital murder cases this year, because you know, we have one courtroom we can get 30 people in for voir dire and jury selection. For capital murder you need three to four times that, minimum," said Hall.

At least three capital murder cases were set to be tried this year, said District Attorney Rob Broussard. The first case on the calendar involved Warren Hardy, who is charged in the death of Kathleen Lundy, 72, of Huntsville in August 2016.

Trials in other kinds of cases are scheduled to resume next month in Madison County.

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https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-08/astrazeneca-shares-fall-on-report-of-vaccine-trial-setback?utm_campaign=pol&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews

Sep 9

AstraZeneca vaccine tests face delay after patient gets ill

... The pause stemmed from a standard review of the company's vaccine trials after **one person developed an unexplained illness**, AstraZeneca said in a statement. The move was intended to give researchers time to examine safety data while maintaining the integrity of the trials, the company said. The drugmaker's shares fell as much as 3% in London Wednesday morning. Later, they pared the decline to 1.1% as investors took it in stride as a fairly common event during testing.

The vaccine, which AstraZeneca is developing with researchers from the University of Oxford, **has been viewed as one of the leading candidates.** The partners are aiming to enroll as many as 50,000 participants for **late-stage trials that are underway in the U.K., the U.S., Brazil and South Africa, with others planned for Japan and Russia.**
...
A volunteer in the U.K. trials was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, an inflammation of the spinal cord generally caused by infections, the New York Times said, citing a person close to the situation that it didn't name.

A Data Safety Monitoring Board is a panel of outside experts that watches for potential harm from experimental drugs and vaccines during clinical trials. **The bar to pause a vaccine trial is generally low since participants are healthy and may never need the immunization they have volunteered to receive.**

The members of the monitoring board have unparalleled insight into clinical studies. Unlike doctors and researchers, they are told whether those participating received the vaccine or a placebo, and they are given regular updates on how each group is faring.

Oxford University said the pause was triggered by its standard review process.

"This is a routine action which has to happen whenever there is a potentially unexplained illness in one of the studies, while it is investigated, ensuring we maintain the integrity of the trials," the university said in an emailed statement. **"In large trials, illnesses will happen by chance but must be independently reviewed to check this carefully."**
...
The setback comes as a group of international scientists raised questions over a fast-moving vaccine from Russia, saying some results of a study appeared improbable. The two incidents highlight the difficulty in getting an effective vaccine to the public quickly as the Covid-19 pandemic spreads unabated.

Politics have also complicated the pursuit of a vaccine. Amid concerns about the Trump administration politicizing the rollout of a vaccine before the elections, frontrunners in the race for a Covid-19 vaccine pledged to avoid shortcuts on science as they face pressure to rush a shot to market.

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Tuesday that it's "unlikely" a Covid-19 vaccine will be available to the public by Nov. 3.

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https://apnews.com/3d72b957732d19cccff30c9f2a2be97d

Sep 9

Wall Street's 3-day skid a reality check for runaway market

Wall Street's summer-long party fueled by investors' appetite for some of the world's best-known technology companies has come to an abrupt, if not entirely unexpected, halt.

The sharp sell-off that began last Thursday has wiped out nearly 7.1% from the S&P 500 as of Tuesday, its first three-day skid in nearly three months.

The Nasdaq composite, home to Apple, Amazon, Zoom, Tesla and many other tech stocks that led the market's remarkable five-month comeback from its lows in March, **has lost more than 10% after setting an all-time high just four days ago — a decline known in the market as a correction.**

Call the last three trading sessions a reality check after what many analysts say was an overdone push by traders into technology companies, especially in August.

"The bottom line is that this correction was long overdue and likely has more downside over the next few weeks (and) months as these positions are cleared out," Morgan Stanley analysts wrote in a research note Tuesday, noting technology stocks had a "parabolic move" last month. Tech stocks jumped 11.8% in August, the sector's best month since a 13.7% surge in April.

Investors' craving for technology companies was fueled by low interest rates, customers stuck at home while the pandemic raged, and efforts by the U.S. government to support out-of-work Americans. An improving outlook for corporate profits has also kept traders in a buying mood.

Wall Street also got a big boost from the Federal Reserve, which has taken unprecedented actions to keep markets running smoothly and also encourage borrowing by keeping interest rates extremely low. Meanwhile, a surge in trading in options contracts, which give investors the right to buy or sell hundreds of thousands of shares of stock at a time, also turbocharged the gains.

Between March 23 and Sept. 2, the Nasdaq jumped 75% while outpacing the S&P 500′s 60% gain and the Dow industrials' 56.5% rally during the stock market's rebound from its pandemic lows. During the run Apple became the first $2 trillion U.S. company and Zoom itself became worth more than General Motors and Ford Motor Co. combined.

Even with the recent pullback, tech stocks are still leading the other 10 sectors in the S&P 500 with a gain of just under 23% so far this year.

While the reasons that made tech stocks attractive during the pandemic haven't changed, market watchers have been increasingly raising concerns that the market's gains were too concentrated in technology companies, driving their valuation to levels that started to sound frothy even factoring in the most optimistic outlooks for company earnings growth next year.

For example, the ratio of the stock price compared to the estimate for earnings over the next 12 months for Apple rose to around 35 last week — an all-time high and well above where the ratio was before the pandemic hit the U.S. economy.

"These stocks just got bought up to the point where even the most optimistic of forward (earnings) estimates won't be enough to justify these valuations," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

The timing of the sell-off coincided with fresh concerns that interest rates could move higher after the Fed signaled that it may allow inflation to heat up. That, plus growing unease over the election outcome, may have given investors a green light to pocket some of their recent gains.

"Those are all reasons for something of a pause here," said Willie Delwiche, investment strategist at Baird. "It's a case that we'd had so much of a run, everyone was on one side of the ship. It didn't ...

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-global-casualties/global-coronavirus-deaths-hit-900000-as-cases-surge-in-india-idUSKBN2603E9

Sep 9

Global coronavirus deaths hit 900,000 as cases surge in India

...**The United States** remains the world's worst-affected country, with deaths exceeding 190,000 and cases exceeding 6.3 million. Brazil is in second place with more than 127,000 deaths followed by India with nearly 74,000 dead.

...

India's fatality rate is around 1%, while Brazil and the United States have mortality rates of around 3%, in line with the world average.

While both deaths and cases in the United States are down from a July peak, cases are rising in about 40% of the country, exacerbated in part by a return of students to college towns.

As cases rebound in parts of Europe, countries have recently seen single-day records in new cases similar to those seen during the spring, signaling a second wave is underway.

The s**harp rise of almost 3,000 new cases in the UK over the weekend was the highest jump since May**, prompting a ban on gatherings of more than six people as prime minister Boris Johnson tries to control the spike.

The UK, which has the fifth-highest death toll of 41,594, has a 14-day quarantine for returners from European holiday destinations such as some Greek islands, France, Croatia and Spain which are experiencing similar spikes.

Spain was the first country in western Europe to record more than half a million cases on Monday and now has 552,000 total infections.

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-kids-half-million-test-positive-united-states/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a

Sep 10

Children represent 9.8% of all COVID-19 cases in the U.S.

... New data out this week shows that **more than 500,000 children in the U.S. have tested positive for the coronavirus since the pandemic began**, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The group said **children represented 9.8% of all COVID-19 cases in the U.S., where more than 6.3 million total cases have been reported**, per a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

The AAP reported there were 70,630 new child cases, a **16% increase over two weeks, between August 20 and September 3,** which brings the national total to 513,415. Puerto Rico was among six states and territories that showed an increase in child cases.

The AAP and the Children's Hospital Association compiled the data of children of varying ages as reported by 49 state health departments, New York City, Puerto Rico and Guam. Texas was excluded from the analysis, the AAP noted.

The report said the **cumulative death toll in the U.S. for children due to the coronavirus is 103.** In a subset of data that was analyzed from 42 states and New York City, children were 0-0.3% of all COVID-19 deaths, and 18 states reported zero child deaths.

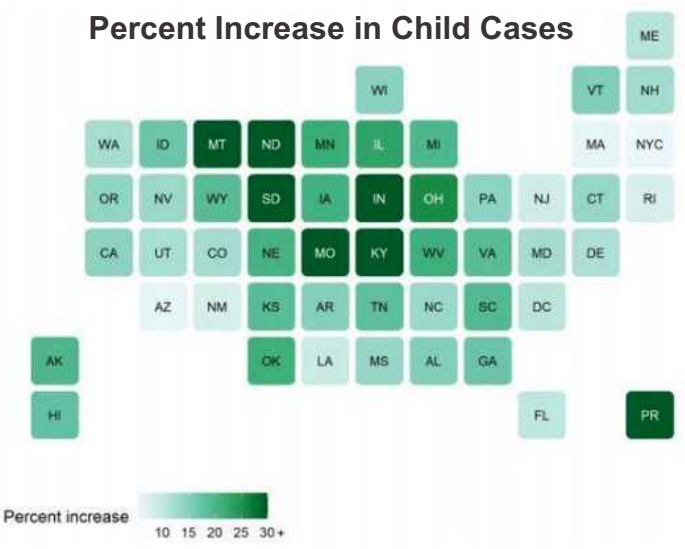
"At this time, it appears that severe illness due to COVID-19 is rare among children," the AAP said. But health experts have said that kids can spread COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the Centers for Disease Control has issued new data about a deadly and mysterious pediatric illness with apparent links to the coronavirus. Since mid-May, the CDC has been following an outbreak of **Multisystem Inflammatory Illness in Children (MIS-C)**, which is also or sometimes referred to as PMIS.

The CDC describes it as **"a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19" that sometimes presents after a COVID illness** or after contact with someone with COVID-19. Instead of attacking the lungs like the new coronavirus disease does in adults, this syndrome, while seemingly very rare, can trigger serious, even deadly cardiac complications in kids.

As of September 3, the CDC has collected reports of 792 confirmed cases of MIS-C and 16 deaths across 42 states, New York City and Washington, D.C. Other cases are under investigation.

The CDC's data suggests that **"most cases are in children between the ages of 1 and 14 years, with an average age of 8 years."** They also note that "more than 70% of reported cases have occurred in children who are Hispanic/Latino (276 cases) or Non-Hispanic Black (230



Data from the American Academy of Pediatrics show the percent increase in child cases of COVID-19 between August 20 and September 3, 2020. The data was derived from 49 states, New York City, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. (Texas was excluded from the count.)

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https://apnews.com/f958bc9798f49b9baa95abfd620ed9fb

Sep 11

Virus spiking in eastern Europe

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — The number of new confirmed coronavirus cases spiked Friday in parts of eastern Europe, with **Hungary and the Czech Republic registering all-time daily highs.**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said his government was drafting a “war plan” to defend against the second wave of the pandemic. The plan’s aim was “not for everyone to stay at home and bring the country to a halt ... but to defend Hungary’s functionality,” Orban said.
...
Wearing masks or other face coverings is mandatory on public transportation, in stores and in many public institutions. In Budapest, Hungary’s capital city, people not wearing a mask on public transit or wearing one can be fined 8,000 forints ($26.50).

While Hungary closed its borders to foreigners on Sept. 1, it has since announced several exemptions, including for people arriving from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the three other members of Europe’s Visegrad Group, or V4.
..
Hungary reported 718 virus cases on Friday, 142 more than the country’s previous 24-hour record. The Czech Republic reported 1,382 cases, which was over 200 more than its previous daily high and led to the return of face masks being mandatory in enclosed public spaces.

Poland also registered an increase in new confirmed cases, with 594 reported Friday. While that was well below the record 903 cases the country recorded Aug. 21, it was higher than the 400-500 new cases of the previous days.

One possible reason for Poland’s overall decline in reported cases since last month is that the government has implemented a new strategy which focuses primarily on testing symptomatic patients. People quarantined after contact with an infected person, however, will no longer need to be tested.

Like Hungary, Portugal has been put back on Britain’s quarantine list, meaning that starting Saturday people traveling from the southern European country’s mainland to Britain must remain quarantined for 14 days after their arrival.

The Portuguese president criticized the rule, saying it punished his country’s tourism-dependent regions.

“We have a certain feeling of unfairness because we don’t close our doors to entries,” Portuguese public broadcaster RTP reported President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa saying late Thursday. “There are other countries that have much more difficult and complicated situations.”

In Spain, the top coronavirus expert saw the country’s rate of new infections easing and “possibly” reaching a plateau after weeks of sharp increases that brought restrictions across the country.

On Friday, Spain’s Health Ministry reported 4,137 new infections in 24 hours, taking the total tally in the pandemic to over 550,000, the highest in Europe. The country’s official death toll reached 26,699 on Thursday.

“In recent days, there is a slowdown in this increase and we are possibly seeing a stabilization,” Dr. Fernando Simón, who heads Spain’s health emergency coordination center, said. “We are starting to ease the rhythm (of the increase).”

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https://apnews.com/d99c49fbd77540fac433cb7c644c6974

Sep 12

Antarctica is still free of COVID-19. Can it stay that way?

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — At this very moment a vast world exists that's free of the coronavirus, where people can mingle without masks and watch the pandemic unfold from thousands of miles away.

That world is **Antarctica, the only continent without COVID-19.** Now, as nearly 1,000 scientists and others who wintered over on the ice are seeing the sun for the first time in weeks or months, a global effort wants to make sure incoming colleagues don't bring the virus with them.

From the U.K.'s Rothera Research Station off the Antarctic peninsula that curls toward the tip of South America, field guide Rob Taylor described what it's like in "our safe little bubble."

In pre-coronavirus days, long-term isolation, self-reliance and psychological strain were the norm for Antarctic teams while the rest of the world saw their life as fascinatingly extreme.

How times have changed.

"In general, the freedoms afforded to us are more extensive than those in the U.K. at the height of lockdown," said Taylor, who arrived in October and has missed the pandemic entirely. "We can ski, socialize normally, run, use the gym, all within reason."

Like teams across Antarctica, including at the South Pole, Taylor and his 26 colleagues must be proficient in all sorts of tasks in a remote, communal environment with little room for error. They take turns cooking, make weather observations and "do a lot of sewing," he said.

Good internet connections mean they've watched closely as the pandemic circled the rest of the planet. Until this year, conversations with incoming colleagues focused on preparing the newcomers. Now the advice goes both ways.

"I'm sure there's a lot they can tell us that will help us adapt to the new way of things," Taylor said. **"We haven't had any practice at social distancing yet!"**

At New Zealand's Scott Base, rounds of mini-golf and a filmmaking competition with other Antarctic bases have been highlights of the Southern Hemisphere's winter, which ended for the Scott team when they spotted the sun last Friday. It had been away since April.

"I think there's a little bit of dissociation," Rory O'Connor, a doctor and the team's winter leader, said of watching the pandemic from afar. "You acknowledge it cerebrally, but I don't think we have fully factored in the emotional turmoil it must be causing."

His family in the U.K. still wouldn't trade places with him. "They can't understand why I came down here," he joked. "Months of darkness. Stuck inside with a small group of people. Where's the joy in that?"

O'Connor said they will be able to test for the virus once colleagues start arriving as soon as Monday, weeks late because a huge storm dumped 20-feet (6-meter) snowdrifts. Any virus case will spark a "red response level," he said, with activities stripped down to providing heating, water, power and food.

While COVID-19 has rattled some diplomatic ties, the 30 countries that make up the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs teamed up early to keep the virus out. Officials cite unique teamwork among the United States, China, Russia and others that elsewhere might engage in diplomatic sniping.

As a frightened world was locking down in March, the Antarctic programs agreed the pandemic could become a major disaster. With the world's strongest winds and coldest temperatures, **the continent roughly the size of the United States and Mexico** is already dangerous for workers at 40 year-round bases.

"A highly infectious novel virus with significant mortality and morbidity in the extreme and austere environment of Antarctica ...

https://abcnews.go.com/US/michigan-state-students-asked-quarantine-due-exponential-growth/story?id=72975851

Sep 13

All Michigan State students asked to quarantine

All local Michigan State University students have been asked to **self-quarantine immediately for the next two weeks to contain the "exponential growth" of COVID-19 cases,** county health officials sad.

At least 342 people affiliated with the East Lansing school have tested positive for the coronavirus since Aug. 24, according to the Ingham County Health Department. In the three weeks prior, there were only 23 such cases, officials said. **Cases started to rise once thousands of students returned to the area for the fall semester**, officials said.

At least a third of the people who tested positive had recently attended parties or social gatherings -- and at least a third of those were associated with a fraternity or sorority, the health department said.

"This is an urgent situation," Ingham County Health Officer Linda S. Vail said in a statement issued Saturday. "The exponential growth of COVID-19 cases must stop. I am concerned about the health and safety of the MSU community, and importantly, I am seriously concerned that unchecked transmission locally will affect the health and safety of all Ingham County residents."

"If we do not slow the spread immediately, we will be dealing with the consequences across the county for months to come," she added.

Until 11:59 p.m. on Sept. 26, **students are advised to only attend in-person classes, labs and athletic training. They can also leave for work and for food, medicine, medical care or other necessary supplies that aren't available via delivery.**

The recommendation is not an emergency order, though the health department warned that "more stringent and mandatory restrictions will be imposed if students do not comply and break the transmission cycle."

The university stood behind the recommendation. In the statement, Michigan State physician David Weismantel said the quarantine "is another tool" to help them prevent the spread of the virus.

East Lansing Mayor Aaron Stephens also voiced support for the health department's recommendation. "While we know many students are doing the right thing, we are still seeing far too many social gatherings in the off-campus community, where individuals are in close contact without face coverings," he said in the statement.

Michigan State has limited in-person classes for the fall and has restricted the number of students living on campus. According to the Lansing State Journal, there are about 1,200 students living in on-campus apartments and under 2,000 in dorms. An indeterminate number of students live off campus in the area. The school has nearly 50,000 total students.

In July, all members of the university's football team had to quarantine or isolate after two members of the football staff and one student-athlete tested positive for COVID-19.

The University of Illinois is currently under a similar lockdown, as it attempts to quell a recent rise in cases. Through Sept. 16, undergraduate students are advised to only leave their residences for essential activities, such as getting food, working or taking mandated COVID-19 tests, and to avoid gathering in groups.

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https://apnews.com/9d884c94f452e0cd75ad32b7d70b3df1

Sep 14

Italy's initial virus hotspot back to school after 7 months

CODOGNO, Italy (AP) — The morning bell Monday marked **the first entrance to the classroom for the children of Codogno since Feb. 21**, when panicked parents were sent to pick up their children after the northern Italian town gained notoriety as the first in the West to record local transmission of the coronavirus.

While all of Italy's 8 million school students endured Italy's strict 2½-month lockdown, few suffered the trauma of the children of Codogno, whose days were punctuated by the sirens of passing ambulances.

"Many lost grandparents," said Cecilia Cugini, the principal of Codogno's nursery, elementary and middle schools.

So while the reopening of Italian schools marks an important step in a return to pre-lockdown routine, the step bears more symbolic weight in the **11 towns in Lombardy and Veneto that were the first to be sealed off as coronavirus red zones.**

Codogno Mayor Francesco Passerini said the town of 17,000 has had virtually no new cases for months now, but authorities are not being complacent. He said they have spared no effort in working with school administrators to provide maximum protection to the city's 3,500 students.
...nursery school children must have their temperatures taken at drop-off but are not required to wear masks. In elementary school and middle school, parents are asked to monitor temperatures at home and masks are required, though they may be lowered during lessons. In schools where distance cannot be maintained, older students will have to keep masks on all day.
...
On Monday, masked elementary students waited in spaces designated by red tape to be called to class. Two classes were shifted from the more crowded of Codogno's two elementary schools to ensure proper distancing. "Parents were not happy but we have dedicated a shuttle bus to bring the children back and forth, to address some of the discomfort," Cugini said.

The middle school, meanwhile, receive 230 new desks commissioned by the government. Cugini said they will replace older, oversized desks to allow students to maintain enough distance to remove masks. Art and technology classes requiring more working room will rotate through the middle school's auditorium.

The city also repaired the middle school roof and upgraded the bathrooms as part of preparations — both projects welcome and overdue.

"It is an emblematic moment for us," Cugini said. "It is important to create an atmosphere so the students can experience the emotions of finding themselves back in school, with classmates and teachers, without being distracted by other things."

For Maria Cristina Baggi's daughters, ages 4 and 10, there was no back-to-school shopping for new backpacks: the old ones were fine as they had lain unused for the four months of distance learning last winter and spring. But there was the usual sense of anticipation to be reunited with classmates, the renewal that comes with every school year — tinged now by a not-so-distant concern that the COVID-19 back-to-school project will bring an uptick in contagion even here.

While there are many rules governing classroom behavior, some uncertainty remains.

"We have doubts about how to react to a cold or a coughing attack — that is an unknown for everyone," Baggi said.

Priests in Italy trying to keep failth alive: https://www.washingtonpost.com/photography/2020/09/11/these-priests-are-trying-keep-faith-alive-italian-alps-during-coronavirus-pandemic/?tid=ss_mail

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https://hallboothsmith.com/since-the-celebration-at-studio-417-it-has-been-mudpie-in-the-sky-for-covid-19-business-interruption-claimants/#_ftn8

Sep 14

Northern District of California granted defendant's motion to dismiss

Motion to Dismiss Granted: Most recently, on September 14, 2020, in Mudpie, the Northern District of California granted defendant's motion to dismiss related to Mudpie's claims that California's COVID-19 Emergency Orders requiring sheltering in place caused business interruption and subsequent economic losses which should trigger coverage.[8]

Mudpie is a San Francisco based retail store selling children's clothing, toys, housewares, books, and other goods. Defendant argued Mudpie "was not entitled to Business Income and Extra Expense coverage under its policy because 'the limitations on [Mudpie's] business operations were the result of the Governmental Order, as opposed to 'direct physical loss or damage to property at the described premises.'" Additionally, and no less importantly, the policy contained an exclusion clause for "'loss or damage caused by or resulting from any virus' – such as the COVID-19 virus." The court relied on Gavrilides and distinguished Studio 417, finding Mudpie did not allege COVID-19 had entered, or likely entered, the business premises.

It will likely be many more days and weeks before Court guidance on COVID-19 business interruption coverage achieves any redline absolutes. In the interim, we will continue to keep you updated the developments and trends in this growing area of dispute.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "direct" in part as "characterized by close logical, causal, or consequential relationship." Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/direct (last visited August 12, 2020). "Physical" is defined as "having material existence: perceptible especially through the senses and subject to the laws of nature." Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/physical (last visited August 12, 2020). "Loss" is "the act of losing possession" and "deprivation." Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/loss (last visited August 12, 2020).

[8] MUDPIE, Inc., Plaintiff v. Travelers Casualty Insurance Company of America, Defendant., No. 20-CV-03213-JST, 2020 WL 5525171 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 14, 2020).

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https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/15/global-report-covid-cases-near-30m-as-chinese-health-official-expects-vaccine-as-soon-as-november

Sep 15

China expects vaccine as soon as November

As global coronavirus cases neared 30 million on Tuesday, a senior health official in China said she expected a vaccine to be publicly available as early as November this year.

According to the Johns Hopkins University Covid-19 tracker, which relies on official government data, there are 29,190,588 confirmed infections worldwide. Deaths stand at 927,245 and are expected to pass 1 million by October.

Both the death toll and global infections total are believed to be higher, due to differing testing rates and definitions, delays in reporting and suspected underreporting by some countries.

Meanwhile Wu Guizhen, **head of biosafety at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said she expected Chinese vaccines for Covid-19 would soon be available to the public as soon as November or December.**

Speaking to state broadcaster CCTV, Wu said: “It will be very soon. The progress is currently very smooth.”

China, the world’s largest producer of vaccines, accounts for nine of the 30 vaccines currently undergoing human trials. Last week, the University of Hong Kong, working with mainland Chinese researchers, said a nasal spray vaccine was entering clinical trials.

Thousands of Chinese residents have been given experimental vaccines made by Chinese companies, including China National Biotec Group, a subsidiary of the state-owned Sinopharm, and Sinovac Biotech. **In June, authorities approved using an experimental vaccine on those in the military and in July, medical workers and others in “high risk jobs” have been given vaccines.**

As the global vaccine race heats up, China has promised to give its partners access to its treatment, prompting worries over vaccines being used as a diplomatic or political tool.

At home, health experts have said that not everyone will need to be vaccinated. Over the weekend, Gao Fu, director of China’s CDC said medical workers, Chinese nationals in overseas virus hotspots, and others would be prioritised.

Gao, along with Wu have both been given experimental vaccines. Wu, speaking on CCTV, said she took one in April. “In the past few months I have felt very good. There’s been no change. And when I received the vaccine there was no local pain,” she said.

Separately, South Korea said it will secure early supply of coronavirus vaccines for 30 million people, or 60% of its population, the country’s prime minister, Chung Sye-kyun, told a cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Chung said the government will negotiate with the relevant international organisations and vaccine makers to secure the early supply of the Covid-19 vaccines and would ...

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-snapshot-idUSKBN2650KS

Sep 16

What you need to know about the coronavirus right now

India
At least 17 members of the Indian parliament have tested positive for the coronavirus, government officials said, underlining the widening spread of infections set to cross five million cases soon.

The lawmakers were screened ahead of the re-opening of parliament on Monday after six months. MPs cleared by the tests wore masks, occupied seats with glass enclosures and worked for truncated hours.

India, where cases have been rising faster than any other nation, lags only the United States in terms of its number of total infections.

South Korea
South Korea said it plans to spend $146 million to procure coronavirus vaccines, initially aiming to secure a supply for 30 million people, or 60% of its population, as it battles persistent outbreaks of new cases.

The population target is higher than a World Health Organization goal for the early purchase of supplies for 20% of the world's most vulnerable people, and at least 40% agreed by European Union nations, Britain and EU partners for their populations.

South Korea has been one of the world's coronavirus mitigation success stories, with an aggressive testing and tracing strategy.

Australia
Australia recorded its first day without a COVID-19 death in two months, as states began to lift restrictions amid growing confidence that a second wave of infections has been contained.

While officials said there were 50 COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, a small increase from a day earlier, Australia reported no fresh fatalities for the first time since July 13.

Most of the new cases were in Victoria, Australia's second most populous state, which has accounted for about 75% of infections

Hong Kong
Hong Kong will reopen bars, swimming pools and theme parks from Friday as it relaxes coronavirus restrictions after the testing of nearly two million people in a programme organised by the Chinese government found 42 cases.

The announcement comes days after the Chinese special administrative region reopened gyms and entertainment venues and increased the number of people allowed to gather to four.

The ban on gatherings of more than four people remains in place as does a ban on people visiting public beaches as authorities called for vigilance.

Hong Kong Disneyland closed on July 15 for a second time this year due to the virus, after having reopened in June.

United Kingdom
British minister Priti Patel said she would call the police to report anyone who flouted a ban on gatherings of more than six people, suggesting that people who stopped for a chat on the street were breaking new coronavirus laws.

COVID-19 cases across the UK have risen sharply in recent weeks, prompting the government to bring in the new rules to restrict socialising, at the same time as health bosses have said there are problems with accessing tests.

The social clampdown comes amid concern that people are struggling to get tests for COVID-19, especially in areas where the infection rates are highest.

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https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/516686-cdc-director-says-masks-more-guaranteed-to-work-than-a-vaccine

Sep 16

CDC director says masks more guaranteed to work than a vaccine

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield said Wednesday that wearing a mask is more guaranteed to protect someone from the coronavirus than taking a vaccine.

Redfield, speaking at a Senate hearing, emphasized the importance of wearing masks, noting that an eventual vaccine is not expected to work in 100 percent of people, and might only work in, say, 70 percent. But a mask is guaranteed to offer at least some protection for all wearers, he added, though it is far from total protection.

"We have clear scientific evidence they work, I might even go so far as to say that this face mask is more guaranteed to protect me against COVID than when I take a COVID vaccine, because the immunogenicity may be 70 percent and if I don't get an immune response, the vaccine's not going to protect me, this face mask will," Redfield said.

While experts widely say wearing masks is a very important part of the effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the development of a vaccine is seen as a key step in getting back to close to pre-COVID-19 normality.

Redfield's emphasis on mask-wearing is a contrast to President Trump, who has rarely worn a mask and has held rallies with crowds of many maskless supporters.

"These face masks are the most important, powerful public health tool we have, and I will continue to appeal for all Americans to embrace these face coverings, if we did it for six, eight, 10, 12 weeks we'd bring this pandemic under control," Redfield said.

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/16/business/yelp-coronavirus-closures/index.html

Sep 17

More than half of businesses that closed during the pandemic won't reopen

About 60% of businesses that have closed during the coronavirus pandemic will never reopen, and r**estaurants have suffered the most, according to new data from Yelp.**

The reviews site has been keeping tabs on closures since March. Businesses can update their status to temporarily or permanently closed on Yelp.

As of August 31, nearly 163,700 businesses on Yelp have closed since March 1, the company said, marking a 23% increase from July 10. Of those, about 98,000 say they've shut their doors for good.

Of all closed businesses, about 32,100 are restaurants, and close to 19,600, or **about 61%, have closed permanently**.

According to Yelp, some eateries have fared better than others: Pizzerias, delis, food trucks, bakeries and coffee shop have done better overall than Mexican restaurants, breakfast and brunch spots, burger or sandwich shops or eateries that focus on dessert.

Restaurant groups have warned that many eateries won't survive the blow delivered by the pandemic.

This week, the National Restaurant Association said that 100,000 restaurants have closed either permanently or long-term, adding that the sector is on track to lose $240 billion in sales this year.

A number of factors have made it especially difficult for restaurants, which tend to operate on razor-thin margins even in the best of times, to make it through the disruption.

First, **consumers are spending less on dining out**, according to the association. **Some people may feel unsafe eating at restaurants at this time**. According to a recent study from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults who tested positive for Covid-19 were approximately twice as likely to have reported dining at a restaurant in the 14 days before becoming ill than those who tested negative.

Meanwhile, restaurant owners have had to invest in new items like personal protective equipment for staff, outdoor seating, plexiglass dividers for indoor spaces and new tech for contactless payment. And fewer customers are allowed in restaurant themselves. Regions that allow indoor dining have placed caps on seating capacity so customers and staff can abide by social distancing rules.

Retail operators are also struggling. **About 30,400 shopping and retail establishments on Yelp have closed since March 1, about 17,500, or 58% of them permanently.** And cities have been hit particularly hard, according to the data. Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Miami have all seen especially high numbers of businesses permanently cease operations.

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https://apnews.com/b62eacec9bd3fff89eeab1a8de72f819

Sep 18

Infection rates soar in college towns as students return

Just two weeks after students started returning to Ball State University last month, **the surrounding county had become Indiana's coronavirus epicenter.**

Out of nearly 600 students tested for the virus, more than half have been positive. Dozens of infections have been blamed on off-campus parties, prompting university officials to admonish students.

University President Geoffrey Mearns wrote that the cases apparently were tied not to classrooms or dormitories but to "poor personal choices some students are making, primarily off campus."

"The actions of these students are putting our planned on-campus instruction and activities at risk," he said.

Similar examples abound in other college towns across the nation. Among the 50 U.S. counties with the highest concentrations of students and overall populations of at least 50,000, 20 have consistently reported higher rates of new virus cases than their states have since Sept. 1, according to an Associated Press analysis.

On average, infection rates in those 20 counties have been more than three times higher than their states' overall rates.

At James Madison University in Virginia, which recently sent students home through September amid a surge in cases, the county is averaging a weekly infection rate of nearly 90 cases per 100,000 people, or more than eight times the statewide average.

Health officials fear that surges among college students will spread to more vulnerable people — older ones and those with underlying health problems — and trigger a new wave of cases and hospitalizations. Some worry that colleges could overwhelm hospitals already bracing for increasing cases of COVID-19 and flu this fall and winter.

"There's this waiting game. Does it stay on college campuses or will it escape?" said Dr. Jeff Pothof, chief quality officer at the University of Wisconsin medical center in Madison, where cases among college students have been climbing.

https://www.gazettenet.com/Missouri-hosts-thousands-at-Lake-of-the-Ozarks-bike-rally-36324193

Sep 19

Missouri hosts tens of thousands at Lake of the Ozarks biker rally

... Thousands of motorcycles have converged around the Lake of the Ozarks, where local officials are bracing for more than 100,000 visitors for the 14th annual Bikefest Lake of the Ozarks.

The event is one of the last and largest of the season in the lake area. Lake Ozark Mayor Gerry Murawski said in years past they'd see about 100,000 bikers spread over the entire lake area over five days of events, scenic rides and concerts.

"It's usually not that bad," he said Thursday. "This year, I don't know what to expect. There's nothing that's the same."

The event started Wednesday and was expected to grow in size through the weekend. By Thursday, bikers packed into bars and restaurants along the Bagnel Dam Strip in Lake Ozark.

Hundreds of bikes were parked in the center turn lane of the town's main drag. Only a handful of the tourists that crammed into town were spotted wearing masks. There are no limits on mass gatherings in this part of the state. And though larger cities like Kansas City and St. Louis have mandatory mask orders, few places around the lake are requiring face coverings.

The mayor said he hopes everyone wears masks when appropriate, but he realizes that's not likely to happen.

"Bikers don't wear masks," he said. "It's just that's the way they are."

The festival follows South Dakota's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in August. With nearly a half million visitors, the 80th annual gathering was deemed a coronavirus "superspreader." One study estimated the rally added more than 250,000 virus cases across the United States.
...

The Lake Ozark mayor says he has been concerned about the pandemic for months.

"But this is our last event of the year and I keep thinking, 'Let's just get through this,' and then we can quite frankly go to sleep for a few months," Murawski said. "And hopefully by next year it's gone. Probably not, though."

By Thursday afternoon, bars like Tuckers' Shuckers and High Noon Pub & Grill were booming, with crowds spilling over to tents, sidewalks and parking lots. With 70s and 80s classic rock blaring on loud speakers, a street vendor sold $5 shots and $1 hot dogs while a group of bikers walked down the sidewalk carrying open cans of Busch Light.

While they converged at the touristy Bagnel Dam Strip, motorcycles have swarmed across the wider lake area. They sat in front of lakeside bars and they followed school buses on windy two-lane roads. They were at the outlet malls and they occupied the parking lots of nearly every motel and hotel in the towns surrounding the lake.

"I love it," said Vance Scovel. "We heard it might be a couple hundred thousand by the weekend.

He and his wife Cindy rode about 350 miles — he on a motorcycle, she on a trike — from their home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to attend the weekend's bike festival. They planned to attend a parade, tour hilly back roads and complete the festival's passport program, which takes visitors to various restaurants, bars and shops for a chance to win a new Harley Davidson.

The couple attended Sturgis last month with no problems. They said they've taken some safety precautions but said they mostly felt safe at the lake.

"I know I should be wearing a mask," Vance Scovel said, "but I'm not too concerned about it."

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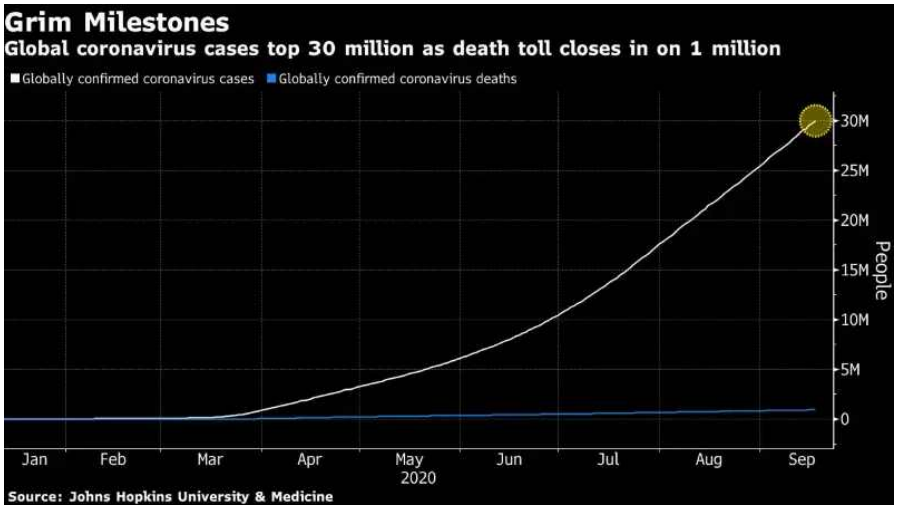
https://www.newsbreak.com/news/2065076040407/deaths-top-950000-trudeau-rival-tests-positive-virus-update

Sep 19

Global coronavirus deaths hit 950,000

(Bloomberg) -- Global deaths from the coronavirus exceeded 950,000, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. India added more than 93,000 cases in a day. New infections in Australia's Victoria state fell to the lowest level in almost three months.



https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/asia-today-new-zealand-to-begin-lifting-virus-restrictions.html

Sep 20

New Zealand to begin lifting virus restrictions

All remaining virus restrictions will be lifted across much of New Zealand from late Monday with the exception of the largest city, Auckland, which will continue to have some restrictions for at least another 16 days.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made the announcement Monday after meeting with top lawmakers. The nation of 5 million people reimposed some restrictions last month after the Auckland outbreak, which now appears to be under control.

Under the plan, maximum gathering sizes in Auckland will be increased from 10 to 100 on Wednesday and then caps removed two weeks after that.

“Auckland needs more time,” Ardern told reporters in the city. “Whilst we have reasonable confidence we are on the right track, there is still a need in Auckland for that cautious approach.”

Health authorities reported no new cases on Monday. The number of active COVID-19 cases is 62, with 33 of those from community spread and 29 among quarantined returning travelers.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— **India** recorded nearly 87,000 new cases in the past 24 hours. The Health Ministry also Monday reported 1,130 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking the total reported fatalities to 87,882. India now has over 5.4 million reported cases and the nation of 1.3 billion people is expected to become the pandemic’s worst-hit country within weeks, surpassing the United States. India has eased lockdown measures to try to overcome the severe economic impact. On Monday, the 17th century white marble Taj Mahal reopens after a gap of six months for national and international tourists. Restrictions such as compulsory mask-wearing, thermal screening and physical distancing will be used.

— **South Korea**’s daily virus tally has stayed below 100 for a second consecutive day, maintaining a slowing trend in fresh infections. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said Monday the 70 new cases added in the past 24 hours took the country’s total to 23,045 with 385 deaths. The drop to double digits on Sunday was the first in about 40 days. South Korea conducts fewer tests on weekends. But its recent virus resurgence has been on a downward trajectory amid strong social distancing rules since its daily tally surpassed 400 in late August.

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https://apnews.com/a01ddfa2e8ef839b2ee05e2cbcd63169

Sep 20

Sweden spared surge of virus cases but many questions remain

...When most of Europe locked down their populations early in the pandemic by closing schools, restaurants, gyms and even borders, Swedes kept enjoying many freedoms.

The relatively low-key strategy captured the world's attention, but at the same time it coincided with a per capita death rate that was much higher than in other Nordic countries.

Now, as infection numbers surge again in much of Europe, the country of 10 million people has some of the lowest numbers of new coronavirus cases -- and only 14 virus patients in intensive care.

Whether Sweden's strategy is succeeding, however, is still very uncertain.

Its health authorities, and in particular chief epidemiologist Dr. Anders Tegnell, keep repeating a familiar warning: It's too early to tell, and all countries are in a different phase of the pandemic.

That has not stopped a World Health Organization Europe official from saying the continent could learn broader lessons from Sweden that could help the virus battle elsewhere.

"We must recognize that Sweden, at the moment, has avoided the increase that has been seen in some of the other countries in western Europe," WHO Europe's senior emergency officer, Catherine Smallwood, said Thursday. "I think there are lessons for that. We will be very keen on working and hearing more from the Swedish approach."

According to the European Center for Disease Control, Sweden has reported 30.3 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the last 14 days, compared with 292.2 in Spain, 172.1 in France, 61.8 in the U.K. and 69.2 in Denmark, all of which imposed strict lockdowns early in the pandemic.

Overall, Sweden has 88,237 reported infections and 5,864 fatalities from the virus, or 57.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants since the beginning of the crisis.

The way Sweden's strategy was viewed outside the country seems to depend largely on what stage of the pandemic the observer was experiencing at the time. Initially, many abroad were incredulous at images of Swedes dining with friends in restaurants or sipping cocktails on the Stockholm waterfront. Some were envious that Swedish businesses were not forced to close.

Then came shock as the virus ripped through the country's nursing homes and hospices.

By mid-April, more than 100 deaths were reported each day in Sweden, while mortality rates were falling elsewhere in Europe.

Today, as fears of a second wave grow across Europe, it's fashionable to praise Sweden, with reporters from France, the U.K. and elsewhere traveling to Stockholm to ask about its success.

But a Swedish government commission investigating the handling of the pandemic will, undoubtedly, have hard questions to answer: Did authorities wait too long to limit access to nursing homes, where about half of the deaths occurred? Were they too slow to provide personal protective equipment to staff in those homes when shortcomings in the elderly care sector had long been known? Why did it take so long to set up wide-scale testing?

Tegnell also refuses to rule out a second wave of coronavirus infections in Sweden. A particular concern is the return of students to high schools for the first time since March.

"We need to be very careful and find the first sign that something is going on so that we can do as much as possible to prevent it from escalating," he told The Associated Press....

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https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-09-21/california-covid19-positivity-rate-drops-below-3-percent-for-the-first-time

Sep 21

California's COVID-19 positivity rate drops below 3% for the first time

... a sign that the Golden State is finally starting to beat back the spread of the coronavirus, officials said Monday.

Just 3.1% of Californians who were tested over the last two weeks received a positive result, and that ratio dropped to 2.8% in the last seven days, state officials said. Hospitals in California are treating the fewest patients with the virus since April, and admissions to the state's intensive care units have been dropping steadily, too.

It's a rare piece of good news for 40 million Californians, who are contending with raging wildfires and toxic air quality on top of the economic, physical and emotional effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

But the good news is tempered with caution: Those fires, coupled with heat waves and toxic air quality, led to a decline in testing. And health officials still aren't certain if gatherings on Labor Day led to an increase in transmission because the virus can take up to two weeks to incubate.

Experts also fear that California's timeline to reopen indoor businesses and schools will coincide with the start of the regular flu season. Gov. Gavin Newsom urged residents to get a flu shot, to wear face coverings and to observe physical distancing during the period he dubbed the "twindemic."

"This disease has not gone away," Newsom said. "Quite the contrary."

On Tuesday, Newsom said, officials will announce some changes to the state's tiered ranking system: purple, red, orange and yellow. The rankings measure the COVID-19 risk in each county — purple is the worst, yellow is the best — and are used to determine which businesses and schools can resume indoor operations.

A handful of counties, including San Diego and Orange, were promoted to the red tier earlier this month. Those governments began the careful process of reopening schools as well as restaurant dining rooms, museums, movie theaters and places of worship at 25% capacity. Orange County's public schools will be allowed to reopen Tuesday, with mandatory social distancing for all students and required face coverings for older students, said Dr. Clayton Chau, the county's public health director.

Not all districts are resuming in-school classes immediately, he said: Some are waiting to see whether the county's progress against COVID-19 holds, while others will phase in a few grades at a time.

A recent surge in COVID-19 infections among students at San Diego State University may push San Diego County back to purple, which would lead to tighter restrictions again.

And then there's Los Angeles County, where the COVID-19 positivity rate has stayed too high for any businesses to reopen for indoor operations. The positive test rate rose last week, which health officials say could be the result of transmissions from the Labor Day weekend.

"I want to be cautiously optimistic, but we did have four days of data last week that showed increases," said Barbara Ferrer, head of L.A. County's public health department. The uptick in positive tests is a "troubling trend," she said, that recalls other increases earlier this summer.

Two to three weeks after the Memorial Day weekend, Ferrer said, the county began seeing a significant uptick in COVID-19 cases, and saw "our biggest surge" in the aftermath of the Fourth of July.

"After you see the increase in cases, a week or two later, you start seeing an increase in hospitalizations," she said. "That often is followed, unfortunately, by an increase in deaths."

So far, Orange County has not seen a similar uptick in cases, Chau said: "I'm keeping my fingers crossed. We haven't seen it, and hopefully we'll keep it that way."

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https://apnews.com/34c3cdf0a82d21e2b623b5815dd6de0e

Sep 21

UK science advisers warn of darker COVID-19 days ahead

LONDON (AP) — Britain's top medical advisers on Monday painted a grim picture of exponential growth in illness and death if nothing is done to control the second wave of coronavirus infections, laying the groundwork for the government to announce new restrictions later this week.

After a slow rise in COVID-19 infections over the summer, **the number of new cases is now doubling every seven days**, and if nothing is done to slow the spread of the disease this could lead to as many as 49,000 cases a day by mid-October, Chief Scientific Officer Patrick Vallance told the public during a televised briefing.

The experience in other countries shows that this increase in infections will soon lead to a rise in deaths, Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty added.

"We have, in a very bad sense, literally turned a corner," after weeks of rising infections, Whitty said.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson later this week is expected to announce a slate of short-term restrictions that will act as a "circuit breaker" to slow the spread of the disease. He huddled with other ministers over the weekend to discuss the government's response.

Whitty stressed that infection rates are rising among all age groups and said that it is not acceptable for individuals to ignore health guidelines and engage in risky activity. Everyone must do their part to slow the spread of the disease because infections among the young and healthy will inevitably spread to their friends and family members and ultimately to the most vulnerable in society.

"This is not someone else's problem," he said. "This is all of our problem."

The government is hoping to slow the spread of COVID-19, which last week pushed new cases to levels not seen since early May. Almost 3,900 new infections were reported on Sunday, compared with a peak of 6,199 cases on April 5.

While death rates have remained relatively low so far, Whitty warned that deaths are likely to rise in coming weeks. The U.K. reported a seven-day average of 21 deaths a day last week, compared with a peak of 942 on April 10.

These numbers include only deaths that are directly related to COVID-19. The real toll could be much higher if emergency services are overwhelmed by coronavirus cases and the National Health Service has to divert resources from diagnosing and treating other diseases, Whitty said.

But Whitty said this has to be balanced against the impact on the economy and society from measures to control the virus, because increased deprivation and mental illness will also lead to deaths.

"Ministers making decisions — and all of society — have to walk this very difficult balance. If we do too little, this virus will go out of control and you will get significant numbers of increased direct and indirect deaths," he said "But if we go too far the other way, then we can cause damage to the economy which can feed through to unemployment, to poverty, to deprivation — all of which have long-term health effects so we need always to keep these two sides in mind."

The government last week stopped short of imposing a total lockdown in northeastern England, where the infection rate first began to rise. Instead, bars and restaurants were ordered to close between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. and people were prohibited from socializing with individuals from other households.

The rise in infection rates comes as lawmakers across the political spectrum criticize the government's testing program. While government ministers tout the record numbers of tests being performed, there are widespread reports of people having to travel hundreds of miles for ...

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https://apnews.com/1475351af6bdeec09803af0362663586

Sep 22

Czechs replace health minister amid record infection surge

PRAGUE (AP) — The Czech government moved Monday to appoint an epidemiologist as the new health minister as the country struggles with a surge of new coronavirus infections.

The outgoing minister, Adam Vojtech, resigned from his post on Monday, saying his departure was meant to create space for a possible different approach to the pandemic.

Prime Minister Andrej Babis, in announcing Prymula's selection, said it was a moment for "crisis management."

President Milos Zeman said he planned to swear in epidemiologist Roman Prymula to the post later Monday.

As deputy health minister, Prymula led the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic for a time in the spring.

The country recorded a relatively low number of COVID-19 cases and deaths then compared to hard-hit western European countries such as Italy, Spain and Britain.

Prymula later assumed a different post, as a government health care envoy.

After the government lifted most of its restrictions in the summer, the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases began to gradually grow and reached a record high last week.

On Thursday, the day-to-day increase of new cases was higher than 3,000, almost the same number as it was in the entire month of March.

Prymula said on the weekend that the loosening of restrictions was carried out too quickly. He estimated that the country could see 8,000 new daily infections if strict new restrictions are not applied.

The Czech Republic has had a total of 49,290 confirmed cases and 503 deaths in a population of nearly 11 million people.

Babis said he was sorry about Vojtech's resignation, calling the outgoing minister "the best" the country ever had. But a month ago, when coronavirus infections were growing, Babis opposed a health ministry plan presented by Vojtech to introduce restrictive measures to contain the surge, including mandatory face masks at schools and elsewhere.

"It's time for us all to cooperate, to do our maximum to end the spike," Babis said Monday.

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-idUSKCN26D2RZ

Sep 22

US death toll from coronavirus hits 200,000

... The United States continues to have world's highest number of COVID-19 deaths. On a weekly average, it is losing about 800 lives each day to the virus, according to a Reuters tally, down from a peak of 2,806 daily deaths recorded on April 15. (Graphic: here)

In New York City, a global epicenter of the pandemic in the spring, health officials on Tuesday identified a new cluster of COVID-19 cases in the borough of Brooklyn, and noted a marked uptick in infections there and in some other neighborhoods.

During the early months of the pandemic, many experts expected the maximum number of deaths in the United States from the pandemic to be around 200,000.

“The idea of 200,000 deaths is really very sobering and in some respects stunning,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious diseases expert, told CNN.

Thousands of tiny U.S. flags covered part of the National Mall in the nation’s capital on Tuesday to commemorate the lives lost.

Speaking in front of the flags, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called on Americans to embrace science.

“This was preventable - not all of it, but much of it,” said Pelosi, a Democrat.

With barely six weeks left before the U.S. election on Nov. 3, Republican President Donald Trump’s handling of the pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn has battered his standing among voters.

...

Trump has frequently questioned scientific experts - including those in his own administration - on everything from the timing of a vaccine to reopening schools and businesses and the importance of face coverings to curb the virus’ spread. He has refused to support a national mask mandate and holds large political rallies where few wear them.

...

The University of Washington’s health institute is forecasting coronavirus fatalities will reach 378,000 by the end of the year, with the daily death toll potentially skyrocketing to 3,000 per day in December.

Six out of every 10,000 residents in the United States has died from COVID-19, one of the highest rates among developed nations.

More than 70% of those who died from the virus in the United States were over the age of 65, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data

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https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/23/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html

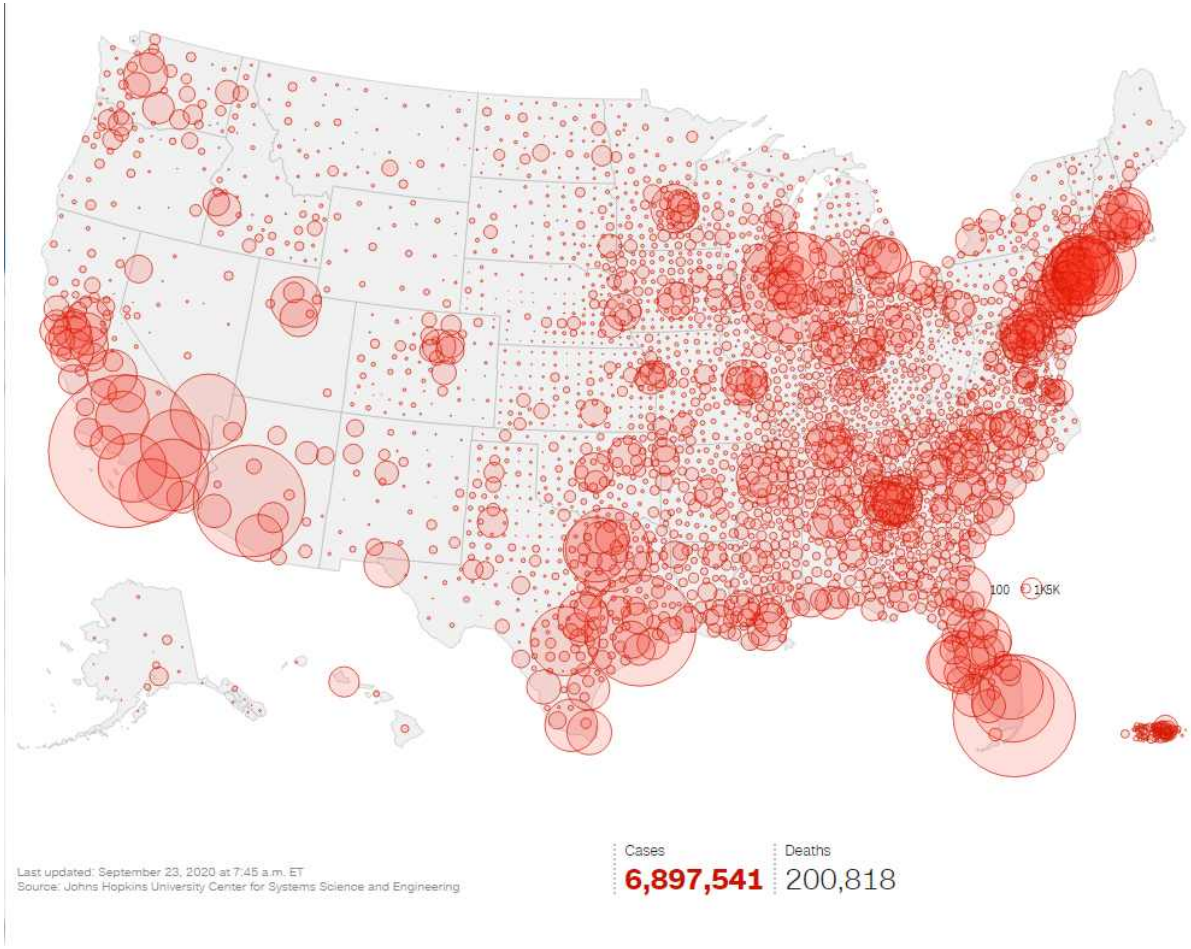
Sep 23

At least 22 states report an uptick in new COVID-19 cases

...**At least 22 states now report a rise in new cases, most of which are in the country's heartland and Midwest. That number is a remarkable difference since last Monday, when only nine states were reporting an upward trend in cases**. As of early Wednesday morning, seven states reported a decline of new cases, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

The virus, still running unabated in many US communities, is raising new alarm in states like **Kentucky and Wisconsin, which has one of the highest Covid-19 positivity rates in the nation, higher than 16%.**
...
In **North Carolina**, university ... says it has "de-densified" dorms and given every student an individual room, limited indoor gatherings to 10 people and taken several other steps to control infections.

In **Vermont**, Middlebury College announced 22 students were barred from the school's campus following "significant Covid-19 conduct violations" over the week.
...
Florida ...the number of children under 18 who have contracted Covid-19 ... jumped 26% by mid-September



https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-us-maps-and-cases/

Use the link to access an interactive chart

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https://www.foxnews.com/health/us-coronavirus-case-fatality-ratio-johns-hopkins

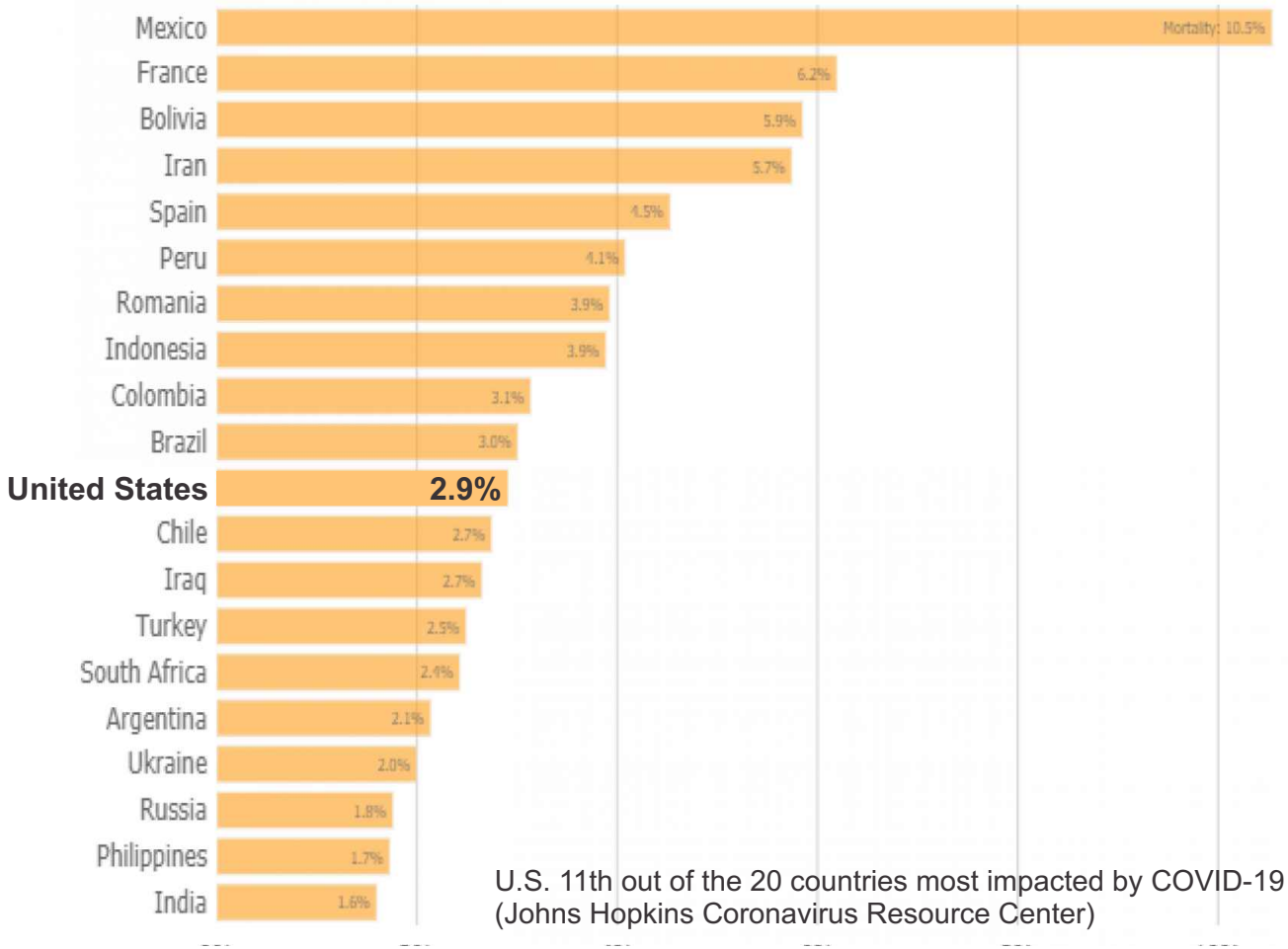
Sep 24

Coronavirus case-fatality ratio rankings in Johns Hopkins mortality analysis

...The observed case-fatality ratio figures measure the number of deaths per 100 confirmed cases. The researchers noted that countries with more testing and more instances of mild cases may have a lower case-fatality ratio than others, and that factors such as older populations and health care systems may impact the results.

Another Johns Hopkins figure, which calculates death per 100,000 population, factored in both confirmed cases and healthy people. For this statistic, the U.S. ranked sixth, with 61.37 deaths per 100,000 population. The country with the highest rate, according to the researchers, is Peru, which has 98.06 deaths per 100,000.

“Countries at the top of this figure have the most deaths proportionally to their COVID-19 cases or population, not necessarily the most deaths overall,” the researchers wrote.



U.S. 11th out of the 20 countries most impacted by COVID-19 (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center)

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https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-records-slowest-weekly-rise-in-active-coronavirus-cases-11600933382383.html

Sep 24

India records slowest weekly rise in active coronavirus cases

In fresh signs of a slowdown in the pandemic, **India has begun to report more coronavirus recoveries each day than new patients. The trend began last Saturday and has lasted six days.** This has helped India achieve its slowest weekly pace in the growth of active cases since the pandemic began: the number is now back below 1 million.

...

The total number of active cases now stands at 966,382, while 4,674,987 patients have been discharged.

...

Right since the beginning of the pandemic, data has shown that states' testing strategies can influence the numbers they report. Among the top 10 states, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh have conducted the most tests per million population over the last fortnight, and Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh the fewest, data from covid19india.org showed.

India's total count of coronavirus patients has risen to 5,732,518 as of Thursday morning. The country accounted for 34% of the 2.1 million cases added globally over the last seven days. This is the highest share by far among all countries. The United States and Brazil had 14% and 8% share each, data from the Johns Hopkins University showed.

After rising steadily, India's share in the cumulative death count has crossed 9%. In just the last seven days, the country accounted for 25% of nearly 37,000 deaths recorded globally, nearly equal to both the US and Brazil combined. Worryingly, the trajectory of deaths is still rising.

Globally, the coronavirus case count has crossed 31.8 million, including over 976,000 deaths and nearly 21.9 million recoveries (69%), data from Johns Hopkins University showed.

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https://scienmag.com/some-severe-covid-19-cases-linked-to-genetic-mutations-or-antibodies-that-attack-the-body/

Sep 25

Some severe cases linked to mutations or antibodies that attack the body

... two new analyses suggest that some life-threatening cases can be traced to weak spots in patients' immune systems.

At least 3.5 percent of study patients with severe COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, have mutations in genes involved in antiviral defense. And **at least 10 percent of patients with severe disease create "auto-antibodies" that attack the immune system, instead of fighting the virus**. The results, reported in two papers in the journal Science on September 24, 2020, identify some root causes of life-threatening COVID-19, says study leader Jean-Laurent Casanova, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator at The Rockefeller University.

Seeing these harmful antibodies in so many patients – 101 out of 987 – was "a stunning observation," he says. "These two papers provide the first explanation for why COVID-19 can be so severe in some people, while most others infected by the same virus are okay."

The work has immediate implications for diagnostics and treatment, Casanova says. If someone tests positive for the virus, they should "absolutely" be tested for the auto-antibodies, too, he adds, "with medical follow-up if those tests are positive." It's possible that removing such antibodies from the blood could ease symptoms of the disease.

...

"It's an unprecedented finding," says study co-author Isabelle Meyts, a pediatrician at the University Hospitals KU Leuven, in Belgium, who earlier this year helped enroll patients in the study, gather samples, and perform experiments. By testing for the presence of these antibodies, she says, "you can almost predict who will become severely ill."

The vast majority – **94 percent – of patients with the harmful antibodies were men,** the team found. Men are more likely to develop severe forms of COVID-19, and this work offers one explanation for that gender variability, Meyts says.

Casanova's lab is now looking for the genetic driver behind those auto-antibodies. They could be linked to mutations on the X chromosome, he says. Such mutations might not affect women, because they have a second X chromosome to compensate for any defects in the first. But for men, who carry only a single X, even small genetic errors can be consequential.

Clinically, the team's new work could change how doctors and health officials think about vaccination distribution strategies, and even potential treatments. A clinical trial could examine, for instance, whether infected people who have the auto-antibodies benefit from treatment with one of the 17 interferons not neutralized by the auto-antibodies, or with plasmapheresis, a medical procedure that strips the antibodies from patients' blood. Either method could potentially counteract the effect of these harmful antibodies, Meyts says.

In addition to the current work, Meyts, Casanova, and hundreds of other scientists involved with an international consortium called the COVID Human Genetic Effort are working to understand a second piece of the coronavirus puzzle. Instead of hunting for factors that make patients especially vulnerable to COVID-19, they're looking for the opposite – genetic factors that might be protective. They're now recruiting people from the households of patients with severe COVID-19 – people who were exposed to the virus but did not develop the disease. "Our lab is currently running at full speed," Casanova says.

www.cnn.com/2020/09/25/us/johnson-and-johnson-vaccine-strong-immune-response/index.html

Sep 26

Johnson and Johnson vaccine produced strong immune response

There is some good news on Johnson & Johnson's coronavirus vaccine.

Early results from a Phase 1/2a clinical trial show i**t was well tolerated and even one dose appeared to produce a strong immune response in almost all of the 800 participants.**
The trial included two age groups: 18- to 55-year-olds and 65 and older, and looked at the safety and side effects of two different doses. Initial findings from the trials suggest the vaccine does provoke an immune response and is safe enough to move into large-scale trials.

The study was posted on MedRxiv, but it has not been peer-reviewed or published in a medical journal yet.

The researchers found that **99% of the participants age 18 to 55 in both dose groups had developed antibodies against the virus 29 days after getting vaccinated.** The analysis found that most of the side effects, like fever, headache, fatigue, body aches and injection-site pain, were mild and resolved after a couple of days.

Some of the participants will be receiving a second shot of the vaccine as part of the trial.

The vaccine -- called Ad26.COV2.S -- uses the same technology used for Johnson & Johnson's Ebola, Zika, HIV and RSV vaccines.

Phase 3 trials will examine the safety and effectiveness of a single dose against a placebo to prevent symptomatic Covid-19. Johnson & Johnson says it plans to enroll 60,000 adult volunteers at more than 200 sites in the US and internationally.
The fact that the trial will examine the efficacy of a single dose of the vaccine, instead of two doses, should expedite results, according to Dr. Paul Stoffels, Johnson & Johnson's chief scientific officer.

So far, it's the only Phase 3 Covid-19 vaccine trial in the United States that is testing a single-dose of the vaccine.
The company says stricter vaccine guidelines under consideration by the US Food and Drug Administration might add to the company's vaccine timeline.

Meanwhile, Dr. Anthony Fauci, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director, says Covid-19 vaccinations could very likely start in November or December. But he warns it may be late 2021 before things are back to normal.

"By the time you get enough people vaccinated so that you can feel you've had an impact enough on the outbreak, so that **you can start thinking about maybe getting a little bit more towards normality, that very likely, as I and others have said, will be maybe the third quarter or so of 2021. Maybe even into the fourth quarter,"** he said in an online conversation with Dr. Howard Bauchner, editor-in-chief of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

But he added it is unlikely that political interference will play a role in the approval process of a Covid-19 vaccine.

"If you look at the standard process of how these things work, I think you could feel comfortable that it is really unlikely that that's going to happen," Fauci said.

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-africa-casablanca-rabat-north-africa-7bd458dbffb7b1d82cb110c9223f5a6f

Sep 27

Morocco faces down COVID spread with tough rules

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — With air and sea borders closed for months and eight cities barring people from entering or leaving, Morocco has been pulling out the stops to stanch the spread of coronavirus.

Still, the kingdom on the Atlantic coast, a magnet for tourists in better times, has registered more than 110,000 positive cases since March and has a death toll of 2,041 — the highest among its North African neighbors.

Morocco first decreed lockdown measures on March 20, but has been gradually easing restrictions. A recent upsurge in infections, however, has forced targeted measures.
...
The director of epidemiology at the Health Ministry, Mohamed Lyoubi, conceded during a webinar that he **expects the situation to worsen over winter as the flu season overlaps with the COVID-19 pandemic.**

“Many hospitals and test sites for the coronavirus are expected to reach capacity,” Lyoubi said. “The situation will also affect the ability of health authorities to carry out case investigations and ensure contact follow-up and monitoring of patients treated at home.”

Morocco’s **testing program is increasingly overwhelmed.** Long lines for testing are now common outside hospitals and laboratories in Moroccan cities.

With a rise in cases, **hospitals have been struggling to keep up with the growing influx of patients, and some intensive care units are reaching full capacity.** Last month, health workers staged a protest outside Ibn Zohr Hospital in Marrakech to demand better working conditions. Photos showing COVID-19 patients lining the corridors of the overcrowded hospital, with some lying on the floor, caused an uproar on social media.

Medical professionals held similar protests elsewhere, claiming that some health facilities are understaffed and lack protective equipment for workers. The Health Ministry has sought to remedy the situation by setting up field hospitals.

The rise in cases has come as a blow to Morocco, which had been phasing out lockdown measures. On July 19, it began a third phase of gradually lifting its lockdown and foreign business visitors were allowed to enter the kingdom starting Sept. 10.

But **Casablanca** doubled down after its infection rate began climbing. The city hosts 42% of the daily reported cases, 40% of the serious cases and 38% of the deaths recorded at the national level, according to Health Minister Khalid Ait Taleb. To counter the surge, **schools were forced to close again, with the adoption of remote education. Markets, cafes, shops and restaurants were ordered to close early. The city enacted a curfew between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.** Police set up roadblocks and patrols to enforce compliance.

The Moroccan monarch said last month that **“if figures continue to increase, the COVID-19 Scientific Committee may recommend another (full) lockdown, perhaps with even tighter restrictions.”**

https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-archive-76133a0e0258f43751b16b031f3a1684

Sep 28

Nearly 1M who died of COVID-19 also illuminated treatment

...Though more deaths are expected this fall because of the recent surge in coronavirus infections in the U.S. and elsewhere, **there also are signs that death rates are declining and that people who get the virus now are faring better than did those in the early months of the pandemic.**

...

“Nobody should make a mistake about this” and think they’re not at risk just because they may not personally know someone who has died or haven’t witnessed what the virus can do firsthand, he said.The nearly 1 million deaths attributed to the coronavirus in nine months are far more than the 690,000 from AIDS or the 400,000 from malaria in all of 2019. They’re trending just behind the 1.5 million from tuberculosis.

Wealth and power have not shielded rich countries from the awful power of the virus. The United States “has been the worst-hit country in the world” with more than 7 million coronavirus infections and more than 200,000 deaths, reflecting “the lack of success that we have had in containing this outbreak,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease specialist, told a Harvard Medical School audience earlier this month.

...

It’s clear that treatments also are affecting survival, many doctors said. **People who have died from COVID-19, especially ones who took part in studies, have helped reveal what drugs do or do not help.**

Dexamethasone and similar steroids now are known to improve survival when used in hospitalized patients who need extra oxygen, but might be harmful for less sick patients.

An antiviral drug, remdesivir, can speed recovery for severely ill patients, shaving four days off the average hospital stay. Two anti-inflammatory drugs, one used in combination with remdesivir — the drug Wang helped test — also have been reported to help although results of those studies have not yet been published.

The jury is still out on convalescent plasma, which involves using antibody-rich blood from survivors to treat others. No large, high-quality studies have tested this well enough to know if it works.

The value of rigorous, scientific studies to test treatments has become clear, Goodman said. “We certainly see what happens” when treatments are widely adopted without them as hydroxychloroquine was, he said. “That exposed a lot of people to a potentially toxic drug” and delayed the hunt for effective ones.

Aside from drugs, “the case fatality rate is actually improving over time as physicians get more adept at taking care of these very sick patients,” said Dr. Gary Gibbons, director of the U.S. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

In hospitals, doctors know more now about ways to avoid using breathing machines, such as keeping patients on their bellies.

“We’ve learned about how to position patients, how to use oxygen, how to manage fluids,” and hospitals have increased their surge capacity and supplies, Dr. Judith Currier, a University of California, Los Angeles physician said at a recent webinar organized by the American Public Health Association and the U.S. National Academy of Medicine.

The best way to avoid dying from the coronavirus remains to avoid getting it, and experience has shown that the simple measures advocated by public health officials work.

“Prevention is the most important step right now as we’re waiting for a vaccine and we’re improving treatment,” Goodman said.

Wearing a face mask, washing hands, keeping at least 6 feet apart and disinfecting surfaces “clearly are having a positive effect” on curbing spread, Fauci said.

If more people stick with common-sense measures like closing bars, “we should improve our ability to manage this” and prevent more deaths, Shahpar said. “It should take longer to get to the next million if it ever happens.”

Return to Timeline

https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-india-archive-pandemics-8328c8ded42253c812590dd0d1fbd935

Sep 28

Death toll from coronavirus tops 1 million

… 8 ½ months after an infection doctors had never seen before claimed its first victims in China, the pandemic's confirmed death toll has eclipsed 1 million, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

That is partly due to the virus's quickening spread through India, where reported deaths have topped 96,000 and cases are increasing at the fastest rate in the world.

The United States, where the virus has killed about 205,000 people, accounts for 1 out of 5 deaths worldwide, far more than any other country despite its wealth and medical resources.
...
The pandemic's toll of 1 million dead in such a limited time rivals some of the gravest threats to public health, past and present.
It exceeds annual deaths from AIDS, which last year killed about 690,000 people worldwide. The virus's toll is approaching the 1.5 million global deaths each year from tuberculosis, which regularly kills more people than any other infectious disease.

But "COVID's grip on humanity is incomparably greater than the grip of other causes of death," said Lawrence Gostin, a professor of global health law at Georgetown University. He noted the unemployment, poverty and despair caused by the pandemic, and deaths from myriad other illnesses that have gone untreated.

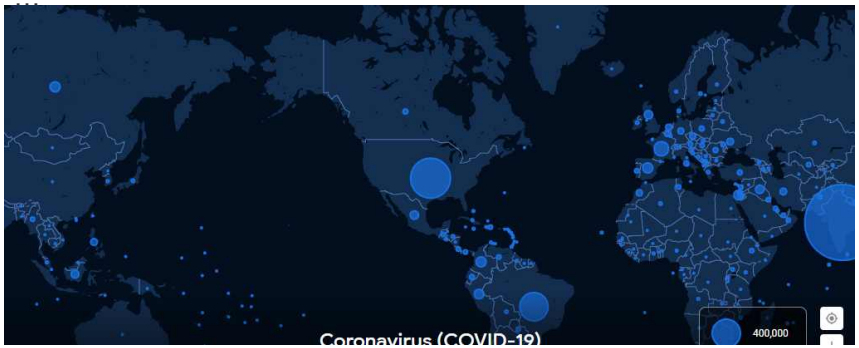
To put the death toll, alone, in perspective, look to Brazil.
Nearly a decade ago, more than 900 Brazilians were killed in flooding that was widely described as the country's worst-ever single day of natural disaster. From late May to late August, the coronavirus killed more Brazilians than that, on average, day after day.
…
For all its lethality, the virus has claimed far fewer lives than the so-called Spanish flu, which killed an estimated 40 million to 50 million worldwide in two years, just over a century ago.

That pandemic came before scientists had microscopes powerful enough to identify the enemy or antibiotics that could treat the bacterial pneumonia that killed most of the victims. In the U.S., the Spanish flu killed about 675,000. But most of those deaths did not come until a second wave hit over the winter of 1918-19.

Up to now, the disease has left only a faint footprint on Africa, well shy of early modeling that predicted thousands more deaths.

But **cases have recently surged in countries like Britain, Spain, Russia and Israel. In the United States, the return of students to college campuses has sparked new outbreaks.** With approval and distribution of a vaccine still probably months away and winter approaching in the Northern Hemisphere, the toll will continue to climb.

"We're only at the beginning of this. We're going to see many more weeks ahead of this pandemic than we've had behind us," Gostin said...
…



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

Return to Timeline

https://people.com/health/us-coronavirus-cases-increased-23-percent/

Sep 29

U.S. coronavirus cases increased by 23 percent in last 2 weeks

... As of Monday afternoon, there have been over 7,146,200 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the U.S. and at least 204,600 people have died...

Throughout much of the midwest — which saw a massive surge over the summer — cases remain high, and are increasing daily. Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin are all reporting consistently high rates of new infections.

A number of neighboring states to the south — Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee — are also experiencing high and rising numbers, as are several western states: Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.

Since late August, the rate of new cases in Utah has tripled, and the state has repeatedly broken their own records for daily infections, most recently on Friday, according to the Salt Lake Tribune. The Utah Department of Health has attributed the majority of new cases to young people.

...

The rise in cases has also led health experts to issue warnings about the possibility of a surge in the coming months — especially as flu season starts...

Tracking new COVID-19 Infections across the U.S.

as of September 28, 2020

PHOTO: MARTIN SCHWARTZ/PEOPLE

SOURCE: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-stay-at-home-order.html

Return to Timeline

https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/12795926/on-spot-covid-test-results-minutes-globally/

Sep 30

Test that gives results in 15 to 30 minutes set to be rolled out globally

...the rapid kits work in a similar way to a pregnancy test and display two blue lines when testing positive for Covid-19.

They work by taking a nasal swab and inserting the sample into a cartridge that looks for antigens - or proteins found on the surface of the virus.

They differ from the current nasal/throat swabs and finger prick tests because **they don't need a lab to produce results.**

It means they are able to detect coronavirus infection within minutes, compared to the hours of days necessary for the genetic tests, known as PCR tests, to turnaround results.

They are also far cheaper - with each one costing just ... $5, however they are generally considered less accurate than lab-based tests.
...
US drugs giant Abbott and South Korean manufacturer SD Biosensor, which produces the tests - have agreed to supply 133 low-income countries.

The WHO and the Bill and Melisa Gates Foundations have agreed to deploy 120 million rapid-diagnostics tests and said the ... $600million [project] **could begin as early as next month.**

Catharina Boehme, chief executive of a non-profit group called the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, said the i**nitial rollout would take place across 20 countries in Africa.**

Peter Sands, executive director of the Global Fund, a partnership that works to end epidemics, said the tests represent a "significant step" in the effort to combat and contain the virus on a global scale.

He said: “They're not a silver bullet, but hugely valuable as a complement to PCR tests.”

While poorer countries will primarily benefit from the rapid-antigen tests, wealthier countries who have signed up to the Access to Covid tools initiative, which the UK has, will also be given access to them.

They represent a potential boon to the Government's Operation Moonshot scheme for mass testing, though it is not clear if they intend to buy these tests.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock previously said mass testing was the nation's "best chance" of reducing social distancing measures without having a vaccine.

Former prime minister Tony Blair has called on the Government to adopt the rapid antigen tests, saying they could enable an extra 300,000 coronavirus tests to be carried out every day within a few weeks.

However Baroness Dido Harding, the head of NHS Test and Trace, warned companies and individuals could be forced to foot the bill for the swift turnaround tests as they were too unreliable for use within the health service.

But she said those without symptoms might choose to pay for the tests to act as a kind of Covid-19 passport to allow them to take part in non-socially distanced activities.

Return to Timeline

https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/airline-news/2020/07/08/united-airlines-layoff-up-36-000-employees-october-coronavorus-fallout/5396857002/

Oct 1

Airlines receiving grants under PPP will be permitted to layoff employees

United Airlines warned employees for months that mass layoffs loomed if travel didn't rebound, and the airline put a grim face on the expected tally [July 8]

In a memo to employees, the Chicago-based airline said **36,000 employees, or 45% of its front-line workers in the USA and more than a third of its overall workforce of 95,000, face layoffs on or around Oct. 1. The most affected groups: flight attendants and airport customer service and gate agents, which account for 26,000 of the 36,000.**

The airline calls them involuntary furloughs because most of the affected employees will be eligible to be recalled when travel demand returns under terms of their union contracts.

Airlines are prohibited from laying off workers until Oct. 1 under the payroll protection provisions of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

United received a $3.5 billion grant and $1.5 billion loan for payroll protection. The program was designed to stabilize airlines and keep workers employed until they could shrink their businesses to the travel reality brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

United executives said in a briefing with reporters that they hope the final tally, which will be known in mid- to late August, will be less than 36,000 as more employees accept voluntary exit programs. The airline extended the application window for its voluntary separation program to July 15 to encourage more employees to sign up. The 36,000 does not include 1,400 previously announced layoffs of management and administrative employees.

"After months of aggressive cost-cutting and proactive capital-raising, today we updated employees about a topic we've always dreaded and the action that was always a last resort in the context of this COVID-19 pandemic: involuntary furloughs," the statement began.

It continued, "The reality is that United simply cannot continue at our current payroll level past October 1 in an environment where travel demand is so depressed. And involuntary furloughs come as a last resort, after months of company-wide cost-cutting and capital-raising."

The airline had to put a number on the cuts because of federal requirements to warn employees about mass layoffs.

United's flight attendant, pilot union leaders react
Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, which represents United flight attendants, called the numbers a "gut punch" but praised United for offering a realistic outlook.

"COVID-19 is an unprecedented threat to aviation workers and the entire U.S. aviation industry," she said in a statement. "This crisis dwarfs all others in aviation history...

Return to Timeline

https://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/01/coronavirus-vaccine-trial-participants-exhaustion-fever-headaches.html

Oct 1

Coronavirus vaccine trial participants report day-long exhaustion, fever and headaches — but say it's worth it

Key Points:

- **High fever, body aches, headaches and exhaustion are some of the symptoms participants in Moderna and Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine trials say they felt after receiving the shots.**
- **While the symptoms were uncomfortable, and at times intense, they often went away after a day, sometimes less.**
- **The phase three trials are a critical last step needed to get the vaccines cleared for distribution.**

Luke Hutchison woke up in the middle of the night with chills and a fever after taking the Covid-19 booster shot in Moderna's vaccine trial. Another coronavirus vaccine trial participant, testing Pfizer's candidate, similarly woke up with chills, shaking so hard he cracked a tooth after taking the second dose.

High fever, body aches, bad headaches and exhaustion are just some of the symptoms five participants in two of the leading coronavirus vaccine trials say they felt after receiving the shots.

In interviews, all five participants — three in Moderna's study and two in Pfizer's late-stage trials — said they think the discomfort is worth it to protect themselves against the coronavirus. Four of them asked not to be identified, but CNBC reviewed documentation that verified their participation in the trials.

While the symptoms were uncomfortable, and at times intense, they often went away after a day, sometimes sooner, according to three participants in the Moderna trial and one in Pfizer's as well as a person close to another participant in Moderna's trial.

The phase three trials are a critical last step needed to get the vaccines cleared for distribution. At least 41 Covid-19 vaccines are in human trials worldwide but only four U.S.-backed candidates are in phase three: Moderna, Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. Health officials expect to have at least one safe and effective vaccine by the end of the year...

Luke Hutchison said he signed up to a coronavirus vaccine trial because he's "pro science"
Luke Hutchison

Return to Timeline

https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/10/01/trump-positive-covid-19-high-risk-groups-severe-case/5892209002/

Oct 2

President Trump has tested positive for COVID-19. What's the typical course of the illness?

President Trump has tested positive for the coronavirus, as have more than 7 million other Americans. Here's what we know about the usual course of the disease.

So far the President's doctor has said only Trump is "well." No information is available as to whether he is experiencing symptoms.

About 40% of people who are exposed to COVID-19 don't have any symptoms at all. It's too early to know if the President will be among them as symptoms typically appear two to 14 days after exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Trump was presumably exposed by his aide, Hope Hicks. It was announced that she had tested positive for COVID-19 and was symptomatic on Thursday. She appears to have been diagnosed on Wednesday evening when she flew with the President to Minnesota.

There is increasing data that people infected with COVID-19 who show symptoms have higher viral loads than those without symptoms. That could mean that Hicks exposed the President to higher levels of the SARS-CoV-2 virus than she would have if she had an asymptomatic case of the disease.

In addition, the President rarely wears a mask in public appearances. "That may put him at higher risk of being exposed to a higher viral inoculum," said Dr. Monica Gandhi, a professor of medicine and infectious disease expert at the University of California.

"However, the interplay between host and pathogen is complex and so we will have to wait and observe this carefully," she said.

If Trump was first exposed to the virus on Wednesday, it is still very early for him to begin exhibiting symptoms. Most people who are symptomatic begin to feel sick within 11 and a half days, according to the CDC. In rare cases it can take even longer.

For the 60% of people infected who do develop symptoms, they can experience fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea....

Return to Timeline

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-canada-astrazeneca/canada-latest-to-start-regulatory-review-of-astrazenecas-covid-19-vaccine-idUSKBN26N2CA

Oct 3

Canada joins countries in real-time AstraZeneca COVID vaccine review

OTTAWA (Reuters) - Canada launched a real-time review of data from AstraZeneca and Oxford University's potential COVID-19 vaccine on Friday, the latest country to speed up its approval process.

As the battle against the coronavirus pandemic intensifies, with infections and deaths still rising, Canada's health ministry said it had received its first submission for authorisation for the vaccine on Thursday.

The aim of a rolling review is to accelerate the process and last month, Canada's health minister Patty Hajdu signed an order allowing companies developing vaccines to submit safety and efficacy data and information as they become available.

The European Union's health regulator on Thursday also started a rolling review of the first batch of data for the potential vaccine being worked on by AstraZeneca.

Canada's health regulator will first evaluate pre-clinical data from studies conducted by Oxford University and will then assess pre-clinical and clinical studies as data becomes available, the British drugmaker said, as it welcomed the move.

Oxford University did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Canadian ministry will not decide whether to authorise this or any other vaccine until it has received the necessary evidence to support its safety, efficacy and quality, it said.

It is also in talks with several vaccine manufacturers and said any company can apply to use the rolling review process.

The news comes almost a month after several global trials of the shot were halted due to an unexplained illness in a study participant. While most studies have resumed, U.S. trials are still on pause as regulators widened their probe.

Last week, Canada agreed to buy up to 20 million doses of the vaccine candidate, one of several deals it has signed to secure around 300 million potential shots as the global death toll from coronavirus exceeds 1 million.

Called AZD1222 or ChAdOx1 nCoV-19, the AstraZeneca vaccine is seen as leading the race to inoculate people against COVID-19. Other vaccine hopefuls in advanced stages include those from Pfizer, Moderna and Sinovac.

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https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-vaccine-uk-scientists-hope-to-deploy-3-months/

Oct 4

UK scientists hope to deploy coronavirus vaccine in 3 months

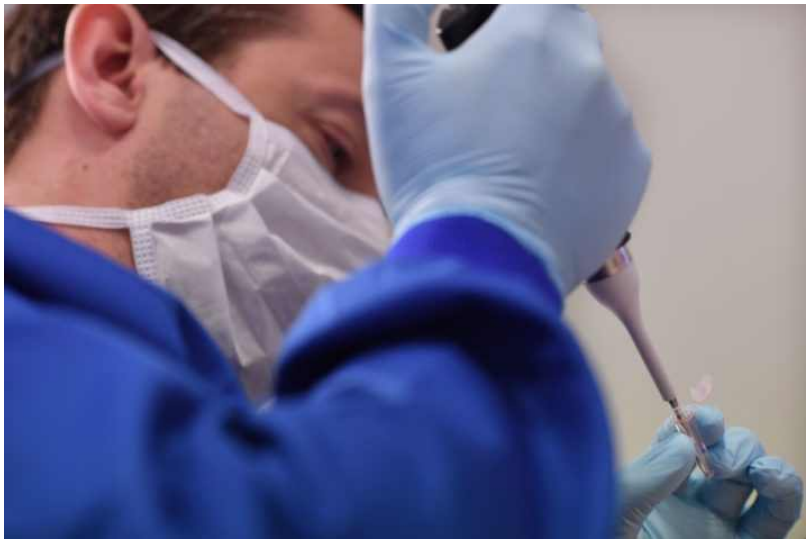
A massive deployment of coronavirus vaccines in the U.K. could be done in as little as three months, the Times reported.

The British daily said scientists working on the vaccine developed by the company AstraZeneca in collaboration with the University of Oxford hope European regulators will approve it "before the start of next year." It quoted "health officials" saying that "every adult could receive a dose within six months."

Earlier this week, the European Medical Agency announced it had started the first "rolling review" of the AstraZeneca vaccine. "The start of the rolling review means that the committee has started evaluating the first batch of data on the vaccine, which come from laboratory studies (non-clinical data)," the EMA said in a statement.

If approved, the vaccine being developed by Oxford University would be "the most advanced of those backed by Britain," the Times said.

The coronavirus has killed more than 42,000 people in the U.K., and more than a million people world-wide, according to the John Hopkins University.



https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-54338864

Oct 5

India's new paper Covid-19 test could be a ‘game changer’

The test, named after a famous Indian fictional detective, is based on a gene-editing technology called Crispr. Scientists estimate that the kit - called Feluda - would return results in under an hour and **cost** [**$6.75**].

Feluda will be made by a leading Indian conglomerate, Tata, and **could be the world's first paper-based Covid-19 test available in the market.**

"This is a **simple, precise, reliable, scalable and frugal test**," Professor K Vijay Raghavan, principal scientific adviser to the Indian government, told the BBC.

Researchers at the Delhi-based CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), where Feluda was developed, as well as private labs, tried out the test on samples from about 2,000 patients, including ones who had already tested positive for the coronavirus.

They found that the new test had **96% sensitivity and 98% specificity.** The accuracy of a test is based on these two proportions. **A test that's highly sensitive will detect almost everyone who has the disease; and a test that has high-specificity will correctly rule out almost everyone who doesn't have the disease.**

The first ensures not too many false negative results; and the second not too many false positives. India's drug regulator has cleared the test for commercial use.

...

The new Feluda test uses Crispr - short form for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats - or a gene-editing technology to detect the virus.

...

In the US and the UK, several companies and research labs are developing similar paper strip tests which can be cheap and mass produced. One of the most talked-about has been a paper-based strip developed by Sherlock Bioscience which has been cleared for emergency use by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The test claims to detect the "unique genetic fingerprints of virtually any DNA or RNA sequence in any organism or pathogen". DNA and RNA are sister molecules responsible for the storage of all genetic information that underpins life.

"The ideal and ultimate test will be the one that is paper-based which you can do from home," said Dr Tsai. "But of course, there are some biological restrictions to the technology - we can't expect people to extract and amplify the RNA from home."

This is where the Feluda test might end up making a huge difference to the way we look at gene-editing based diagnostic tests.

Dr Debojyoti Chakraborty, a molecular scientist with CSIR-IGBMR and a lead member of the team that developed Feluda, told the BBC that they were working on a prototype of a test where "you can extract and amplify the RNA using PCR machine at home".

"We are trying for a simple, affordable, and truly point-of-care test so widespread testing is not limited by machines and manpower," Dr Chakraborty said.

"India has the opportunity to show the value of this test, because it has such a big population and it's coming right at the time when it is needed," Dr Kissler said. "If their efficacy is demonstrated, it can have benefits that ripple around the world."

A vaccine will be vital for fully recovering from the pandemic, but according to Dr Kissler, **reliable, accessible testing is also key to achieve "a sense of normalcy".**

"In the ideal world I envision, taking a test will be as easy as brushing your teeth or making toast," he said.

Return to Timeline

https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/futures-bounce-on-stimulus-hopes-hints-of-trump-hospital-discharge/ar-BB19IfIA?li=BBnbfcL

Oct 5

Futures bounce on stimulus hopes, hints of Trump hospital discharge

(Reuters) - U.S. stock index futures bounced on Monday as doctors said President Donald Trump could be discharged from the hospital where he is being treated for COVID-19, while signs of progress with a new fiscal stimulus bill also lifted sentiment.

Sequestered at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center outside Washington since Friday, Trump has released a series of videos in an effort to reassure the public that he is recovering, although his condition remains unclear and outside experts warn that his case may be severe.

Wall Street's main indexes sold off sharply on Friday after Trump's announcement that he had contracted the disease added to political uncertainty just a month away from voting in the presidential election.

Feeding the improved tone were comments from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who said on Sunday that progress was being made in talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on a new bipartisan package of coronavirus relief measures.

By 6:23 a.m. ET, Dow e-minis <1YMcv1> were up 151 points, or 0.55%, S&P 500 e-minis were up 18.5 points, or 0.55%, and Nasdaq 100 e-minis were up 107.5 points, or 0.96%.

Doubts about the scale of further fiscal aid and a slowing economic recovery have weighed on the S&P 500 recently, with the benchmark index in September logging its worst month since the coronavirus-driven crash earlier this year.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll on Sunday showed Trump's rival, Joe Biden, opening his widest lead in a month in the presidential race, with a majority of Americans thinking Trump could have avoided infection if he had taken the virus more seriously.

Investors say a Biden victory, and an accompanying higher capital gains tax, could spark a round of profit-taking in sectors such as technology.

Heavyweight tech-related stocks including Apple Inc , Nvidia Corp , Netflix Inc , Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp were up about a percent in premarket trading after weighing heavily on the Nasdaq <.IXIC> on Friday.

Focus later in the day will be on a reading of the services sector, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the U.S. economy, after data last week showed activity in the manufacturing sector slowed unexpectedly in September.

Return to Timeline

https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/10/02/trump-has-covid-running-list-whos-been-tested-and-their-results/5894564002/

Oct 6

In the White House - who has tested positive:

... a running list of people who have tested positive [for COVID-19]

[Who attended SCOTUS nomination event at the White House]

This is a developing story, not a comprehensive list, which [USA Today] will keep updated in the days to come.

Return to Timeline

https://www.marketwatch.com/story/dont-ever-ever-underestimate-the-potential-of-the-pandemic-5-reasons-scientists-say-you-should-be-afraid-of-covid-19-2020-10-06

Oct 7

5 reasons scientists say you should be afraid of COVID-19

... The world still has a lot to learn about the novel coronavirus — and that alone, experts say, should be enough to motivate communities to work together to slow its progress. Scientists don't advise mass hysteria, but they also don't believe that going about business as usual is a wise move.

"COVID is a complete threat to the American population," Dr. David Nace of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center told the Associated Press. "Most of the people aren't so lucky as the president," he said, citing Trump's extensive medical team and unique access to trial treatments.

Governments around the world are struggling to stop the spread of the pandemic. The so-called Spanish flu of 1918 and 1919 and Black Death from 1347 to 1351 were two of the most extreme global pandemics — an epidemic, in contrast, affects regions or a community — ever recorded.

COVID-19 had killed at least 210,909 people in the U.S. as of Wednesday, according to data aggregated by Johns Hopkins University, and there were 7,501,612 confirmed cases. Worldwide, there were 35,806,345 confirmed cases of the virus and 1,049,754 deaths.

Here are five reasons that people should remain vigilant, according to doctors and scientists:

1. There is no vaccine
...If and/or when there is one available, it's unlikely to be distributed to the general public until early to mid-2021...

2. COVID-19 is highly contagious
— can even happen outdoors. ...A maskless jogger can leave a 30-foot "droplet slipstream" in his or her wake, ...

3. The virus acts in peculiar ways
... "inflammation in older people can be more intense, causing organ damage," .. Doctors today attribute that phenomenon to the "cytokine storm" or hypercytokinemia, a process where the immune system in healthy people reacts so strongly that a surge of immune cells and their activating compounds (cytokines) effectively turn the body against itself.

4. Untold numbers of people are asymptomatic ... a range where 20% to 40% of the people have no symptoms

5. Flu season is approaching
... doctors are understandably concerned about a "twindemic." Both influenza and COVID-19 are untreatable with antibiotics and have almost identical symptoms: fever, coughing, night sweats and tiredness

Return to Timeline

https://www.clinicaltrialsarena.com/uncategorized/globaldata-epidemiologist-report-global-covid-cases-approach-36-million/

Oct 7

Death toll from coronavirus tops 1,050,000

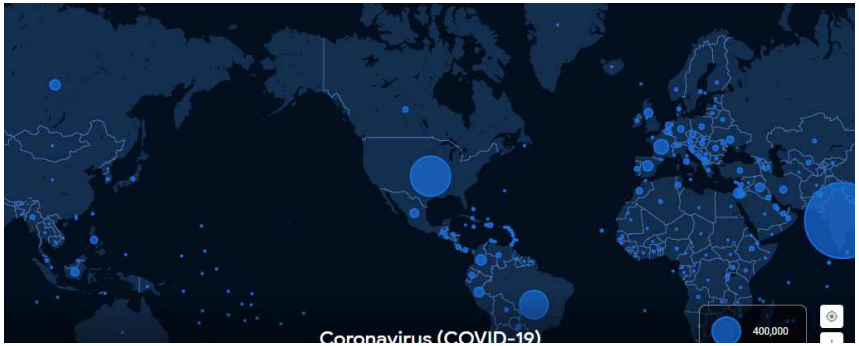
Globally, the total confirmed cases of Covid-19 have reached over 35,865,000 with over 1,050,000 deaths and 25,004,000 recoveries.

The US, India, and Brazil account for over 53% of the world's total confirmed cases and about 44% of total confirmed deaths.

While many US states report increases in daily confirmed cases, the number of daily confirmed cases in India continues to decline.

In Europe, over 6,337,000 total confirmed cases and 241,000 total deaths have been reported, resulting in a relatively high case fatality rate of 3.8% compared with other regions.

In Czechia, a record high of over 4,400 daily confirmed cases was reported; the government will announce new restrictions on Friday.



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

https://abcnews.go.com/Health/live-updates/coronavirus/?id=73493745#73495008

Oct 8

The Czech Republic has the highest rate of COVID-19 infection in Europe

The Czech Republic identified 5,335 new cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, its highest single-day rise yet.

It's the first time the central European nation has registered more than 5,000 new cases in one day. The previous record of 4,457 new cases in a 24-hour reporting period was just set the day before.

The cumulative total now stands at 95,360 confirmed cases with 829 deaths, according to the latest data from the Czech health ministry.

More than 43,000 cases were active Wednesday, including 1,563 patients who remained hospitalized for COVID-19, while over 50,000 have recovered from the disease, according to the health ministry data.

The Czech Republic has the highest rate of COVID-19 infection in Europe. Over the past two weeks, **the country of 10.7 million people has reported 346.1 cases per 100,000, surpassing Spain** for the first time, which has seen 305 cases per 100,000, according to data published Tuesday by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

Earlier this week, **the Czech government declared another state of emergency due to the rapid increase** in COVID-19 infections, after having relaxed almost all restrictions over the summer. The government is expected on Friday to announce new measures to contain the outbreak.

The Czech Republic is among a handful of European countries, including France, Spain and the United Kingdom, that are grappling with an uptick in COVID-19 cases as a second wave of infections hits the region.

Petr David Josek/AP

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https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/8/which-countries-in-europe-might-avoid-a-second-wave-and-why

Oct 9

Which countries in Europe might avoid a second wave, and why?

As some countries across Europe entering the so-called second wave, there are some that appear to be – at least for now – bucking this trend.

Spain, France and the UK have been witnessing a significant spike in daily coronavirus cases after a period of lower numbers.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in the past 24 hours, the UK has reported 14,542 cases and France 10,479, while the Czech Republic, widely-praised for containing its first outbreak, was placed back under a state of emergency this week as cases soared. It reported 4,456.

By comparison, **Italy – whose population is six times larger than the Czech Republic's, has reported 2,677, Germany is at 2,828, and no new cases have been recorded in Sweden.**

Analysts say expert-led measures, better compliance and learning from past mistakes are helping some nations manage the virus.
...
Italy was convulsed by the early outbreak of the pandemic – the media carried constant images of body bags and headlines screamed in a panic over daily death tolls nearing 1,000 spreading alarm across the region. A strict lockdown followed...[and] authorities used the time they gained from the lockdown "to prepare for a 360-degree approach". [They] strengthened ... healthcare services...In April, ... set up a monitoring system to assess the risk of transmission and health service resilience. Now [they] have a weekly quantitative risk assessment, which tells [them] how every one of the 21 regions in the country is coping with the outbreak ...

Compared with Italy, **Germany's fatality figures have been much lower,** approximately 9,000 compared with nearly 36,000, with analysts putting this – in part – down to a **higher number of ICU beds and more testing.**

Other measures have included a gradual reopening of schools and restaurants, a track-and-trace system, plus a tracing app that, according to authorities, has been used to send 1.2 million test results from labs to users during the first 100 days from its launch in June.

As Aswad says: **"There may not be anything particularly unique in Germany about the interventions such as mask-wearing or local lockdowns, but perhaps there are differences in compliance compared to other countries.** I also think there are cultural differences in the way people interact with one another and how public and private spaces are set up.

"My impression is that people and businesses, on the whole, are sticking to social-distancing guidelines quite well. Even now you're not allowed to walk around a restaurant without a mask and you don't see many people without masks on when travelling on the underground, and large businesses are quite strict about not letting people in without them. At least from an attitude perspective, most people realise that there's a lot of caution that needs to be taken."

Compliance, analysts say, has been a key factor in Sweden too.

The country's seemingly lax approach to the pandemic has drawn international attention. It has tried to slow down the virus instead of attempting to stop it – schools, restaurants and bars remained open, and masks measures were not enforced.

While cases are now slowly rising, levels are much lower than they were earlier in the year.

Helena Nordenstedt, an associate professor of Global Health at Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, said: "At the height of the pandemic in Stockholm, we had 1,100 patients admitted at the same time, now there are 25 people in Stockholm hospitals, so there is a huge difference.

https://abcnews.go.com/Health/live-updates/coronavirus/?id=73516391#73516748

Oct 9

Analysis shows cases rising in 28 US states

An ABC News analysis of COVID-19 trends across all 50 U.S. states as well as Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico found there were increases in newly confirmed cases over the past two weeks in 28 states.

The analysis also found increases in the daily positivity rate of COVID-19 tests in 25 states, increases in COVID-19 hospitalizations in 35 states and increases in daily COVID-19 death tolls in 18 states plus Puerto Rico.

The seven-day average of new cases in the United States has now surpassed 44,000, the highest it has been since Aug. 21.

Two states -- **Montana and South Dakota -- reported their highest single-day** increases in the number of new COVID-19 cases. Seven states -- **Arkansas, Iowa, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming -- hit a record number of current COVID-19 hospitalizations in a day.**

Although figures in the **Northeast** still remain relatively low, the number of new cases continues to slowly increase, relative to the figures that were seen during the spring. The region's **seven-day average of new cases is now the highest it has been since June 2. In the last month alone, that average has increased by more than 69%.**

In the **Midwest**, the number of **new cases continues to hit record levels, averaging 13,200 cases per day, largely driven by consistently high caseloads in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.** The number of current COVID-19 hospitalizations in many midwestern states also continues to climb. Since Sunday, current hospitalizations in Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wisconsin have all hit record highs.

The number of new cases in the South remain significantly lower than they were throughout the summer. However, the South still contributes to more than 45% of the country's daily regional caseload, with an average of over 18,000 new cases per day.

Over the past three weeks, the number of new cases in the West has increased by 26%. Idaho and Utah still continue to produce high daily case totals. Although the figures in California are on a downward trend, the state continues to report a high number of new cases every day.

The trends were all analyzed from data collected and published by the COVID Tracking Project over the past two weeks, using the linear regression trend line of the seven-day moving average.

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https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-idUSKBN26V0GA

Oct 10

U.S. COVID-19 cases hit two-month high, 10 states report record increases

(Reuters) - New cases of COVID-19 in the United States hit a two-month high on Friday with over 58,000 infections of the new coronavirus reported and hospitalizations in the Midwest at record levels for a fifth day in a row, according to a Reuters analysis.

Ten of the 50 states reported **record one-day rises** in cases on Friday, including the Midwestern states of **Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri** and **Ohio. Wisconsin and Illinois** recorded over 3,000 new cases for a second day in a row - a two-day trend not seen even during the height of the previous outbreak in the spring, according to Reuters data.

The Western states of **Montana, New Mexico** and **Wyoming** also reported their biggest one-day jumps in cases, as did **Oklahoma** and **West Virginia**.

Nineteen states have seen record increases in new cases so far in October.

Amid the resurgence in cases across the nation, President Donald Trump, who recently contracted COVID-19, is set to resume his re-election campaign on Saturday by addressing supporters from the balcony of the White House.

He is then scheduled to travel on Monday to central Florida to hold his first campaign rally since leaving the hospital.

Trump and his administration have faced criticism for their handling of the pandemic that has claimed over 213,000 lives in the country, as well as for a lax approach to mask-wearing and social distancing in the White House.

There is no federal mandate to wear a mask, and 17 states do not require them, according to a Reuters analysis.

In addition to rising cases, hospitals in several states are straining to handle an influx of patients.

Seven states on Friday reported **record numbers of hospitalized COVID-19 patients: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Wisconsin.**

In the Midwest, hospitalizations rose to nearly 9,000, continuing a streak of records that began on Monday.

There are now over 34,000 **hospitalized nationally, up 18% in the past two weeks.**

While deaths nationally continue to trend downward, the United States is losing on average 700 lives a day. **Three states reported a record one-day increase in fatalities on Friday: Arkansas, Missouri and Montana.** Health experts caution that deaths are a lagging indicator and usually rise weeks after cases climb.

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https://www.forbes.com/sites/geekgirlrising/2020/10/10/6-strategies-for-beating-covid-anxiety-depression/#305b6e94560e

Oct 11

COVID-19 is causing a global mental health crisis, warns Red Cross

As 2020 drags on and the Covid-19 pandemic continues to ravage the world, **the number of people reporting mental health issues, including anxiety, depression and stress, has skyrocketed.**

According to recent data, symptoms of **anxiety and depressive disorders have more than tripled among U.S. adults compared to this time last year**—with women and Black and Latinx communities most acutely impacted.

And in a study released today, on World Mental Health Day, y the International Committee of the Red Cross (IRCR), over half — **51 per cent — of respondents surveyed across seven countries reported that the global health crisis has negatively impacted their mental health.**

The data are disturbing, but not surprising, says Dr. Teralyn Sell, Ph.D, psychotherapist and brain health expert.

“Over the past seven months, the world has seen a high degree of change, isolation, uneasiness and loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” she explains. “People have lost their jobs, lost loved ones, and are struggling to maintain some sense of sense of normalcy while life feels anything but normal.”

This experience has had a serious impact on our collective mental health.

There are tools we can all employ, however, to help us improve our psychological wellbeing during the age of Covid. From maintaining routines to stopping negative self-talk, Dr. Sell shares some of these coping mechanisms with us.

1: Focus on the things you can control.

...

2: Adjust your inner dialogue with positive self-talk.

...

3: Use your senses in a new way.

...

4: Maintain routines.

...

5: Limit your screen time.

...

6: Connect.

... if your loneliness moves to despair, reach out for professional help immediately.

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-international-news-pandemics-asia-china-77da12921617c2c4ed225cdde17b30fd

Oct 12

COVID-19 in the Asia Pacific region

... **China** ... health authorities **will test all 9 million people in the eastern city of Qingdao for the coronavirus this week after nine cases linked to a hospital were found** ... Travelers arriving from abroad in China still are required to undergo a 14-day quarantine.

... **India** has reported 66,732 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, driving the **country's overall tally to 7.1 million**. The Health Ministry on Monday also reported 816 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities to 109,150. India is **seeing fewer new daily cases of the virus since mid-September** when daily infections touched a record high of 97,894 cases. It's averaging more than 70,000 cases daily so far this month. Health experts have warned that congregations during major festivals later this month and in November have the potential to spread the virus. They also caution that coming winter months are expected to aggravate respiratory ailments.

... **Malaysia will restrict movements in its biggest city, Kuala Lumpur**, neighboring Selangor state and the administrative capital of Putrajaya starting Wednesday to curb a sharp rise in coronavirus cases. Defense Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob says **all schools in these areas will be shut and all religious, sports and social activities will be halted for two weeks**. He says economic activities can continue but with strict health measures. The move comes **just over four months after Malaysia lifted a three-month nationwide lockdown to control the pandemic.** It has experienced a new wave of cases following increased travel for an election last month in eastern Sabah state, a hotspot on Borneo island....

...**Indonesia**'s capital have moved to ease strict social restrictions despite a steady increase in cases nationwide. **Jakarta imposed large-scale social restrictions from April to June, then eased them gradually. The city brought back strict restrictions last month as the virus spread.** Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan said his administration decided to ease the restrictions from Monday because the increase in infections has stabilized. The move came days after President Joko Widodo urged local administrations to refrain from imposing lockdown measures that could cause crippling economic damage in Southeast Asia's largest economy.

— **Sri Lanka**n officials say they have suspended the repatriation of citizens stranded overseas by the coronavirus because the country's quarantine facilities are full. Army Commander Shavendra Silva, who heads the task force to control the virus, says a **steep rise in COVID-19 patients in the past week has filled the quarantine facilities.** Sri Lanka **earlier announced it had successfully contained the virus, with no local infections reported for two months.** But a cluster originating in a garment factory earlier this month has resulted in 1,307 new cases in just one week. The country has reported a total of 4,791 cases, including 13 deaths.

— **South Korea** has confirmed 97 new cases of the coronavirus, a modest uptick from the daily levels reported last week. The increase comes as officials ease social distancing restrictions after concluding that transmissions have slowed following a resurgence in mid-August. The figures released by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Monday brought the number of infections since the pandemic began to 24,703, including 433 deaths. **South Korea relaxed its social distancing guidelines beginning Monday, allowing high-risk businesses like nightclubs and karaoke bars to open as long as they employ preventive measures. Spectators will also be allowed at professional sports events, although teams will initially be allowed to only sell 30% of the seats in stadiums.**

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-archive-0843b8b1b0b67e4109d3eb7ff3698de4

Oct 13

2nd COVID-19 vaccine trial paused over unexplained illness

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) — A late-stage study of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine candidate has been paused while the company investigates whether a study participant's “unexplained illness” is related to the shot.

The company said in a statement Monday evening that illnesses, accidents and other so-called adverse events “are an expected part of any clinical study, especially large studies,” but that its physicians and a safety monitoring panel would try to determine what might have caused the illness.

The pause is at least the second such hold to occur among several vaccines that have reached large-scale final tests in the U.S.

The company declined to reveal any more details about the illness, citing the participant's privacy.

Temporary stoppages of large medical studies are relatively common. Few are made public in typical drug trials, but the work to make a coronavirus vaccine has raised the stakes on these kinds of complications.

Companies are required to investigate any serious or unexpected reaction that occurs during drug testing. Given that such tests are done on tens of thousands of people, some medical problems are a coincidence. In fact, **one of the first steps the company said it will take is to determine if the person received the vaccine or a placebo.**

The halt was first reported by the health news site STAT.

Final-stage testing of a vaccine made by AstraZeneca and Oxford University remains on hold in the U.S. as officials examine whether an illness in its trial poses a safety risk. That trial was stopped when a woman developed severe neurological symptoms consistent with transverse myelitis, a rare inflammation of the spinal cord, the company has said. That company's testing has restarted elsewhere.

Johnson & Johnson was aiming to enroll 60,000 volunteers to prove if its single-dose approach is safe and protects against the coronavirus. Other vaccine candidates in the U.S. require two shots.

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https://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/amid-rising-covid-19-cases-and-hospitalizations-local-us-leaders-and-public-health-experts-worry/article_ada4af99-b7ac-5f04-a88c-b83646ba4591.html#tncms-source=infinity-scroll-summary-siderail-latest

Oct 13

Public health experts worry of a coming surge

With **33 states reporting a rise in new Covid-19 cases** and a nationwide uptick in hospitalizations, local officials worry this could be the beginning of the coming surge experts have warned about.

In Colorado, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said Covid-19 cases are rising at a "concerning rate," while the city's seven-day average daily case rates are as "high right now as they were at the height of the pandemic back in May."

The **seven-day average of hospitalizations also rose about 37% in a little more than a week**, he said during a Monday news conference, and warned residents could soon see tighter Covid-19 restrictions if the city's numbers continue to trend in the wrong direction.

Officials across the country warn of similar patterns. White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx last week warned the **Northeast was seeing "early surggestions" of alarming trends. Kentucky's governor said recently the state is seeing a third major escalation in infections. In Wisconsin, a field hospital is opening this week in response to a surge of Covid-19 patients -- days after the state reported record-high numbers of Covid-19 cases, hospitalizations and daily deaths.**

The **US is now averaging more than 49,000 new infections daily -- up 14% from the previous week**, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. And last week, the nation recorded more than 50,000 new cases for at least four days in a row. The last time that happened was in early August.
...

Hospitalizations nationwide are also on the rise. **At least 10 states have recorded record-high hospitalization numbers since Friday**, according to data from the COVID Tracking Project.
Nationwide, there are more than 35,000 people hospitalized with the virus, according to the project.

As emergency physicians begin to see an uptick in severe Covid-19 cases, they're also growing fearful another surge is on its way, Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency medicine physician with Brown University, said Saturday.

"We are all seeing increasing numbers of Covid-19 patients who are coming into our ERs, who are getting really sick, requiring hospitalization and even intensive care," Ranney told CNN. **"We are all deeply afraid that this is the beginning of that dreaded second wave,"** she added.

And that's as healthcare professionals across the US are still lacking adequate personal protective equipment and testing supplies, she said.

“We're quite fearful for what we are heading into."

Tracey Nixon, the chief nursing officer at University of Utah Health told CNN affiliate KUTV last week the hospital system's intensive care units were at 97% capacity and the surge they're anticipating "in the next few weeks" will put a strain on staff.

"Our teams are exhausted and under tremendous pressure," Nixon told the affiliate...

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https://www.iheart.com/content/2020-10-13-nevada-man-becomes-first-person-in-us-to-get-covid-19-twice/

Oct 14

Nevada man becomes first person in U.S. to get COVID-19 twice

A 25-year-old man from Nevada is the first person in the United States to contract COVID-19 twice. **He is the fifth person in the world to get reinfected with the coronavirus.** A case study published in the medical journal The Lancet said that the man's second infection was worse than the first one.

The patient tested positive for the virus in April and suffered from mild symptoms, including a cough and nausea. He recovered a few weeks later and tested negative on two separate occasions in May. On May 28, two days after his last negative test, the man saw his symptoms return. He checked himself into an urgent care facility after developing a high fever, headache, dizziness, cough, nausea, and diarrhea.

He ended up in the hospital and tested positive for COVID-19 on June 5. He has since recovered and has been released from the hospital.

Scientists said the genetic codes from each virus showed "significant differences," leading them to conclude that he was infected twice. The authors of the study noted that the case is concerning because it shows that not everybody becomes immune once they get sick.

"These findings suggest that the patient was infected by SARS-CoV-2 on two separate occasions by a genetically distinct virus. Thus, previous exposure to SARS-CoV-2 might not guarantee total immunity in all cases," the authors of the study said.

They also stressed the importance of following social distancing guidelines and wearing masks, even if you have already recovered from COVID-19.

"All individuals, whether previously diagnosed with COVID-19 or not, should take identical precautions to avoid infection with SARS-CoV-2," they wrote.

One doctor said that reinfection appears to be extremely rare and pointed out that this does not mean "that protective immunity is impossible."

"It doesn't tell us that protective immunity is impossible," Dr. Simon Clarke, associate professor in cellular microbiology at the University of Reading, told CNBC. "It is worth remembering that this might be just one of a very small handful of reinfections, **it might be very rare, or it might be one of the very first few we are going to see a lot more of given time."**

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https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/coronavirus-covid-19-reinfection-death-holland-b1021190.html

Oct 14

Dutch woman becomes first person to die after two Covid-19 infections

An elderly Dutch woman is believed to be the first person to die after twice being infected with Covid-19.

Experts say the 89-year-old woman, who suffered from a rare type of bone marrow cancer, was first admitted to hospital earlier this year with a severe cough and fever after testing positive for the virus.

She was discharged five days later with “fatigue” but after her Covid-19 symptoms had gone.

Doctors say that two months later she started chemotherapy treatment for her cancer and developed a fever, coughing and breathing difficulties.

The woman, who has not been named, again tested positive for Covid-19 but was found to have no antibodies in her blood.

Her conditioned worsened on day eight of the second infection and she died two weeks later.

Researchers at Maastricht University Medical Center say her natural immune response could still have been “sufficient” to fight off coronavirus as her cancer treatment “does not necessarily result in life threatening disease.”

Experts say that after testing samples from both cases they found **the genetic makeup of the two viruses were different.**

“It is likely that the second episode was a reinfection rather than prolonged shedding,” they stated in their report.

The researchers concluded that Covid-19 reinfections are expected to occur once antibodies decrease and immunity wanes.

It is the first time that someone is reported to have died from a second spell of coronavirus, according to CNN.

Cases of reinfection have also been reported in the US, Hong Kong, Belgium and Ecuador.

A Nevada man became the first reinfection case in the US when he tested positive for Covid-19 in April and again in June.

Doctors say that in both cases he suffered from a sore throat, cough, headache, nausea and diarrhoea.

Unlike the Dutch woman he did not have underlying health issues but also suffered a more serious case the second time.

Researchers say that after the second sickness the man

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https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/10/14/coronavirus-californias-covid-19-deaths-continue-to-plummet/

Oct 15

California's average daily deaths have fallen 57% in 2 weeks

Counties around California reported 65 new fatalities from the virus, sinking the daily average further to about 56 deaths per day over the past week. **The 394 total deaths reported over the past seven days were the fewest in the span of a week since the end of May.**

California is also one of just a handful of states where there are fewer new cases now than there were two weeks ago, albeit not by much.

The Golden State has been stuck in a plateau between 3,000 and 3,600 cases per day for about a month. On Tuesday, counties around the state reported another 4,345 cases of COVID-19 — the highest single-day total in three weeks — which increased the daily average slightly to about 3,340 cases per day over the past week.

Some counties that didn't issue updates over the three-day weekend reported multiple days of results Tuesday. The numbers here reflect when cases and deaths were reported, not when they occurred.

California's average daily death toll has sunk 33% in two weeks, while in the Bay Area it has remained about flat.

Overall, the Bay Area accounts for about 10% of the 16,654 total virus fatalities in the state, despite making up about 20% of its population. But the region accounts for a larger share of the statewide deaths in the past two weeks: about 17%.

There was little change in the statewide positivity rate, which fell below 3% on Sept. 20 and has held steady at about 2.6% for the past two weeks.

After hospitalizations hit their lowest point since April 1 over the weekend, they increased slightly Monday to 2,226 active patients — still fewer than any day but the first two days of April. (CDPH began tracking hospital data on April 1.)

Nationally, new cases are coming at their highest rate since mid-August as the cumulative total was closing in on 8 million, according to Johns Hopkins University. On Monday, the national average crept over 50,000 cases per day for the first time since mid-August, after it fell as low as 35,000 per day in mid-September.

The U.S. death toll crossed 215,000, according to Johns Hopkins.

More Americans have been infected with COVID-19 and died from the virus than the citizens of any other country in the world.

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https://www.bloombergquint.com/coronavirus-outbreak/pfizer-biontech-covid-vaccine-trial-remains-on-track-ceo-says

Oct 15

Pfizer, BioNTech Vaccine Trial remains on track

Side effects that have emerged in a large late-stage trial of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE are in line with those seen in smaller early studies, a positive sign for one of the front-runners in the race for a shot.

The partners haven't had to stop their late-stage study over safety concerns, BioNTech Chief Executive Officer Ugur Sahin said in an interview. They're sticking with their previously **announced target of being able to provide preliminary data on whether the vaccine works as soon as this month**, if a threshold for infections is reached; if so, any **submissions for regulatory approval would come later.**

That would put **Pfizer and BioNTech on track to potentially be the first to show the efficacy of a Covid-19 vaccine**, in an environment of intense scrutiny over every possible complication. **This week, Eli Lilly & Co. and Johnson & Johnson both said they had to pause research** on potential therapies or shots because of safety concerns. ...

The pauses in other studies show "there is no room for ignoring facts," Sahin said. "If there is a concern, the process stops. No one closes their eyes, and it should give people confidence that if a vaccine survives the development process and is approved, it should be regarded as safe."

Pfizer and BioNTech chose their candidate from a slate of four contenders, all of which relied on messenger RNA technology designed to teach the body's cells to become vaccine factories in their own right.

In what Sahin said is an unusual step, Pfizer and BioNTech published some of the data they used to narrow the field in the New England Journal of Medicine on Wednesday. The results show that people who took the experimental shot they chose had fewer so-called systemic side effects -- things like fever, chills and fatigue -- than those who got another jab in the partners' portfolio.

Because of the structure of the trial, BioNTech and Pfizer had first disclosed early results for another vaccine candidate, BNT162b1, in July. Investors were already optimistic about prospects for it, but after comparing data the companies decided instead to pursue another candidate, BNT162b2, Sahin said. That one performed as well in elderly people in the study as it did in young participants, he said, an important consideration for a coronavirus vaccine.

With just 195 participants, the early study was too small to show the real safety implications of the experimental shot. Still, the side effects that have emerged so far in the 44,000-person late-stage trial are similar to those seen in these early studies, Sahin said.

Safety is a key factor for any potential vaccine because the shots will be given widely to healthy people. **The Food and Drug Administration has said it will require two months of safety data before reviewing any application for emergency authorization for a vaccine.**

Collecting the extra safety data probably won't cause much of a delay once readout on the vaccine's effectiveness is available, Sahin said.

"Waiting another couple of weeks to complete the safety data should not be a concern," he said.

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https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/10/who-is-first-in-line-coronavirus-vaccine/

Oct 16

Who will get the vaccine first? Here's where you might land in line

WHENEVER A NEW vaccine gets approved, health officials have to tackle the difficult question of who should be first in line to receive it. Typically health-care workers are first, and in previous outbreaks, such as the H1N1 swine flu in 2009, people whose health was most vulnerable got priority, too.

With the widely anticipated COVID-19 vaccine, there's a new factor being considered: fairness.

On October 2, the National Academy of Medicine revealed its recommendations for COVID-19 vaccine distribution in an influential 237-page framework commissioned by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report proposes distributing a vaccine in four phases as it becomes available. **The first recipients** are obvious picks: **health-care workers, emergency responders, people with underlying conditions, and older adults living in group settings.** This mirrors similar recommendations by the World Health Organization, and it is a foundational principle for the COVAX collaboration, a global effort to improve poorer countries' access to a vaccine, which 171 nations have pledged to join. (The U.S. is not one of them, and a small group of scientists question the wisdom of putting some health-care

But for the first time in history, **the report also recommends that priority be given to people who score high on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index, which identifies factors such as poverty, lack of access to transportation, or crowded housing that are linked to poor health outcomes.** The committee of virologists, epidemiologists, economists, and other health researchers who wrote the report said the goal is to rectify the pandemic's disproportionate burden on minorities and poor people and "work toward a new commitment to promoting health equity."

...

The second phase of the recommended rollout would include the **remaining adults older than 65, K–12 teachers, school staff, and childcare workers—as well as essential workers in industries such as meatpacking that don't allow social distancing.** Residents and staff of group homes, homeless shelters, prisons, and detention centers also fit into this category.

Children, young adults under 30, and other critical workers at increased risk are in the third group. The fourth wave includes everyone else residing in the U.S.

Now that it's been submitted, the report will be considered by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a nongovernmental organization that makes public policy recommendations on the use of licensed vaccines to the CDC. While ACIP's suggestions aren't binding, they're usually adopted.

"These won't be rigid recommendations. We need some flexibility," says Jose Romero, ACIP committee chair and Secretary of Health for the state of Arkansas.

That's because health-care regulators want to avoid some of the pitfalls encountered when they prepared for a vaccination campaign during the H1N1 flu pandemic, which killed more than 12,000 people in the U.S. At that time, counties geared up for distribution of the vaccine to the first priority group, but the shipments arrived so slowly that the threat had passed by the time they received large quantities. Historically, when supplies are limited, mass vaccination can be successfully replaced with ...

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https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-free-counties-america/story?id=73443542

Oct 16

The last COVID-free counties in America

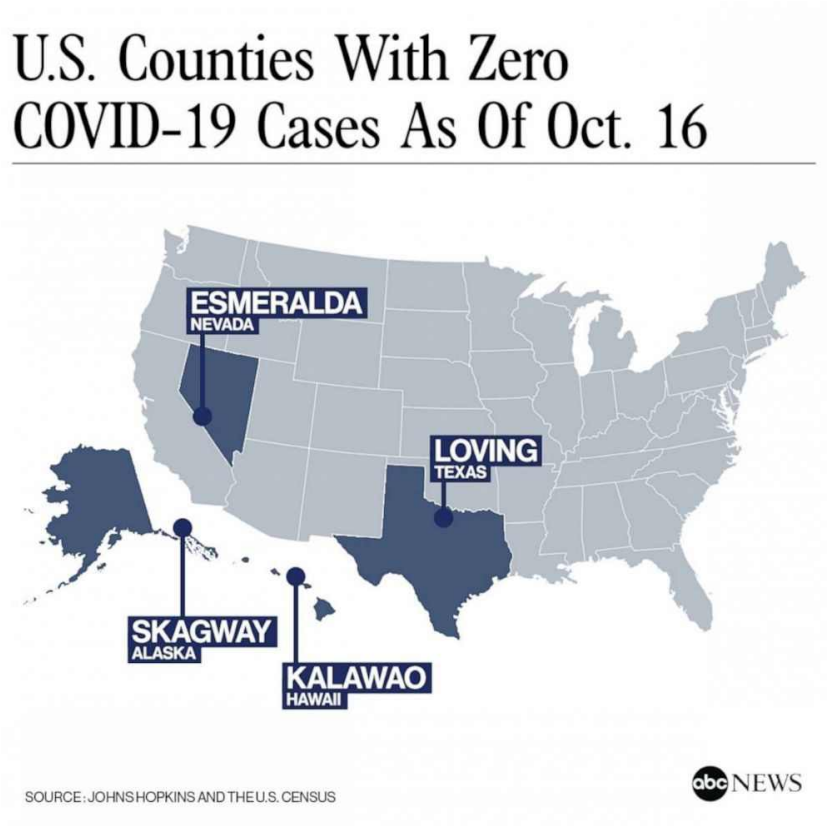
... **The four counties in the United States that haven't reported a single COVID-19 case have some commonalities. They're sparsely populated and geographically isolated. They're solidly middle-class.** In two counties, tourism has ground to a sudden halt because of the pandemic. But testing in areas without strong health infrastructure can complicate the picture, experts warn. You can't report COVID-19 cases if you don't test for them, and rural America has historically lacked access to health resources available in more populated areas.

"Is it that they don't have access?" asked Dr. Jorge Caballero, a clinical instructor at Stanford Medicine, who built a national testing directory that the federal government uses as part of its COVID-19 response effort. "Or are they so remote that they essentially serve as their own version of the NBA bubble?"

Rural and isolated areas are the opposite of a monolith. America's last COVID-free counties span the oil fields of Texas, high desert towns in Nevada, a popular Alaskan port city and a Hawaiian peninsula where historically, patients with leprosy were forced to live in isolation.

Experts warn against extrapolating too much from a tiny sample, in which geography, population density, luck, and even the way in which the United States counts infections, likely play big parts in their lack of coronavirus cases.

In conversations with ABC News, local officials had their own theories. Geography and a sparse population were a starting point. They learned lessons from cities with early outbreaks. Having a small population allowed the community to protect the most vulnerable. But **they don't feel invincible, most said**. On the contrary, they're testing and preparing. **Whether they've been careful, lucky or divinely blessed, the virus is coming, they say**...



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https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/coronavirus-a-timeline-of-how-the-deadly-outbreak-evolved/

Oct 17

Death toll from coronavirus tops 1,100,000

Last Updated October 16th, 2020 13:56 ...

Globally, the total confirmed cases of COVID-19 have reached over 38,998,000 with over 1,099,000 deaths and 26,930,000 recoveries.

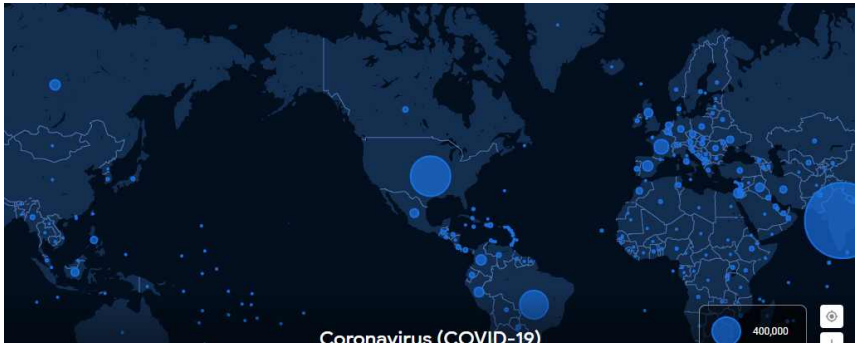
The US remains the most heavily affected country worldwide, accounting for 21% of the total confirmed cases across the globe.

Though the UK is experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 considerably larger than the first, daily confirmed deaths have not seen the same increase.

In Latin America, overall new daily infections are thought to be slowing. Brazil, Latin America's worst affected region has seen a decrease in new cases and deaths since August.

Indonesia has now overtaken the Philippines as the most heavily affected country in Southeast Asia.

As new daily cases in the Philippines have started to slow, a ban on non-essential overseas travel is set to be lifted from 21 October.



https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en

Use the link to access a live tracker for today's numbers

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-wisconsin-health-south-dakota-9039f5a16a2efb826dc4c20fae6bc204

Oct 17

Rural Midwest hospitals struggling to handle virus surge

WESSINGTON SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) — Rural Jerauld County in South Dakota didn't see a single case of the coronavirus for more than two months stretching from June to August. But over the last two weeks, its rate of new cases per person soared to one of the highest in the nation.

"All of a sudden it hit, and as it does, it just exploded," said Dr. Tom Dean, one of just three doctors who work in the county.
...
Rural counties across Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana sit among the top in the nation for new cases per capita over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. In counties with just a few thousand people, the number of cases per capita can soar with even a small outbreak — and the toll hits close to home in tight-knit towns.
...
As cases surge, hospitals in rural communities are having trouble finding beds. A recent request to transfer a "not desperately ill, but pretty" sick COVID-19 patient was denied for several days, until the patient's condition had worsened, Dean said.
...
Thin resources and high death rates have plagued other small communities. Blair Tomsheck, interim director of the health department in Toole County, Montana, worried that the region's small hospitals would need to start caring for serious COVID-19 patients after cases spiked to the nation's highest per capita. One out of every 28 people in the county has tested positive in the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

"It's very, very challenging when your resources are poor — living in a small, rural county," she said.

Infections can also spread quickly in places like Toole County, where most everyone shops at the same grocery store, attends the same school or worships at a handful of churches.

"The Sunday family dinners are killing us," Tomsheck said.

Even as outbreaks threaten to spiral out of control, doctors and health officials said they are struggling to convince people of the seriousness of a virus that took months to arrive in force.
...
South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who has carved out a reputation among conservatives by foregoing lockdowns, blamed the surge in cases on testing increases, even though the state has had the highest positivity rate in the nation over the last two weeks, according to the COVID Tracking Project. Positivity rates are an indication of how widespread infections are.

In Wisconsin, conservative groups have sued over Democratic Gov. Tony Evers mask mandate.

Whether the requirement survives doesn't matter to Jody Bierhals, a resident of Gillett who doubts the efficacy of wearing a mask. Her home county of Oconto, which stretches from the northern border of Green Bay into forests and farmland, has the state's second-highest growth in coronavirus cases per person.

Bierhals, a single mother with three kids, is more worried about the drop in business at her small salon. The region depends on tourists, but many have stayed away during the pandemic.

"Do I want to keep the water on, or do I want to be able to put food on the table?" she asked. "It's a difficult situation."

Bierhals said she thought the virus couldn't be stopped and it would be best to let it run its course. But local attitudes like that have left the county's health officer, Debra Koniter, desperate.

Konitzer warned that the uncontrolled spread of infections has overwhelmed the county's health systems.

"I'm just waiting to see if our community can change our behavior," she said. "Otherwise, I don't see the end in sight."

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/covid-cases-continue-climb-almost-every-state-u-s-braces-n1243848

Oct 18

Cases climbing in almost every state as U.S. braces for possible 'third peak'

... **38 states, Washington, D.C., and Guam all recorded increases in cases over the last 14 days, and nine states have plateaued**, according to NBC News tallies. Rhode Island, which, like Texas, has also had a net decrease, does not report data over the weekend, and Missouri is not reporting data because of a technology issue.

Cases numbers have **spiked in Vermont and New Mexico** as they battle spikes of about 117 percent in case numbers over the last two weeks.

"We are really struggling," Dr. Todd Vento, director of the Telehealth Infectious Disease Program of Utah-based Intermountain Health, said on NBC's "TODAY" show. "People are doing heroic work, but they are really getting to the point where it's going to be literally unsustainable."

On Saturday, thousands of people, many without masks, attended a Trump rally in Janesville, Wisconsin, as health officials urge residents not to gather with anyone outside of their immediate families. The state, which does not release case counts over the weekend, had a record 3,861 new cases Friday, according to the state's health department.

In **North Dakota, a whopping 4 percent of the state's residents have contracted Covid-19 since March, most of the cases coming within the last few weeks.**

North and South Dakota lead the U.S. in weekly virus cases per capita, according to an NBC News tally, and intensive care units are filling up across the states. According to the most recent data released by the North Dakota Health Department, there are 16 ICU open beds in the state, just one in the capital, Bismarck. The state, which does not have a mask mandate, only recommends that its residents cover their faces.

"You know, from my perspective, the mask mandate, it's going to be hard to enforce," said Kirby Kruger, director of the Health Department's disease control division. "I think there's a segment of the population that doesn't want to do this. ... It's not something that they feel that the government should be forcing on them."

Gov. Doug Burgum has continued to stress individual responsibility as case numbers rise. "I think it's important to the future of our state that we do understand there is something that is more powerful than an executive order — infinitely more powerful than a mandate — and these are the beliefs that individuals hold in their hearts," he said at a news conference.

Burgum, a Republican, said he was "amazed" that people were still debating the mask mandate because "there is no other way to get someone to wear a mask other than for that person to choose to do that."

Texas, where illness is declining slightly, has had more than 860,000 cases and almost 17,500 deaths. While the trends are somewhat positive, Gov. Greg Abbott deployed additional resources to the Panhandle and the South Plains on Friday to support hospitals.

"As the Amarillo and Lubbock communities see a rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations, the State of Texas is providing support to hospitals throughout these two regions," Abbott, a Republican, said in a news release.

Epidemiologists warn of a possible "third peak" of Covid-19, this time largely centered in the Midwest and the Plains.

"Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, we're having what I see as potentially six weeks of super-spreader events, right, in which we're going to be getting together with family and friends," Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious diseases expert at the Emory University School of Medicine, said Friday. "And we can see a lot of disease happening."

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https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/10/19/dentists-coronavirus-pandemic-ada-cdc/3653734001/

Oct 19

Dentists affected as pandemic keeps patients away despite safety measures

Millions of Americans are delaying dental appointments over concerns about coronavirus infection, and that's likely to trigger increased fees for patients, job cuts for workers and fewer family practices.

When the pandemic began this spring, essentially all dentists temporarily shut down for all but emergency appointments, putting hundreds of thousands of Americans out of work. While 99% of dentists have reopened, the number of patients visiting offices remains about 20% below usual levels, according to the American Dental Association.

And dentists don't expect it to improve much more anytime soon despite significant safety measures they've rolled outto protect themselves and patients from COVID-19.

Spending on dental care could fall by up to 38% in 2020 and 20% in 2021, the ADA projects. Of dentists surveyed by the trade group, more than 46% said their patient volume was down at least 15% from usual levels during the week of Oct. 5.

About 15% to 20% of regular dental patients say "they're not going to go back to the dentist until there's a vaccine or a proven treatment," said Marko Vujicic, chief economist of the ADA.

"They're a segment of the population that's very cautious, and they're waiting for COVID to pass, so to speak," Vujicic said. "They're simply not returning to usual activities, period."
...
In August, the World Health Organization angered dentists by advising that "routine non-essential oral health care – which usually includes oral health check-ups, dental cleanings and preventive care – be delayed until there has been sufficient reduction in COVID-19 transmission rates from community transmission to cluster cases or according to official recommendations at national, sub-national or local level."

The ADA said it "respectfully yet strongly disagrees" with the WHO's guidance, pointing to numerous safety measures dentists have set up to reduce the risk of transmission, steps advised by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Those measures include heightened use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as N95 masks and surgical masks, disposable gowns, air purifiers, cleaning solutions, temperature checks, hand washing and social distancing, including forcing patients to wait in their cars until their appointment is ready to begin.

Dental industry leaders have said they're not aware of any documented cases of COVID-19 outbreaks stemming from dental offices, but they acknowledge that patients remain concerned about opening their mouths wide in the presence of others for extended periods of time.

"I know I would rather go into a dental office than a restaurant," said Scott Asnis, a practicing dentist in his role as founder and CEO of Dental365, a network of dentists based in New York.

If patient volume remains at current levels for a few more months, dentists say they'll give serious consideration to raising their fees, including for insured patients, as well as cutting jobs or selling their practices, according to the ADA.

"We're at a very important next couple of months," said Vujicic, the ADA economist. "I do think we will see additional layoffs ...

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-pandemics-immunizations-epidemics-united-nations-fc4c536d62c5ef25152884adb1c14168

Oct 20

Vaccine storage issues could leave 3B people without access

...From factory to syringe, t**he world's most promising coronavirus vaccine candidates need non-stop sterile refrigeration to stay potent and safe.** But despite enormous strides in equipping developing countries to maintain the vaccine "cold chain," **nearly 3 billion of the world's 7.8 billion people live where temperature-controlled storage is insufficient** for an immunization campaign to bring COVID-19 under control.
...
Maintaining the cold chain for coronavirus vaccines won't be easy even in the richest of countries, especially when it comes to those that require ultracold temperatures of around minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 F). Investment in infrastructure and cooling technology lags behind the high-speed leap that vaccine development has taken this year due to the virus.

With the pandemic now in its eighth month, logistics experts warn that vast parts of the world lack the refrigeration to administer an effective vaccination program. This includes most of Central Asia, much of India and southeast Asia, Latin America except for the largest countries, and all but a tiny corner of Africa.
...
To uphold the cold chain in developing nations, international organizations have overseen the installation of tens of thousands of solar-powered vaccine refrigerators. Keeping vaccines at stable temperatures from the time they are made until they are given to patients also requires mobile refrigeration, reliable electricity, sound roads and, above all, advance planning.
...
Currently, 42 coronavirus vaccine candidates are in clinical trials and another 151 are in pre-clinical evaluation, according to WHO. The ones most likely to end up in the Covax mix must be stored at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius (25-46 F).

A Pfizer candidate is among the ones in advanced testing requiring storage at ultracold temperatures. The company, which has designed a special carrying case for its vaccine, has expressed interest in Covax and signed contracts with the United States, Europe and Japan.

Medical freezers that go down to minus 70 degrees Celsius are rare even in U.S. and European hospitals. Many experts believe the West African countries that suffered through a 2014-16 Ebola outbreak may be the best positioned, because a vaccine against that virus also requires ultracold storage.

For more than two-thirds of the world, however, the advanced technology is nowhere on the horizon, according to a study by German logistics company DHL. Meanwhile, billions of people are in countries that don't have the necessary infrastructure to maintain the cold chain for either existing vaccines or more conventional coronavirus candidates, the study said.

Opportunities for vaccines to be lost expand the farther a vaccine travels. DHL estimated that 15,000 cargo flights would be required to vaccinate the entire planet against COVID-19, stretching global capacity for aircraft and potentially supplies of materials such as dry ice.
...
Cracks in the global cold chain start once vaccines leave the factory. Container ships are not equipped to refrigerate pharmaceutical products with a limited shelf life. Shipping vaccines by air costs a lot more, and air cargo traffic is only now rebounding from pandemic-related border closures.

Even when flights are cold and frequent enough, air freight carries other potential hazards. WHO estimates that as much as half of vaccines globally are lost to wastage, sometimes due to heat exposure or vials breaking while in transit. With coronavirus vaccines, which will be one of the world's most sought-after products, theft is also a danger.
...
As with most logistics, the last kilometer (mile) is the hardest part of delivering a coronavirus vaccine to the people who need it. In Latin America, perhaps nowhere more than Venezuela provides a glimpse into how the vaccine cold chain could go dramatically off course.

When a blackout last year left much of the nation in the dark for a week, doctors in several parts of Venezuela reported losing stocks of ...

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/ireland-is-imposing-one-of-europes-strictest-coronavirus-lockdowns-and-the-government-expects-150000-people-to-lose-their-jobs-within-days/ar-BB1acKPl?li=BBnb7Kz

Oct 20

Ireland is imposing one of Europe's strictest coronavirus lockdowns

Ireland has warned that an estimated 150,000 people — around 3% of the entire population — will lose their job within days as the country moves to its highest level of coronavirus restrictions.

Starting Thursday, non-essential retailers will shut and people are asked to remain at home whenever possible, with a 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) travel limit for exercise. Social or family gatherings in homes or gardens will be banned.

Restaurants and bars can only provide takeaway service.

The lockdown, similar to the one imposed in March, will last six weeks.

Leo Varadkar, deputy premier, said in a press conference on Monday that the government estimates "about 150,000" will be laid off in the coming days.

He said it would cost around €200 million ($236 million) per week to support the economy through employment benefits and grants.

"So about €1.5 billion ($1.77 billion) for six weeks and that's not taking account, though, of the potential fall in [tax] revenue that may arise from business closures," Varadkar said.

Prime Minister Micheál Martin said in a televised speech that the country already has "what is probably Europe's strictest regime," but that current measures were not enough to suppress the virus.

"The government has decided that the evidence of a potentially grave situation arising in the weeks ahead is now too strong," he said.

"If we pull together over the next six weeks we will have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas in a meaningful way."

The "Level 5" restrictions will last until December 1.

Schools, childcare facilities and manufacturers can stay open.

The government said the restrictions would come into effect at midnight on Wednesday, later clarifying this meant late Wednesday night, early Thursday morning.

Infections have been on the rise in Ireland, with nearly 12,500 new coronavirus cases reported in the past two weeks. The death toll in the country stands at 1,852.

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-pandemics-health-south-america-argentina-ce8ce2f05963f1be85fc9f009a32a9c0

Oct 20

Latin America registers some of the world's highest daily case counts

... as **Argentina** passed 1 million virus cases Monday, it is now smaller cities like Ushuaia that are seeing some of the most notable upticks. Doctors have had to quadruple the number of beds for COVID-19 patients over the last month. At least 60% of those tested recently are coming back positive for the virus.
...
Across Latin America, three other nations are expected to reach the 1 million case milestone in the coming weeks — **Colombia, Mexico and Peru**. The grim mark comes as Latin America continues to register some of the world's highest daily case counts. And though some nations have seen important declines, overall there has been little relief, with cases dropping in one municipality only to escalate in another.

The trajectory is showing that the pandemic is likely to leave no corner of Latin America unscathed.

"The second wave is arriving without ever having finished the first," said Dr. Luis Jorge Hernández, a public health professor at the University of the Andes in Colombia.

Argentina has seen cases spiral despite instituting one of the world's longest lockdowns. Colombia's major cities have seen a dip, but smaller areas like the department of Caldas in the coffee region are only now reaching a peak. **Peru's overall numbers have dropped, but officials recently reported 12 regions are spiking back up. Mexico, likewise, has seen a rise in a quarter of all states over the last week.**

The result is that rather than a second virus wave like that being seen in Europe, epidemiologists anticipate a more sustained, plateau-like trend.
....
The virus' cruel path through Latin America is a consequence of weak public health systems, social factors like poverty and poor government decisions early on that resulted in flawed or limited testing and little contact tracing. Today the region is home to half the 10 countries with the highest total cases around the globe.

Argentina initially registered low virus case numbers but now has one of the highest rates of new daily infections per capita, ...

Dr. Adolfo Rubinstein, a former Argentine health minister, said the nation depended too heavily on lockdowns as its primary means of controlling the virus, failing to purchase enough tests in the initial months of the pandemic.
...

Brazil reached 1 million cases in June and now is up to 5.2 million for the pandemic.
...

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https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/20/world/a-virus-update-in-three-charts.html

Oct 21

A virus update, in three charts

... **The full picture: There are some silver linings.**

The statistics on new virus cases that get so much attention are somewhat exaggerating the severity of the current outbreak, because of the rise in testing.

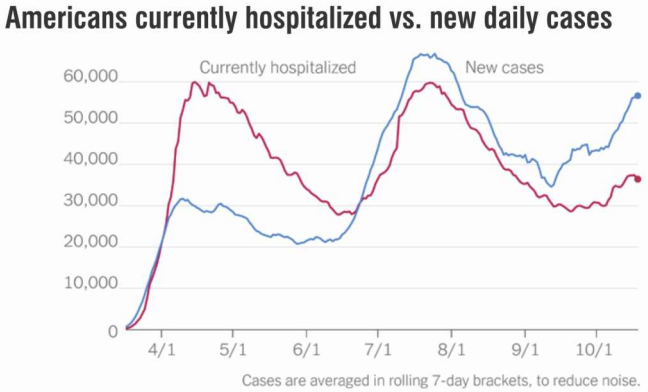
And treatments have improved, reducing the death count.

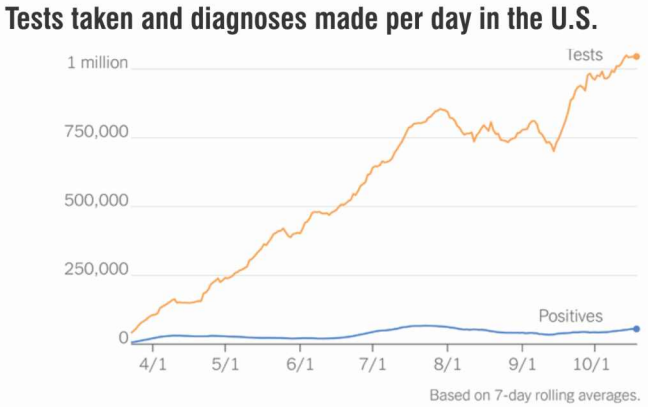
But the virus's toll has still been horrific — and worse than in many other countries. More than 220,000 Americans have died, and hundreds of people are still dying every day.

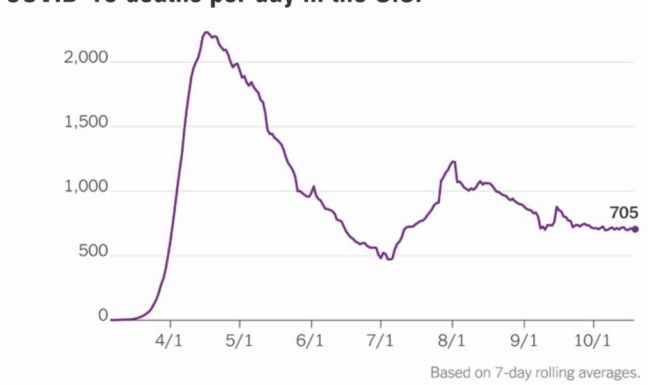
The overall situation is also getting worse, as the hospitalization numbers make clear.

In some states, hospitals are almost full, and the virus continues to spread. “I'm just waiting to see if our community can change our behavior,” Debra Konitzer, the top health officer in Oconto County, Wis., recently said. “Otherwise, I don't see the end in sight.”As Donald McNeil says,

“The fall wave has just begun.”







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https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/10/20/925441975/studies-point-to-big-drop-in-covid-19-death-rates

Oct 21

Sharp drop in death rate of hospitalized patients

Two new peer-reviewed studies are showing a sharp drop in mortality among hospitalized COVID-19 patients. The drop is seen in all groups, including older patients and those with underlying conditions, suggesting that physicians are getting better at helping patients survive their illness.

"We find that the **death rate has gone down substantially,**" says Leora Horwitz, a doctor who studies population health at New York University's Grossman School of Medicine and an author on one of the studies, which looked at thousands of patients from March to August.

The study, which was of a single health system, finds that mortality has dropped among hospitalized patients by 18 percentage points since the pandemic began. Patients in the study had a 25.6% chance of dying at the start of the pandemic; they now have a 7.6% chance.

That's a big improvement, but 7.6% is still a high risk compared with other diseases, and Horwitz and other researchers caution that COVID-19 remains dangerous.
...
“The **people who are getting hospitalized now tend to be much younger, tend to have fewer other diseases and tend to be less frail** than people who were hospitalized in the early days of the epidemic," Horwitz says.

So have death rates dropped because of improvements in treatments? Or is it because of the change in who's getting sick?
...
Mateen says drops are clear across ages, underlying conditions and racial groups. Although the paper does not provide adjusted mortality statistics, his rough estimates are comparable to those Horwitz and her team found in New York.

"Clearly, there's been something [that's] gone on that's improved the risk of individuals who go into these settings with COVID-19," he says.

Horwitz and others believe **many things have led to the drop in the death rate. "All of the above is often the right answer in medicine**, and I think that's the case here, too," she says.

Doctors around the country say that **they're doing a lot of things differently** in the fight against COVID-19 and that treatment is improving. "In March and April, you got put on a breathing machine, and we asked your family if they wanted to enroll you into some different trials we were participating in, and we hoped for the best," says Khalilah Gates, a critical care pulmonologist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. "Six plus months into this, we kind of have a rhythm, and so it has become an everyday standard patient for us at this point in time."

Doctors have gotten better at quickly recognizing when COVID-19 patients are at risk of experiencing blood clots ...

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https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-czech-republic-prague-andrej-babis-8c1a05d3280ae8b6cd773b8e9fc952f3

Oct 22

Czechs enter 2nd lockdown to avoid health system collapse

PRAGUE (AP) — Czechs had been assured it wouldn't happen again.

But amid a record surge of coronavirus infections that's threatening the entire health system with collapse, the Czech Republic is adopting on Thursday exactly **the same massive restrictions it slapped on citizens in the spring**. Prime Minister Andrej Babis had repeatedly said these measures would never return.
...
The measures include **limits on free movement and the closure of many stores, shopping malls and hotels. They will remain in place until at least Nov 3.**

The Czech Republic had initially set an example with its effective and fast response when the pandemic first struck, but failed to learn from other countries' subsequent experiences and now faces the consequences.

As the pandemic struck slightly later than in western Europe, Czech authorities gained some breathing space. They used it to impose sweeping restrictions on daily life in March, and — **unlike most other European countries — made mask-wearing obligatory in all public areas.**

In April, the country was the first, with Austria, to start to ease restrictions and — again unlike most other European countries — almost completely abandoned them in the summer.

In June, thousands declared victory over the coronavirus at a big party on Prague's medieval Charles Bridge. Babis, considered a populist leader, was jubilant and told an international conference in August that his country was the "best in COVID," despite already growing numbers of infected people.

The atmosphere at Wednesday's news conference, as Babis announced the new measures, was more sober.

"What happened was somehow predicted but nobody expected its scope," Babis said.

Some experts had called much earlier for strict steps.

"(Even) yesterday (would have been) late, there's a danger at every corner," Jaroslav Flegr, a professor of evolutionary biology who predicted the surge a while ago, told Czech public television.

Many still remember when Babis' then health minister, Adam Vojtech, and his team proposed in August a mandatory return of masks in schools. Babis dismissed that option and fired the minister weeks later when the numbers of new infections started to grow rapidly in September.

They still are.

The daily figure for new confirmed cases was a record of almost 15,000 on Wednesday. That was almost 3,000 more than the previous record, set on Tuesday.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Czech Republic has registered 208,915 confirmed infections, about one third of them in the past seven days, and 1,739 people have died — with a record 100 deaths registered Monday.

The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases has risen over the past two weeks from 32.81 new cases per 100,000 people on Oct. 7 to 92.88 new cases per 100,000 people on Wednesday.

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/22/coronavirus-second-wave-europe-is-affected-differently-heres-why.html

Oct 22

Coronavirus 2nd wave is hitting Europe in very different ways

LONDON — There's no doubt that Europe is seeing a second wave of coronavirus infections, but the surge is not affecting its major economies in the same way.

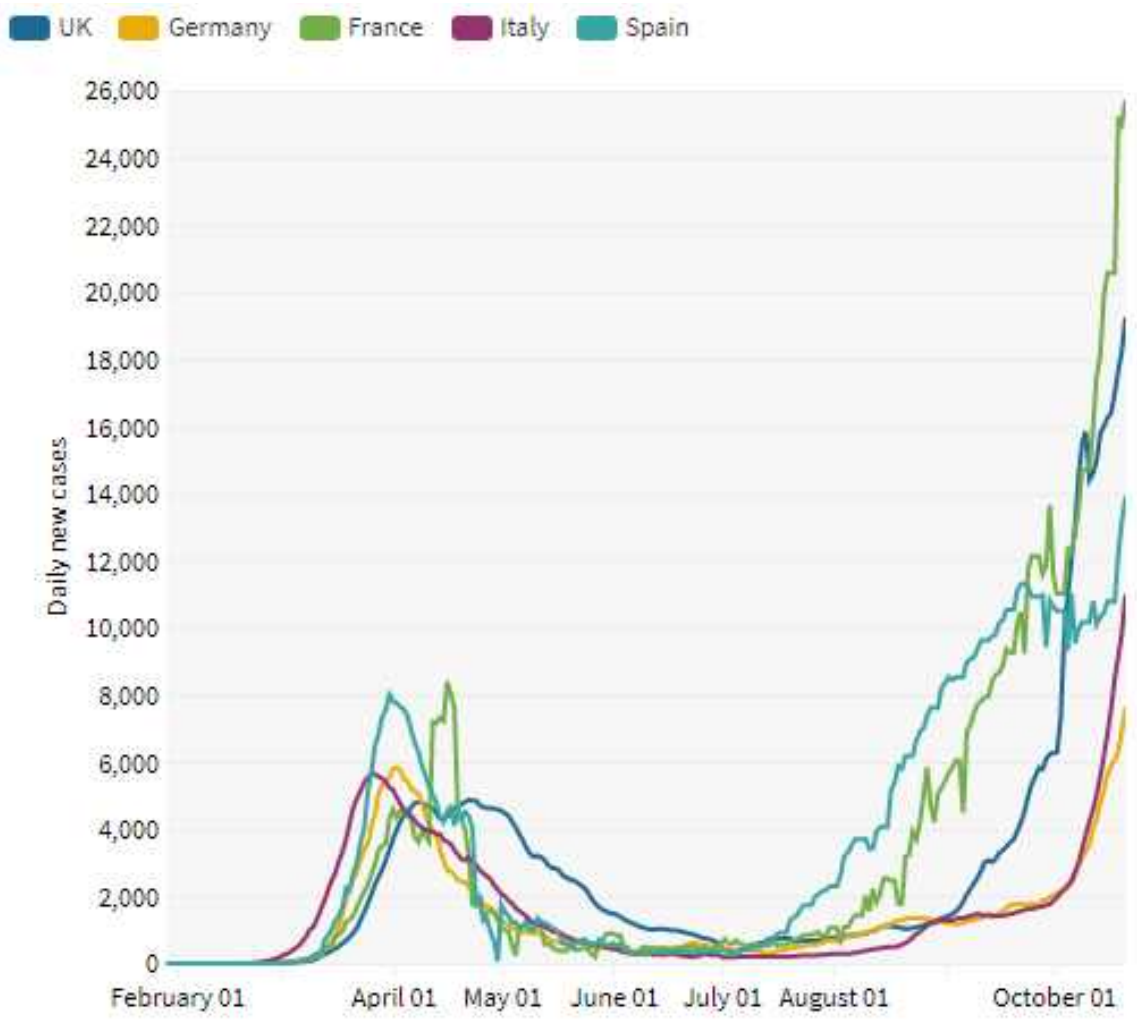
The **U.K., France and Spain, as well as the Netherlands, have all seen a sharp rise in cases since late August-early September.** But **Italy and Germany have lagged behind** their counterparts, only now seeing numbers starting to pick up dramatically.

JPMorgan analysts have looked at the phenomenon and believe they know what's behind the disparity.

"Most likely, in our view, the **difference** between Germany and Italy, on the one hand, and France, Spain, the Netherlands and the U.K., on the other, is not mobility but rather the breadth of **mask wearing and the efficacy of test and trace regimes**," ...

Major European economies: Daily new cases

(7 day average) Source: John Hopkins University



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https://www.aol.com/article/news/2020/10/22/fda-approves-first-covid-19-drug-antiviral-remdesivir/24659415/

Oct 22

FDA approves first COVID-19 drug: antiviral remdesivir

U.S. regulators on Thursday approved the first drug to treat COVID-19: remdesivir, an antiviral medicine given to hospitalized patients through an IV.

The drug, which California-based Gilead Sciences Inc. is calling Veklury, cut the time to recovery by five days — from 15 days to 10 on average — in a large study led by the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

It had been **authorized for use on an emergency basis since spring, and now becomes the first drug to win full Food and Drug Administration approval for treating COVID-19**. President Donald Trump received it when he was sickened earlier this month.

Veklury is approved for people at least 12 years old and weighing at least 88 pounds (40 kilograms) who are hospitalized for a coronavirus infection. For patients younger than 12, the FDA will still allow the drug's use in certain cases under its previous emergency authorization.

The drug works by inhibiting a substance the virus uses to make copies of itself. Certain kidney and liver tests are required before starting patients on it to ensure it's safe for them and to monitor for any possible side effects. And the label warns against using it with the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, because that can curb its effectiveness.

"We now have enough knowledge and a growing set of tools to help fight COVID-19," Gilead's chief medical officer, Dr. Merdad Parsey, said in a statement.

The drug is either approved or has temporary authorization in about 50 countries, he noted.

Its price has been controversial, given that no studies have found it improves survival. Last week, a large study led by the World Health Organization found the drug did not help hospitalized COVID-19 patients, but that study did not include a placebo group and was less rigorous than previous ones that found a benefit. The FDA's approval statement noted that, besides the NIH-led one, two other studies found the drug beneficial.

Gilead charges $2,340 for a typical treatment course for people covered by government health programs in the United States and other developed countries, and $3,120 for patients with private insurance. The amount that patients pay out of pocket depends on insurance, income and other factors.

So far, only steroids such as dexamethasone have been shown to cut the risk of dying of COVID-19. The FDA also has given emergency authorization to using the blood of survivors, and two companies are currently seeking similar authorization for experimental antibody drugs.

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https://chicago.suntimes.com/entertainment-and-culture/2020/10/22/21529664/santa-claus-macys-chicago-new-york-state-street-cancel

Oct 23

No Santa Claus at Macy's this season

Macy's said Santa Claus won't be greeting kids at its Chicago store or its New York flagship this year due to the coronavirus, interrupting a holiday tradition started nearly 160 years ago.

More than a quarter of a million people come to see Santa at Macy's in New York each year, the company said, making it hard to create a safe environment during a pandemic. Before taking a picture with the jolly old man, crowds walk in tight quarters through a maze-like Santaland that's filled with Christmas trees, running toy trains and elves in green costumes.

Santa still will appear at the end of the televised Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, the company said.

With the coronavirus still raging, stores and malls are having to rework their typical holiday strategy, which had been to pack as many people through its doors as possible. Walmart, for example, is holding its Black Friday deals over four weeks, instead of one day.

But the decision by Macy's differs from big mall owners, which will still go ahead with in-person Santa visits by banning kids from sitting on his lap and making sure they stay six feet away from him.

Macy's has been using Santa Claus to draw crowds to its New York store since the early 1860s, calling itself "The Home of Santa Claus" for decades. And Macy's had a starring role in the 1947 film "Miracle on 34th Street," where a girl discovers the real Santa inside the store.

In Chicago, Santa's visits to the State Street store date back more than 70 years, to the historic building's previous days as Marshall Field's.

Macy's will be offering a free online experience on its website at the end of November, where families can play games, get a virtual tour of Santa's workshop and take a selfie with Santa.

"Moving to a virtual engagement will safely bring the magic of Santa Claus to children of all ages this year," Macy's said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The pandemic has forced Macy's to tweak other holiday traditions.

In order to deter crowds, **its annual Thanksgiving Day parade won't go through its usual route through Manhattan. Instead, floats, performers and giant cartoon balloons will be filmed for TV in front of the Herald Square store in New York.**

Macy's also ditched a one-night firework spectacle on the Fourth of July, and held smaller unannounced firework shows to stop people from gathering to watch.

https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/23/health/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-trial-resumes/index.html

Oct 24

AstraZeneca, Johnson&Johnson to resume Covid-19 vaccine trials in US

Drugmakers AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson both said Friday they are set to resume their paused coronavirus vaccine trials in the United States after health scares.

AstraZeneca's trial had been on hold since early September, and Johnson & Johnson's trial had been paused since earlier this month

AstraZeneca said the US Food and Drug Administration authorized the restart Thursday after reviewing all of the global safety data and concluding it was safe to resume. The trial had already resumed in other countries.
The trial was paused after a volunteer in Britain developed a neurological condition.

Johnson & Johnson's trial was put on hold October 12 due to a study participant's "unexplained illness," the company said. The company said Friday "no clear cause" was identified. "Preparations to resume the trial in the United States are now underway," the company said, including submissions for approval by Institutional Review Boards. **Johnson & Johnson's statement did not specify when the trial would begin again but a source familiar with the process said it could restart at some point next week, pending IRB approval.**

"There are many possible factors that could have caused the event. Based on the information gathered to date and the input of independent experts, the Company has found no evidence that the vaccine candidate caused the event," the company's statement said.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine trial started September 23 with a plan to recruit 60,000 patients in eight countries, including the United States. In its statement Friday, Johnson & Johnson said discussions with regulators around the world are "progressing."

Government health officials, as well as outside experts, have said the holds are an example of how the safety process is working and protecting Americans from any potentially dangerous vaccines. Regulators wanted to check to make sure any problems could not have been caused by the vaccines.

AstraZeneca has been working with Britain's University of Oxford to develop its vaccine, one of four that have started late-stage, Phase 3 trials in the US.

An internal AstraZeneca safety report obtained by CNN last month showed the study volunteer, a previously healthy 37-year-old woman, "experienced confirmed transverse myelitis" after receiving her second dose of the vaccine, and was hospitalized on September 5. The woman was enrolled in the UK arm of the trial, which is run by the University of Oxford.

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https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/23/coronavirus-single-day-record-us-432079?cid=apn

Oct 24

U.S. sets new single-day record for coronavirus infections

The United States tallied a record **83,010 new coronavirus cases Friday as infections climb across much of the country, according to data compiled by the Covid Tracking Project.**

The virus' trajectory belies President Donald Trump's frequent predictions that the pandemic is "rounding the corner," as he again claimed during the final presidential debate on Thursday. Democratic nominee Joe Biden refuted that notion, predicting the country is headed into a "dark winter."

The latest surge comes ahead of what's expected to be an especially dangerous winter for the virus, with hospitalizations already on the rise. **More than 41,000 people have been hospitalized with the virus, up nearly 20 percent in the past two weeks, while deaths are also beginning to rise again to a seven-day average of nearly 800 per day.**

...

Public health experts warn the number of new infections will continue rise during the fall and winter as temperatures fall and people spend more time indoors. Even if a vaccine is authorized before the end of the year, it will likely take months before it can be widely distributed to the public.

“The number of Covid cases, hospitalizations, and deaths is going to continue to grow sharply as we enter the winter; until all of us on our own start taking enough collective action to slow the spread,” Trump’s former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb tweeted Friday. “There is no seasonal backstop, and won’t be any new national policy action.”

At least 8.3 million Americans have been infected by the virus since the global pandemic began and nearly 225,000 have died, according to CDC data.

CDC Director Robert Redfield and other government health experts have implored Americans to wear masks, continue to social distance and frequently wash their hands to help prevent spread of the virus.

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https://apnews.com/article/spain-coronavirus-emergency-europe-2a851229071576fa4fff11162798e3de

Oct 25

Spain orders nationwide curfew to stem worsening outbreak

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spain declared a **second nationwide state of emergency Sunday and ordered an overnight curfew across the country** in hopes of stemming a resurgence in coronavirus infections, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said.

The Socialist leader told the nation in a televised address that the extraordinary measure will go into effect on Sunday night.

Sánchez said that his government is using the state of emergency to impose an 11 p.m.-6 a.m. nationwide curfew, except in the Canary Islands.

Spain's 19 regional leaders will have authority to set different hours for the curfew as long as they are stricter, **close regional borders to travel and limit gatherings to six people who don't live together**, the prime minister said.

"The reality is that Europe and Spain are immersed in a second wave of the pandemic," Sánchez said after meeting with his Cabinet.

The leader added that he would ask Parliament this week to extend the **state of emergency for six months, until May.**

Sánchez's government said Saturday night that a majority of Spain's regional leaders have agreed to a new state of emergency and the meeting Sunday was to study its terms.

The state of emergency gives the national government extraordinary powers, including the ability to temporarily restrict basic freedoms guaranteed in Spain's Constitution such as the right to free movement.

Spain's government has already declared two state of emergencies during the pandemic. **The first was declared in March to apply a strict home confinement across the nation, close stores and recruit private industry for the national public health fight. It was lifted in June after reigning in the contagion rate and saving hospitals from collapse.**

The second went into effect for two weeks in Madrid to force the capital's reluctant regional leaders to impose travel limits on residents to slow down an outbreak in which new infections were growing exponentially. It lasted until Saturday.

Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa has said his agency and regional health officials were studying how to apply nightly curfews, perhaps like the 9 p.m. ones already in place in France's major cities.

The state of emergency would make it easier for authorities to take swift action, avoiding having to get many of the restrictions approved by a judge. Some judges have rejected efforts to limit movement in certain regions, causing confusion among the public.

Government officials on all levels were reticent to impose another complete home lockdown and industry shutdown, given the weakened state of Spain's economy, which has plunged into a recession and seen its unemployment rolls skyrocket in recent months.

Spain this week became the first European country to surpass 1 million officially recorded COVID-19 cases. But Sánchez admitted Friday in a nationally televised address that the true figure could be more than 3 million, due to gaps in testing and other factors.

Spain on Friday reported almost 20,000 new daily cases and 231 more deaths, taking the **country's death toll in the pandemic to 34,752.**

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https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/italy-orders-bars-and-restaurants-to-close-early-as-covid-rates-surge/ar-BB1ancHV?li=BBnbfcL

Oct 25

Italy orders bars and restaurants to close early as COVID rates surge

MILAN (Reuters) - Italy on Sunday **ordered bars and restaurants to close by 6 p.m. and shut public gyms, cinemas and swimming pools** to try to halt a rapid resurgence in the coronavirus that has pushed daily infection rates to new records.

The measures, which take effect on Monday and were agreed between Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's government in Rome and regional authorities, arrived after two nights of protests in Naples and Rome against curfews introduced in a number of regions last week.

Aware of the huge cost of shutting down the economy, the Rome government has said it does not want to repeat the blanket lockdown ordered in the first phase of the crisis. But it has been forced to ratchet up restrictions steadily as the pandemic has raced ahead after slowing down in the summer.

The decree encourages people not to go out and to limit contacts at home with anyone outside their immediate family, but does not impose a mandatory nationwide curfew or lockdown and allows shops and most businesses to remain open.

However, service in bars and restaurants will be subject to a series of controls to limit contagion, and cinemas, theatres, gaming halls and disotheques will be closed.

The decree also directs that up to **three quarters of high school teaching should be done online to limit the number of pupils in school buildings.**

Italy, once the country hardest hit by the pandemic in the industrialised world, has been overtaken by others in Europe including Spain, France and Britain, but case rates have been rebounding rapidly and health services have come under increasing pressure.

On Saturday, authorities reported a new record daily total of 19,644 infections, as well as 151 deaths from the respiratory disease.

The protests in Naples and Rome, while limited in scale, underlined the tense political climate facing Conte's coalition government between the anti-establishment 5 Star Movement and the centre-left Democratic Party.

Conte was generally praised for his handling of the initial phase of the crisis but has come under increasing fire for failing to strengthen preparations including testing and contact tracing over the summer.

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https://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/26/covid-vaccine-fauci-says-findings-will-be-known-by-early-december.html

Oct 26

Dr. Fauci says vaccine findings will be known by early December

...**The U.S.'s leading expert on infectious disease believes it will only be a matter of weeks before the findings of a potential vaccine will be known.**

"We will know whether a vaccine is safe and effective by the end of November, the beginning of December," White House coronavirus advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said in a BBC interview on Sunday.

"The question is: Once you have a safe and effective vaccine, or more than one, how can you get it to the people who need it as quickly as possible?"

Fauci said a vaccine deemed safe and effective would be rolled out according to a set prioritization, with individuals such as health care workers and those in a higher risk category likely to receive the first doses. He said it would be "several months into 2021" before a vaccine becomes more widely available.

The development of a vaccine, Fauci warned, would not replace the need for public health measures to help protect people from the disease for some time.

...

Leo Varadkar, **Ireland's deputy prime minister, has said he is hopeful an inoculation against the coronavirus could be approved before the end of the year.**

"I'm increasingly optimistic, as is government, that we will see a vaccine approved in the next couple of months and that in the first half or first quarter of next year it'll be possible to start vaccinating those most at risk," Varadkar, who is a qualified doctor, told RTE radio on Sunday.

Not all public health experts share the same level of optimism about the development of a Covid vaccine before year-end, however.

The Mail on Sunday reported plans had been drawn up for frontline National Health Service staff to receive a coronavirus vaccine within weeks, citing an email sent by an NHS Trust chief to his staff.

In response to the report, U.K. Health Minister Matt Hancock said on Monday that it was not the government's expectation for NHS staff to receive access to a potential vaccine this year.

He did rule out the possibility of a Covid vaccine being delivered to hospital staff in 2020 but said the bulk of the rollout would likely take place in the first half of next year.

The **U.K.'s chief scientific advisor, Patrick Vallance, has said he doesn't believe a Covid vaccine will be available for widespread use in the community until at least the spring.**

He also told the National Security Strategy Committee in London last week that **the coronavirus was likely to become as endemic as the annual flu.**

This means the infection rate of the coronavirus, like other coronaviruses, will eventually stabilize at a constant level so that the virus becomes present in communities at all times.

...

Separately, Dr. David Heymann, who led the WHO's infectious disease unit during the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003, believes some governments may be over-reliant on the development of a vaccine at a time when effective communication, diagnostic testing and outbreak containment activities are all critically important tools.

"The difficulty right now is that in many countries, they are looking forward to a vaccine which may or may not come, which may or may not be effective in the short or long term, and they are looking at possible therapeutic (options) which could solve many of the problems," Heymann said during a webinar for think tank Chatham House last week.

"But, that's not a good way to proceed at present. … **We have to learn to live with the pandemic."**

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_United_States_presidential_election

Nov 3

2020 US presidential election

Oct 26 - Early Voting numbers exceeds those in 2016

https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-donald-trump-florida-elections-voting-2020-4c36f3eb40ba0ffc71d3eb9488a0e360

... 58.6 million ballots cast so far, more than the 58 million that The Associated Press logged as being cast through the mail or at in-person early voting sites in 2016.

...

On Oct. 15, Democrats registrants cast 51% of all ballots reported, compared with 25% from Republicans. On Sunday, Democrats had a slightly smaller lead, 51% to 31%.

...

Analysts said the still sizable Democratic turnout puts extra pressure on the Republican Party to push its voters out in the final week and on Nov. 3. That's especially clear in closely contested states such as Florida, Nevada and North Carolina.

...

The electoral map for the 2020 election

The electoral map for the 2020 election, based on populations from the 2010 Census

If no candidate receives the minimum 270 electoral votes needed to win the election, the United States House of Representatives will select the president from the three candidates who received the most electoral votes, and the United States Senate will select the vice president from the candidates who received the two highest totals. The election will occur simultaneously alongside elections for the House of Representatives, Senate, and various state and local-level elections.