

COVID-19 Daily Update

August 6, 2020

Summary

The United States has 4,852,749 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 159,407 reported related deaths. Department of Labor reported that another 1,186,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. In a private phone call with state and local officials, Dr. Birx expressed concern about an uptick in positivity rates in several cities, including Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. Facebook and Twitter removed posts from President Trump and his campaign for violating their COVID-19 misinformation policies. The posts included portions of an interview in which he said that children are “almost immune” from COVID-19.

Transportation and Safety Administration announced a contract with Lavi Industries for 1,230 acrylic barriers for TSA security checkpoints at 37 priority airports nationwide. Department of State and USAID launched a new COVID-19 Private Sector Engagement & Partnership Fund, devoting \$10 million to fund innovative private sector solutions to mitigate the secondary impacts of COVID-19 in developing countries.

Five states reported a record number of weekly COVID-19 deaths on Wednesday, August 5: Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada, and Oklahoma. In California, Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti authorized the city to shut off water and power service to properties repeatedly hosting large house parties, which have “essentially become nightclubs in the hills.” Garcetti noted that enforcement will focus on people “determined to break the rules” who pose a significant threat to public health. Nearly 60% of new COVID-19 cases in Los Angeles County are occurring in residents between the ages of 18 and 49. In North Carolina, Governor Cooper extended phase two of re-opening for five more weeks, keeping bars, gyms, and indoor entertainment venues closed until at least September 11. In Ohio, Governor DeWine tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of a scheduled meeting with President Trump. A Gallup survey of nearly 6,500 travelers found that 52% of respondents report feeling uncomfortable flying during the pandemic.

New York reported three deaths, 570 hospitalizations, and 132 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, August 5. Approximately 703, or 0.97%, of the 72,370 tests administered in New York on August 5 were positive for COVID-19. New York State Liquor Authority found 26 social distancing violations in bars and restaurants on Wednesday. Governor Cuomo signed a 30-day extension of the state’s eviction moratorium. Cuomo noted that there will be “no evictions as long as we are in the middle of the epidemic” and expressed that he would continue to extend the order “until I say COVID is over.” Governor Cuomo is expected to announce later this week whether school districts across the state can tentatively plan to re-open for the upcoming school year. Cuomo recently commented that “we’re not going to open any school unless the viral transmission rate says we have the virus under control.”

Presidential updates

- [Trump Campaign Video Removed for Containing Misleading Claims on COVID-19](#), August 6
 - Facebook removed a post from President Trump’s personal page of a Fox News interview in which he asserted that children are “almost immune” from COVID-19.
 - In the video, Trump stated that children have “much stronger immune systems than we do” and that children “don’t have a problem” with COVID-19.
 - Facebook issued a statement, explaining the post “includes false claims that a group of people is immune from COVID-19, which is a violation of our policies around harmful COVID misinformation.” The video was viewed nearly half a million times on Facebook before it was removed.
 - Twitter similarly blocked the Trump campaign’s post containing the video, saying that it violated company rules on coronavirus misinformation. The account was barred from posting new tweets until the offending post was removed.
 - Deputy national press secretary for Trump’s re-election campaign expressed that “the President was stating a fact that children are less susceptible to the coronavirus” and described Facebook’s actions as “another display of Silicon Valley’s flagrant bias against this president.”
- [White House Coronavirus Taskforce Members Comment on COVID-19](#), August 6
 - In a private phone call with state and local officials, Dr. Birx expressed concern about an uptick in positivity rates in several cities, including Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. Birx warned that the positivity rates in Baltimore and Atlanta “remain at a very high level.”
 - Dr. Fauci noted that test positivity rates can provide an early indication of a surge in COVID-19 cases. Fauci clarified that Birx “was warning the states and the cities to be careful, because this is a predictor of trouble ahead.”
 - Fauci called on states to “accelerate the fundamental preventative measures that we all talk about” including “masks, social distancing, avoiding crowds, outdoors greater than indoors, [and] washing hands.” According to Fauci, these measures can “prevent that uptick from becoming a surge.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 198](#), August 5
 - Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Etienne, [warned](#) of disruptions to regular health services during the pandemic.
 - A WHO survey found that half of the diabetes and hypertension programs at the primary care level have been halted in 27 countries, and pregnancy related visits have dropped by 40%.
 - Etienne called on countries to “re-engineer how essential care is delivered and invest in the first level of care,” using telemedicine, and community outreach programs to support vulnerable populations.

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

- [CDC COVID-19 Update](#), August 6
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from eight models projecting the number of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day 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. Forecasts estimate between 2,000 to 12,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day by August 31.
 - CDC highlighted [guidance](#) on travel during the pandemic. CDC noted that “staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.” CDC posted [answers](#) to frequently asked questions on travel and COVID-19, including domestic, international, and air travel.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), August 6
 - New York reported three deaths, 570 hospitalizations, and 132 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, August 5.
 - Approximately 703, or 0.97%, of the 72,370 tests administered in New York on August 5 were positive for COVID-19.
 - New York State Liquor Authority found 26 social distancing violations at bars and restaurants on Wednesday, August 5.
 - Governor Cuomo [signed](#) a 30-day extension of the State’s eviction moratorium. Cuomo noted that there will be “no evictions as long as we are in the middle of the epidemic” and expressed that he would continue to extend the order “until I say COVID is over.”

New York City

- [Doubts Raised About New York City Schools Re-Opening](#), August 6
 - Governor Cuomo is expected to announce whether schools can re-open statewide later this week. Cuomo recently [commented](#) that “we’re not going to open any school unless the viral transmission rate says we have the virus under control.”
 - The New York Times reports that New York City faces significant logistical and political problems that could upend Mayor de Blasio’s ambition to re-open City schools this fall.
 - According to the Times, there are not enough nurses to staff all city school buildings, ventilation systems in aging buildings are in urgent need of upgrades, and there may not be enough teachers available to offer in-person instruction. An estimated 20% of teachers are eligible to work from home for medical reasons.
 - Nearly every large school district has opted to start the school year through remote-only instruction, including Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, and Washington D.C.
 - Emily Oster, a health economist at Brown University, predicted that, if New York does not open its schools, “no one is opening until there’s a vaccine.”

Other Related Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), July 23
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 1,186,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week.
 - The number of new claims had been steadily declining since March, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. The numbers spiked

for two weeks in July, briefly marking a reversal of that trend. This week's report marks the lowest weekly total since March.

- DOL reported 655,707 new claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not normally eligible for state jobless benefits.
- [*Associated Press Data Shows Declines in Virus Testing*](#), August 5
 - An Associated Press [analysis](#) found that the number of COVID-19 tests conducted in the United States dropped by 3.6% over the past two weeks to 750,000. The count fell in 22 states, including places where the percentage of positive tests remains alarmingly high, such as Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, and Iowa.
 - Some of the decline in testing over the past few weeks was expected after backlogged commercial labs urged doctors to concentrate on their highest-risk patients. Some experts attribute the decline in testing to the hours of waiting required to get a test in some areas – and days or weeks of waiting sometimes involved in obtaining test results.
 - U.S. testing is built primarily on highly sensitive molecular tests that detect the genetic code of the coronavirus. Although the test is considered the gold standard for accuracy, experts increasingly say the country's overburdened lab system is incapable of keeping pace with the outbreak. Director of Harvard's Global Health Institute commented that "there's a sense of desperation that we need to do something else."
 - A New York Times [article](#) highlighted a different testing strategy. Some experts advocate for the widespread adoption of less accurate tests, as long as they're administered quickly and often enough. A proposal from Harvard researchers calls for the federal government to distribute \$1 saliva-based antigen tests to all Americans so that they can test themselves regularly, perhaps even daily.
 - Testing demand is expected to surge again this fall, when schools re-open and flu season hits, most likely outstripping supplies and leading to new delays and bottlenecks.
- [*Partitioning the Curve: Interstate Travel Restrictions During the Pandemic*](#), August 5
 - An article published in New England Journal of Medicine highlighted the differential spread of COVID-19 across state lines. In the third week of July, for example, COVID-19 incidence was 10 times as high in some states as in others.
 - Many jurisdictions have responded to the unevenness of the unfolding pandemic by imposing travel restrictions. Nearly half the states have imposed interstate travel restrictions to date. Eight have imposed restrictions on entrants from all states, 12 have imposed them only on entrants from selected high-prevalence areas, and four have shifted between these positions. A common feature of these orders is a requirement that entrants — both residents and nonresidents — self-quarantine for 14 days.
 - The article highlights some of the legal issues presented by state orders and summarizes three federal lawsuits challenging state orders in Kentucky, Maine, and Hawaii. The authors acknowledge the "impulse to adopt" such measures but cautions that "state or regional isolationism is a poor substitute for national leadership in pandemic response."

- [National Institutes of Health COVID-19 Updates](#), August 5
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the beginning of a [clinical trial](#) to evaluate the antiviral remdesivir plus the immunomodulator interferon beta-1a as a treatment for COVID-19. The study will enroll more than 1,000 hospitalized adults with COVID-19. Participants must have laboratory-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection with evidence of lung involvement, including a need for supplemental oxygen, abnormal chest X-rays, or illness requiring mechanical ventilation.
 - NIH announced that its investigational COVID-19 [vaccine](#), developed in coordination with Moderna, protected mice from infection with SARS-CoV-2 when given as two intramuscular injections of a 1-microgram dose three weeks apart. Mice challenged 7 weeks after only a single dose of 1 mcg or 10 mcg of mRNA-1273 were also protected against viral replication in the lung.

- [Health Experts Ask FDA to Make Its Vaccine Deliberations Public](#), August 6
 - Nearly 400 health experts signed [letter](#), calling on FDA to publicly release information on the agency’s deliberations over whether to approve a COVID-19 vaccine. The letter was organized by the Center for Science in the Public Interest.
 - The letter asks for COVID-19 vaccines to be made “widely available, only after FDA has been able to evaluate safety and efficacy data from completed phase three clinical trials.”
 - The letter urges FDA to engage in “a transparent and rigorous FDA approval process that is devoid of political considerations.” The experts highlight that that an “effective vaccine will only be truly useful if a large proportion of the public is willing to take it.”
 - Dr. Paul Offit, a member of FDA’s vaccine advisory panel and a signatory of the letter, said that the panel could extend their typical public discussions to “go through all the data.”

- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), August 5
 - FDA issued [warning letters](#) to two companies, both of which distribute chloroquine phosphate products intended to treat disease in aquarium fish.
 - FDA expressed concerned that consumers may mistake, and have mistaken, unapproved chloroquine phosphate animal drugs for the human drug chloroquine phosphate.
 - In June, FDA [withdrew](#) its emergency use authorization (EUA) for chloroquine phosphate to COVID-19 patients due to its lack of effectiveness and known potential for serious side effects.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Key Tax Considerations For Companies With Remote Employees](#), August 3
- [Public Disclosure: Data Analytics and DOJ Enforcement in Light of COVID-19](#), August 3
- [Senate Proposes the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools Act](#), August 3

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