

COVID-19 Daily Update

August 14, 2020

Summary

The United States has 5,280,315 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 167,828 reported related deaths. Department of Commerce reported that retail sales grew by 1.2% in July, less than the 2.3% expected by economists polled by Dow Jones and considerably lower than the 8.4% rise in consumer spending in June. Electronic stores reported the highest growth since June with a 22.9% increase, followed by gas stations at 6.2% and clothing stores at 5.7%. CDC Director Redfield stated that he is “very cautiously optimistic” that there will be at least one effective vaccine deployed by the start of 2021. The Supreme Court upheld a decree to allow Rhode Islanders to vote in several upcoming elections without requiring voters to fill out mail-in ballots before two witnesses or a notary. Department of Homeland Security announced an extension of the U.S. agreement with Canada and Mexico to limit nonessential travel through September 21.

The five metropolitan areas in the United States with the highest rate of COVID-19 infections are all in South Texas: Brownsville-Harlingen, Eagle Pass, Rio Grande City, Corpus Christi, and Laredo. In Michigan, Governor Whitmer announced plans to donate four million free face masks to homeless shelters, tribal organizations, community health centers, schools, and grocery stores. The National September 11 Memorial & Museum canceled its annual light display on the anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks “after concluding the health risks during the pandemic were far too great for the large crew.” France declared Paris and the Marseille region in the southeastern part of the country to be COVID-19 high-risk zones, granting local authorities powers to restrict the movements of people and vehicles, limit access to public transportation, and close down restaurants and bars.

New York reported four deaths, 554 hospitalizations, and 127 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, August 13. Approximately 727, or 0.85%, of the 85,455 tests administered in New York on August 13 were positive for COVID-19. Governor Cuomo announced that “low risk cultural activities” such as museums, and aquariums in New York City will be allowed to re-open at 25% capacity on August 24. Patrons will be allowed in only with timed ticketing and staggered entry. Bowling alleys will be allowed to open statewide on Monday, August 17, at 50% occupancy, with every other lane closed. The State will release health protocols for gyms on Monday, August 17. Gyms that adhere to the protocols will be allowed to re-open. State health officials announced plans to send mobile COVID-19 testing units to farms in rural counties after a handful of COVID-19 clusters were reported among farmworkers.

Presidential updates

- [White House Fact Sheet on Re-Opening Schools](#), August 14
 - The White House published a fact sheet urging states to re-open schools for in-person instruction this fall.
 - Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) estimated that “just the three months of closures between March and May 2020 may reduce future potential earnings of children by 2.3% – 3.7%.
 - CEA calculated that 5.6 million people will be unable to return to work for childcare reasons if schools do not re-open. While 45% of married men with children are able to telework, this number falls to 42% for married women, and 21% for single women.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 206](#), August 13
 - WHO [warned](#) that 43% of schools worldwide lacked access to basic handwashing with soap and water in 2019, “a key condition for schools to be able to operate safely” during the pandemic.
 - WHO updated [guidance](#) on home care patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to include evaluation considerations for clinicians, recommendations on COVID-19 waste management, and advice on treating patients at home.

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

- [Interpretation of COVID-19 Death Forecasts](#), August 14
 - CDC consolidated data from 31 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate over the next four weeks. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.
 - National forecasts suggest that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 180,000 to 200,000 by September 5. The forecasts predict that weekly reports of new COVID-19 deaths may increase over the next month, with 4,200 to 10,600 new deaths reported during the week ending September 5.
 - State-level forecasts predict that the number of reported new deaths per week may increase over the next four weeks in Colorado and may decrease in Arizona, Vermont, and Wyoming.
- [CDC Guidance on COVID-19 Quarantine Protocols](#), August 14
 - CDC recently updated guidance on COVID-19 quarantine protocols.
 - CDC recommends a 14-day quarantine for people who have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.
 - CDC notes that someone who has had COVID-19 within the past three months does “not need to quarantine or get tested for up to 3 months [after close contact with a confirmed case] as long as they do not develop symptoms again.”
 - CDC states that “people who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.”

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), August 14
 - New York reported four deaths, 554 hospitalizations, and 127 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, August 13.
 - Approximately 727, or 0.85%, of the 85,455 tests administered in New York on August 13 were positive for COVID-19.
 - State Liquor Authority officials observed 12 social distancing violations at bars and restaurants in New York on August 13.
 - State health officials announced plans to send mobile COVID-19 testing units to farms in rural counties after a handful of COVID-19 clusters were reported among farmworkers.
 - Governor Cuomo announced that “low risk cultural activities” such as museums, and aquariums in New York City will be allowed to re-open at 25% capacity on August 24. Patrons will be allowed in only with timed ticketing and staggered entry.
 - Bowling alleys will be allowed to open statewide on Monday, August 17, at 50% occupancy, with every other lane closed. Patrons must wear a mask and remain at their lanes. Due to restrictions on indoor dining, food and beverage service will not be allowed in New York City bowling alleys.
 - The State will release health protocols for gyms on Monday, August 17. Gyms that adhere to the protocols will be allowed to re-open.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), August 14
 - The 9/11 Memorial & Museum [cancelled](#) its annual Tribute in Light commemorating victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks due to COVID-19 “health risks” for the “large crew required to produce” the event.
 - Long Island Rail Road [re-configured](#) vending machines at two locations in Penn Station to allow customers to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE), including KN95 masks for \$9.99 and hand sanitizer for \$0.75. Metropolitan Transit Authority plans to install PPE vending machines at additional stations in the coming weeks.
 - Officers have [stopped](#) 1,350 vehicles in Staten Island as part of the City’s COVID-19 checkpoint initiative to notify travelers about the State’s quarantine policies. In comparison, officers stopped 36 vehicles at bridges and tunnels going into Manhattan. Mayor de Blasio commented that most checkpoints have taken place on Staten Island because it has the most out-of-state traffic into the City.
- [Roadblocks Threaten School Re-Opening, Worrying School Leaders](#), August 14
 - A New York Times [investigation](#) examined New York City’s plans to re-open schools for in-person instruction this fall.
 - Last week, a large group of principals [called on](#) Mayor de Blasio to delay in-person instruction by a few weeks. On Wednesday, August 12, the principals’ union sent a [letter](#) urging the mayor to “heed their dire warnings” about opening too soon.
 - The union chastised the City for failing “to address many of our crucial concerns” and ignoring “repeated appeals from schools leaders to allow enough time to implement highly complicated protocols.” Instead of opening for in-person instruction, the union called for a “phased-in approach,” starting with remote learning and opening the buildings to students closer to the end of September.

- One elementary school principal described September 10, the scheduled first day of school, as “not even close to realistic.”
- Several schools have [proposed](#) utilizing outdoor space for instruction. Public school officials on the Lower East Side, for example, have submitted plans to Department of Transportation to utilize adjacent streets to help students socially distance. The City has yet to approve, or respond to, their proposals.

Other Related Updates

- [Department of Health COVID-19 Updates](#), August 14
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) combined investments of \$6.5 million in two commercial diagnostic laboratories, Aegis Sciences and Sonic Healthcare, to expand capacity to conduct up to four million additional SARS-CoV-2 per month.
 - HHS announced that CDC [executed](#) an existing contract option with McKesson Corporation to support vaccine distribution under Operation Warp Speed. CDC’s current contract with McKesson, awarded as part of a competitive bidding process in 2016, included an option for the distribution of vaccines in the event of a pandemic.
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), August 13
 - FDA [warned](#) consumers that certain hand sanitizer products have tested positive for 1-propanol contamination. 1-propanol is not an acceptable ingredient for hand sanitizer products and can be toxic and life-threatening when ingested.
 - FDA issued warning letters to [AkivaMed](#), [CoreMedica Laboratories](#), [Fair Price Labs](#), and [Holistic Health International](#) for selling adulterated and misbranded COVID-19 testing products.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [CMS Seeks Permanent Changes for Certain Telehealth Services Modified During Public Health Emergency](#), August 14
- [Credit Funds: Valuation Risks and Other Compliance Considerations in a Pandemic Market Environment](#), August 10

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