

# COVID-19 Daily Update

August 2, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 4,639,005 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 154,619 reported related deaths. Dr. Birx warned that the United States had entered a “new phase” of the pandemic and urged people to take extreme health precautions as infections and deaths rise sharply throughout the country. Birx commented that the virus is “extraordinarily widespread” and “what we’re seeing today is different from March and April.” Birx urged people in areas of high transmission to “really consider wearing a mask at home” and “assume that you’re positive if you have individuals in your household with co-morbidities.” CDC’s most recent national forecasts project that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 168,000 to 182,000 by August 22. FDA authorized the first two COVID-19 antibody tests, both manufactured by Siemens, that can estimate the quantity of COVID-19 antibodies in a patient’s blood. FDA cautioned that “patients should not interpret results as telling them they are immune, or have any level of immunity, from the virus.” Arizona Representative Raúl Grijalva tested positive for COVID-19, becoming at least the 12th member of Congress to contract the virus.

While the Northeast has improved considerably since its peak in April, COVID-19 cases are increasing slightly in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts as residents move around more freely and gather more frequently in groups. Texas reported 1,875 deaths over the last week. Chief Medical Officer of United Memorial Medical Center in Houston warned that “people are just not listening” and expressed frustration that “we keep on doing our best to save these people, and then we get another batch of people who are doing exactly what we are telling them not to do.” In Florida, Tropical Storm Isaias is set to unleash strong wind gusts, heavy rain, and possibly storm surge flooding along the state’s eastern shores through Sunday night. Emergency management officials warned that hurricane “shelters should be considered your last resort” and that “because of COVID-19, we feel that you are safer at home.” Officials in Melbourne, Australia’s second-largest city, declared a “state of disaster” and announced a strict, six-week lockdown to curb COVID-19 transmission in the area.

Approximately 531, or 0.9%, of the 58,961 tests administered in New York on August 1 were positive for COVID-19. The Capital Region has a 2.1 % positivity rate, the highest of any region in New York. The second highest positivity rate is in the Mid-Hudson region, at 1.3%, and the lowest positivity rate is in North Country, at .3%. A coalition of labor unions representing public transportation workers and customers issued a letter to congressional leaders calling for an additional \$3.9 billion in federal funding for Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in the next COVID-19 relief bill. The letter highlighted that MTA’s “budget has been strained to the bone by running essential services while dealing with unprecedented declines in ridership, farebox revenue, and supporting taxes and subsidies.”

## Presidential updates

- [\*President Trump Comments on COVID-19 Testing Initiatives in the United States\*](#), July 31
  - President Trump commented that the United States has the “best [COVID-19] testing in the world.”
  - The White House released a [factsheet](#) on the country’s COVID-19 testing efforts. 94% of the 13,000 Health Resources and Services Administration-funded federally qualified health centers are now offering COVID-19 testing.
  - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) set up surge testing sites in communities experiencing recent increases in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations; these sites have conducted more than 92,000 tests in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Arizona, and California.
  - HHS [announced](#) that the United States has conducted more than 59 million COVID-19 tests nationally, averaging over 810,000 per day over the past seven days. Over the past month, 45% of lab tests were completed within three days; over the last seven days, 56% of lab tests were completed within three days. Quest and LabCorp have both received emergency use authorizations from FDA for tests using pooled samples to increase efficiency and reduce testing turnaround time.
  - National Institutes of Health [announced](#) a \$248.7 million investment through its Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) initiative to seven biomedical diagnostic companies to support new lab-based and point-of-care COVID-19 tests that could significantly increase the number, type, and availability of tests by millions per week as early as September 2020.

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [\*COVID-19 Situation Report – 194\*](#), August 1
  - International Health Regulations Emergency Committee [recommended](#) that WHO continue “to work with partners to counter misinformation” related to the pandemic and urged countries to exhibit “global solidarity” as they continue fighting COVID-19.
  - WHO [updated](#) interim guidance on waste management during the pandemic. WHO noted that COVID-19 can pass through human excrement and that proper water disinfection and treatment can effectively reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading through wastewater.
  - WHO [published](#) a draft describing the preferred and minimally acceptable profiles for therapeutic agents for the treatment of hospitalized patients with moderate, severe, and critical COVID-19.
  - WHO [published](#) a report highlighting recent progress its COVID-19 Strategic Response and Preparedness Plan, including scaling up international coordination and support, increasing country preparedness and response, and accelerating research and innovation.

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

- [\*COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity\*](#), July 31
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending July 25.
  - The average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased in six surveillance regions, with the highest percentages in the southeast (13.6%), south central (16.5%), and southwest (8.9%).

- The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 130.1 per 100,000, up from 120.9 per 100,000 during the previous week. The highest rates were in people 65 years and older, at 360.2 per 100,000, up from 338.2 per 100,000.
- Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 increased from June 27 to July 11 for the first time since mid-April. Deaths fell slightly from July 18 to July 25, from 12% to 8.6% but remained above the epidemic threshold.
- [Interpretation of COVID-19 Death Forecasts](#), July 31
  - CDC consolidated data from 32 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 168,000 to 182,000 by August 22. The forecasts predict that weekly reports of new COVID-19 deaths may increase over the next month, with 5,000 to 11,000 new deaths reported during the week ending August 22.
  - State-level forecasts predict that the number of reported new deaths per week may increase over the next four weeks in Alabama, Kentucky, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, and Washington State.

#### **New York State**

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), August 2
  - New York reported three deaths, 556 hospitalizations, and 143 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Saturday, August 1.
  - Approximately 531, or 0.9%, of the 58,961 tests administered in New York on August 1 were positive for COVID-19.
  - New York State Liquor Authority inspected 1,103 dining establishments in New York City and Long Island on Friday, July 31, and found social distancing violations at 41 bars and restaurants.
  - The Capital Region of New York has the [highest](#) COVID-19 positivity rate, 2.1%, in the State. Reported cases in the region rose throughout July after a cluster of cases developed from a single Fourth of July party.

#### **New York City**

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), August 2
  - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) published [guidance](#) for identifying and triaging adult patients at increased risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms in outpatient settings.
  - A coalition of labor unions representing NY public transportation employees and customers [issued](#) a letter to congressional leaders calling for an additional \$3.9 billion in federal funding for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in the next COVID-19 relief bill.
  - The letter stressed that “the well is dry” and highlighted that MTA’s “budget has been strained to the bone by running essential service while dealing with unprecedented declines in ridership, farebox revenue, and supporting taxes and subsidies.”

## **Other Related Updates**

- [\*Study on Young Children as Potential COVID-19 Carriers\*](#), July 30
  - A recent study, published in Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), assessed the COVID-19 transmission potential of children.
  - Researchers examined the presence of SARS-CoV-2 viral nucleic acid in a group of 145 patients with COVID-19 with mild to moderate illness within one week of symptom onset.
  - The study found that children younger than five with mild to moderate COVID-19 have high amounts of SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in their nasopharynx compared with older children and adults.
  - Researchers cautioned that the study is “limited to detection of viral nucleic acid, rather than infectious virus” but noted that “SARS-CoV-2 pediatric studies reported a correlation between higher nucleic acid levels and the ability to culture infectious virus.”
  - The study warned that “behavioral habits of young children and close quarters in school and day care settings raise concern for SARS-CoV-2 amplification in this population as public health restrictions are eased.... [I]n addition to public health implications, this population will be important for targeting immunization efforts as SARS-CoV-2 vaccines become available.”
  
- [\*Subways May Be Safer Than Once Thought\*](#), August 2
  - A New York Times [survey](#) of transportation agencies suggests that riding public transportation is not a major source of transmission for the coronavirus.
  - In Paris, public health authorities conducting contact tracing found that none of the 386 infection clusters identified from early May to mid-July were linked to the city’s public transportation.
  - In Austria, a study found that coronavirus clusters in April and May were not tied to public transit. In Tokyo, where public health authorities have aggressively traced virus clusters, none have been linked to the city’s famously crowded rail lines.
  - Public health experts warned that the evidence should be considered with caution. Experts note that ridership in other major cities is still well below pre-pandemic levels. Tracing clusters directly to public transit is difficult, and the level of the threat depends largely on how well a city has reduced its overall infection rate.
  
- [\*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup\*](#), July 31
  - FDA [authorized](#) two COVID-19 serology tests, manufactured by Siemens, which display an estimated quantity of antibodies present in an individual’s blood. According to FDA, the new tests “give us additional tools to evaluate” COVID-19 antibodies. FDA noted that “patients should not interpret results as telling them they are immune, or have any level of immunity, from the virus.”
  - FDA [issued](#) a warning letter to one company for selling fraudulent COVID-19 related treatments.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [\*Remote Control: Best Practices for Litigating and Investigating During COVID and Beyond\*](#), July 29

Send questions to:

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