

COVID-19 Daily Update

April 23, 2020

Summary

The United States has 856,209 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 47,272 reported related deaths. The Department of Labor reports that another 4.4 million workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. More than 26 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last five weeks. President Trump signed a proclamation temporarily stopping the issuance of green cards to those outside the United States for 60 days. President Trump stated that the order “will ensure that unemployed Americans of all backgrounds will be first in line for jobs as our economy reopens.” The order does not apply to U.S. citizens and exempts individuals seeking to enter the country on an immigrant visa as a health care professional or medical researcher working to combat COVID-19. The House will vote on a \$484 billion COVID-19 relief package on Thursday afternoon that would provide funds for small business loans, hospitals, and increased testing capacity.

WHO warned that COVID-19 “remains extremely dangerous” and “will be with us for a long time.” President Trump expressed doubt about a potential second wave of COVID-19 this fall, and asserted that “it may not come back at all.” However, CDC Director Redfield recently stated that the coronavirus and the seasonal flu season will likely overlap later this year, causing an “even more difficult” second wave of COVID-19 in the fall. Dr. Fauci also stated that he is “convinced” that “we will have coronavirus in the fall” because of its degree of transmissibility and global nature.

Governor Cuomo released the preliminary results of a statewide COVID-19 antibody study. New York State randomly tested 3,000 people at grocery stores and shopping locations across 19 counties in 40 localities. The study estimates that nearly 14% of New Yorkers have developed some immunity to the virus. New York City had the largest concentration of positive antibody tests, with more than 21.2% of people testing positive. New York City Health Commissioner Barbot announced that the City’s 147,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases are “just the tip of the iceberg,” adding that the actual figure could be closer to 1 million. Two pet cats in New York tested positive for COVID-19, marking the first confirmed cases in companion animals in the United States.

General/Employer Guidance

Presidential updates

- [Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing](#), April 22
 - President Trump expressed doubt about a potential second wave of COVID-19 this fall, and asserted that “it may not come back at all.” This statement contradicts CDC Director Redfield’s recent [comment](#) that COVID-19 and the seasonal flu season will likely overlap later this year, causing an “even more difficult” second wave of COVID-19. Dr. Fauci is “convinced” that “we will have coronavirus in the fall” because of its degree of transmissibility and global nature.
 - President Trump criticized Georgia Governor Kemp’s decision to allow many businesses to re-open this week as premature, given the number of virus cases in the state. Georgia will allow gyms, hair and nail salons, bowling alleys, and tattoo parlors to reopen on Friday, April 24. On Monday April 27, restaurants will resume dine-in service, and movie theaters can re-open. Dr. Fauci disagreed with Kemp’s executive order asserting that, “If I were advising the governor, I would tell him that he should be careful.”
- [Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants Who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market During the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak](#), April 22
 - President Trump signed a proclamation temporarily “suspending immigration into the United States.” The order cautions against the impact of foreign workers on the United States labor market during times of high domestic unemployment. During his daily press briefing, President Trump stated that the order “will ensure that unemployed Americans of all backgrounds will be first in line for jobs as our economy reopens.”
 - The order applies to aliens who are outside of the United States as of April 23, do not have a valid immigrant visa, and do not have any official travel documents other than a visa – such as a transportation letter or advance parole document.
 - The order does not apply to U.S. citizens and their spouses and children. The order further exempts lawful permanent residents. The order also does not apply to individuals seeking to enter the country on an immigrant visa as a health care professional or medical researcher working to combat COVID-19.
 - The order expires within 60 days of April 23 and “may be continued as necessary.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [China to give millions more to WHO after the U.S. halts funding](#), April 23
 - China announced plans to donate an additional \$30 million to WHO after President Trump suspending American funding earlier this month. President Trump previously accused WHO of promoting “China’s misinformation” and “severely mismanaging” the spread of the coronavirus.
- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 94](#), April 23
 - WHO Director-General Tedros [asserted](#) that the virus “remains extremely dangerous” and “will be with us for a long time.” While most of the epidemics in Western Europe are stable or declining, most countries are in the early stages of their epidemics. WHO warned that epidemics can easily re-ignite, and noted that most of the world’s population remains susceptible.
 - WHO reports that [available evidence](#) suggests that COVID-19 is not a laboratory construct. WHO notes that a constructed virus would show a mix of known elements within genomic sequences – which SAR-COV-2 does not. Experts interviewed by NPR [confirm](#) that the virus

was likely transmitted between animals and humans in nature as has happened in previous outbreaks such as Ebola, SARS, and MERS.

- The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) launched the COVID-19 [knowledge hub](#), a central repository for public health information, guidance, and free webinars.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Confirmation of COVID-19 in Two Pet Cats in New York](#), April 22
 - CDC and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in two pet cats. These are the first pets in the United States to test positive for COVID-19.
 - The cats live in two separate areas of New York State. Both had mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery. COVID-19 has been reported in very few animals worldwide, mostly in those that had close contact with a person with COVID-19.
 - CDC edited [guidance](#) on COVID-19 and veterinary clinics to include that “in some rare situations, people can spread the virus to animals.” Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by the virus, and the role animals may play in the spread of COVID-19.
- [Assessment of SARS-CoV-2 Infection Prevalence in Homeless Shelters](#), April 22
 - A recent study, published by CDC as an early release, investigated three clusters of COVID-19 in residents and staff members at homeless shelters in the United States. A cluster is defined as two or more positive cases in the preceding two weeks. Where a COVID-19 cluster has been detected, the study recommends that shelters test all residents and staff, regardless of their symptoms.
 - When testing followed identification of a cluster, high proportions of residents and staff members had positive test results for SARS-CoV-2 in Seattle (17% of residents; 17% of staff members), Boston (36%; 30%), and San Francisco (66%; 16%). Among shelters in Atlanta where no cases had been reported, a low prevalence of infection was also identified (4% of residents; 2% of staff members).
- [COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#), April 22
 - CDC added new information on COVID-19 in racial and ethnic minority groups. Current data suggest a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 illness and related death among racial and ethnic minority groups. A recent CDC [study](#) examined data from 580 hospitalized COVID-19 patients. The study found that 33% of hospitalized patients were black, compared to 18% in the community, and 8% were Hispanic, compared to 14% in the community.
 - CDC discusses the factors that influence minority group health, including living conditions, work circumstances, underlying health conditions, and lower access to care. CDC summarizes the steps required to address the needs of vulnerable populations across health care providers, community organizations, and the federal government.

New York State

- [1 in 5 New Yorkers May Have Had Covid-19, Antibody Tests Suggest](#), April 23
 - New York State reported 438 COVID-19 deaths on Thursday. The number of deaths in the first four days of this week is down 33% compared with the first four days of last week. New York’s total reported death toll is now 15,740.
 - New York reports 1,350 new hospital admissions for COVID-19 per day. This metric is down from around 2,000 per day last week.

- Governor Cuomo released the preliminary results of a statewide COVID-19 antibody study. The State randomly tested 3,000 people at grocery stores and shopping locations across 19 counties in 40 localities. The study estimates that nearly 14% of New Yorkers have developed some immunity to the virus. New York City had the largest concentration of positive antibody tests, with more than 21.2% of people testing positive.
- If the State's numbers indicate the true incidence of the virus, more than 1.7 million people in New York City, and more than 2.6 million people statewide, have already been infected. The findings also indicate that the fatality rate from the virus is about 0.5%.
- The Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Disease Control at the New York City Department of Health [cautioned](#) against the use of antibody tests to pinpoint immunity. Deputy Commissioner Daskalakis warned that the tests “may produce false negative or false positive results” and may not be indicative of “durable immunity.”
- [Attorney General James' Statement in Response to President Trump's Proclamation](#), April 22
 - New York Attorney General James issued a statement on President Trump's recent immigration order halting the issuance of green cards to new immigrants for 60 days. Attorney General James criticized the proclamation as “antithetical” to American values and asserted that immigrants are providing critical services during the pandemic. Attorney General James stated that her office is “ready to take legal action.”

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), April 23
 - The City [launched](#) a “Food for Heroes Campaign” to provide two meals per day for one month to 1,250 health care workers at Elmhurst Hospital. As funds increase, the City plans to expand the program to other sites.
 - New York City [announced](#) a public-private partnership with the White House and Owens-Minor (OW), a health care logistics company, to provide New York City with one million square yards of American-made medical gown fabric. This supply will allow local New York City manufacturers to produce up to 400,000 hospital gowns for frontline health care workers.
 - The City [plans](#) to surge supplies and staff to nursing homes. The City will increase its weekly shipment of personal protective equipment to nursing homes by 50%. The City previously sent 210 clinical staff volunteers to 40 nursing homes citywide and plans to double this amount to 420 volunteers.
- [Mayor de Blasio Outlines Test and Trace Plan](#), April 22
 - Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) a new “Test and Trace” strategy to reduce COVID-19 infections in New York City. The City currently has five walk-in testing sites across the City. The City plans to hire additional contact tracers to ensure close contacts are rapidly traced, tested, and quarantined. The City will provide meals, clean clothes, and medical refills for isolated individuals and plans to perform remote medical checks via tele-health.
- [COVID-19: Requesting Death Certificates and Reporting Deaths](#), April 22
 - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued [guidance](#) for the public, medical professionals, and funeral directors on how to request death certificates. Death certificates are still being processed and delivered to funeral homes and families, even if final arrangements have not been made.

- [*Presenting Characteristics, Comorbidities, and Outcomes Among 5700 Patients Hospitalized With COVID-19 in the New York City Area*](#), April 22
 - A recent study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, described the characteristics of 5,700 COVID-19 patients in New York City area hospitals. Outcomes were assessed for 2,634 patients who were discharged or had died at the study end point.
 - The most common comorbidities were hypertension, obesity, and diabetes. During hospitalization, 373 patients (14.2%) were treated in the intensive care unit care, 320 (12.2%) received invasive mechanical ventilation, 81 (3.2%) were treated with kidney replacement therapy, and 553 (21%) died. The mortality rate for those requiring mechanical ventilation was 88.1%.
- [*New York City Department of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Homeless Shelters*](#), April 22
 - The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued updated guidance on how to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in homeless shelters.

Other Related Updates

- [*UN food program chief fears coronavirus could lead to 'famines of biblical proportions'*](#), April 23
 - The Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) recently warned that COVID-19 threatens to create “multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months.”
 - The Executive Director called for a “global ceasefire” and for the parties engaged in conflicts around the world to give the WFP “swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to all vulnerable communities.”
- [*Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report*](#), April 23
 - The Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 4.4 million workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. More than 26 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last five weeks. Secretary of Labor Scalia issued a [statement](#) attributing the elevated unemployment claims to the pandemic.
 - A recent Pew Research Center [survey](#) found that 52% of low-income households (with earnings below \$37,500 for a family of three) report that someone in the household lost a job because of COVID-19, compared with 32% of upper-income families (with earnings over \$112,600).
- [*CBP Extends Temporary Closure of Trusted Traveler Program Enrollment Centers*](#), April 22
 - Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) extended its temporary closure of the Trusted Traveler Program enrollment centers until at least June 1 to minimize the public’s exposure to COVID-19. Enrollment centers were previously closed from March 19 until May 1.
 - The temporary closure includes all public access Global Entry enrollment centers, NEXUS enrollment centers, SENTRI enrollment centers, and FAST enrollment locations. CBP extended the period of time that Trusted Traveler Program applications remain active; all applicants now have 485 days from the date of their application to complete the enrollment process.
- [*FEMA Fact Sheet on Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Health Care Setting*](#), April 22
 - FEMA issued guidance for organizations to manage their personal protective equipment (PPE) needs during the pandemic.
 - FEMA recommends that non-health care industries carefully consider whether PPE is required by law or regulation as part of their routine duties, or whether it is needed for mitigating employee exposure to COVID-19. FEMA warns that businesses may need to identify multiple

suppliers and prioritize near-term versus long-term needs. If PPE is urgently required, FEMA encourages businesses to submit a request for assistance to local or state emergency management agencies.

- [*HHS Announces Additional COVID-19 Funding*](#), April 23
 - The Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) [provided](#) \$5 million to poison control centers to improve their capacity to respond to increased calls due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - CDC plans to [award](#) \$631 million to states and local public health departments to expand their capacity for testing, contact tracing, and containment.
 - HHS is [distributing](#) \$100 billion to Medicare facilities and hospitals in high-impact areas as part of the CARES Act. A portion of the funds will be used to reimburse health care providers, at Medicare rates, for COVID-related treatment of the uninsured.

- [*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup*](#), April 22
 - FDA issued an [emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) for IntelliVue Patient Monitors which health care providers can use to remotely monitor COVID-19 patients in hospital settings. By reducing the amount of provider-patient contact, the monitors will reduce the risk of a provider's exposure to the virus.
 - FDA and the Federal Trade Commission issued a [warning letter](#) to Copper Touch, LLC, for offering unapproved and misbranded products for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19.
 - FDA issued [guidance](#) on a temporary policy that provides regulatory flexibility to state-licensed pharmacies and facilities that repackage or combine FDA-approved propofol injectable emulsion products for the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Key Health Care Provisions of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act](#), April 23
- [Ensuring Compliance as Usual Even Without Business as Usual in Latin America](#), April 23
- [HHS Provides Guidance on Additional Distributions from the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund](#), April 23
- [CMS Recommendations on Reopening Facilities to Provide Non-Emergent, In-Person Health Care](#), April 22
- [CMS Medicare Payment and Policy Changes for FY 2021 – Skilled Nursing Facilities, Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities, and Hospices](#), April 22
- [Senate Passes Increased Funding for Paycheck Protection Program](#), April 22

Send questions to COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com