

# COVID-19 Daily Update

August 9, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 5,025,088 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 162,751 reported related deaths. President Trump enacted a number of executive measures intended to curb the negative economic impact of COVID-19, by addressing lapsed unemployment benefits, reinstating an eviction moratorium, providing relief for student loan borrowers, and suspending the collection of certain payroll taxes. The President's actions came after crucial benefits provided under earlier aid bills lapsed, and after two weeks of talks between congressional Democrats and administration officials failed to yield an agreement on a broader relief package. Pfizer entered into an agreement with Gilead Sciences, the maker of remdesivir, to manufacture the drug at a facility in Kansas. Gilead says it plans to produce more than two million courses of treatment by the end of 2020.

In Virginia, the State Supreme Court granted a request from Governor Northam to temporarily halt evictions proceedings, extending protections for tenants through September 7. In Florida, Disney announced plans to scale back its operating hours after lower-than-expected attendance during the pandemic. New Zealand marked 100 days without any new reported cases of local transmission of COVID-19. France plans to require mask use in outdoor high traffic areas beginning on Monday, August 10. Wearing a mask in crowded enclosed spaces, including museums, shopping malls, and on public transportation, has been compulsory in France since mid-July. Sixty-eight NFL players have opted out of the upcoming football season due to concerns over COVID-19. Half of the players who opted out are offensive and defensive linemen, who are in closest contact with other players during practices and games.

New York reported seven deaths, 548 hospitalizations, and 131 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Saturday, August 8. Approximately 515, or .78%, of the 65,812 tests administered in New York on August 8 were positive for COVID-19, marking the lowest one-day positivity rate since the beginning of the pandemic. State Liquor Authority cited 60 bars and restaurants for social distancing violations on Saturday, August 8. Governor Cuomo asked the "NYPD to step up and help" enforce State guidelines more thoroughly. According to New York Times interviews with doctors, epidemiologists, and other public health experts, New York State is well positioned to re-open schools, so long as safety precautions remain in place. Less than 1% of coronavirus tests statewide are positive, well below the 5% positivity threshold that both CDC and WHO have targeted as a safe standard for re-opening schools.

## Presidential updates

- [\*President Trump Enacts Executive Measures to Protect Against the Economic Impact of COVID-19\*](#), August 8
  - President Trump enacted a number of executive measures intended to curb the negative economic impact of COVID-19.
  - The President's actions came after crucial benefits provided under earlier aid bills lapsed, and after two weeks of talks between congressional Democrats and administration officials failed to yield an agreement on a broader relief package.
  - **Student Loan Relief:** President Trump signed a [memorandum](#) requiring the Education Secretary to extend the student loan relief available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which is scheduled to expire on September 30. The memo suspends student loan payments and waives all interest on loans held by Department of Education until December 31, 2020.
  - **Renter and Homeowner Relief:** President Trump signed an [executive order](#) directing the Health Secretary and the Director of CDC to consider whether any measures temporarily halting residential evictions of any tenants for failure to pay rent are reasonably necessary to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. The order directs the Treasury and HUD Secretary to identify federal funds to provide temporary financial assistance to renters and homeowners affected by financial hardships caused by COVID-19. The order further directs authorities to consider providing eviction or foreclosure assistance to renters and homeowners.
  - **Payroll Tax Relief:** President Trump signed a [memorandum](#) directing the Treasury Secretary to “defer the withholding, deposit, and payment” of certain payroll tax obligations paid during the period of September 1 through December 31, 2020. The memo states that this action “will put money directly in the pockets of American workers and generate additional incentives for work and employment, right when the money is needed most.”
  - **Unemployment Relief:** President Trump signed a [memorandum](#) directing the Secretary of Homeland Security, acting through the FEMA administrator, to “approve a lost wages assistance program.” Under the program, if a governor request a grant for lost wages assistance, the governor will be allowed to provide eligible claimants with “a \$400 payment per week [unemployment payment], which shall reflect a \$300 federal contribution.” The program will be available “until the balance of the Department of Homeland Security’s Disaster Relief Fund reaches \$25 billion or for weeks of unemployment ending not later than December 6, 2020, whichever occurs first.”

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [\*COVID-19 Situation Report – 201\*](#), August 8
  - WHO updated [guidance](#) on COVID-19 public health surveillance efforts, highlighting the importance of the collecting metadata to properly analyze and interpret COVID-19 surveillance data.

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

- [\*COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity\*](#), August 7
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending August 1.
  - The average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased in nine surveillance regions, with the highest percentages in the southeast (12.7%), south central (14.4%), and southwest (8.8%).
  - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 137.6 per 100,000, up from 130.1 per 100,000 during the previous week. The highest rates were in people 65 years and older, at 378.8 per 100,000, up from 360.2 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 18, after declining for 11 weeks since mid-April. Deaths fell slightly from July 25 to August 1, from 12.6% to 7.8% but remained above the epidemic threshold.
- [\*Hospitalization Rates and Characteristics of Children Hospitalized With COVID-19\*](#), August 7
  - A recent study, published by CDC as an early release, examined data on 576 pediatric COVID-19 cases from 14 states.
  - The study found that the cumulative rate of COVID-19–associated hospitalization among children is 8 per 100,000 cases, which is lower than the hospitalization rate of adults with COVID-19, at 164.5 per 100,000 cases.
  - Forty-two percent of children in this analysis had one or more underlying medical conditions. Researchers warned that “children can develop severe COVID-19 illness; during the surveillance period, one in three children were admitted to the ICU.”
  - The study concluded that the “reinforcement of prevention efforts is essential in congregate settings that serve children, including childcare centers and schools.”

## New York State

- [\*New York State COVID-19 Updates\*](#), August 9
  - New York reported seven deaths, 548 hospitalizations, and 131 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Saturday, August 8.
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  - The State Liquor Authority cited 60 bars and restaurants for social distancing violations on Saturday, August 8. Governor Cuomo asked the “NYPD to step up and help” enforce State guidelines more thoroughly.
- [\*Health Experts Say New York Positioned to Re-Open Schools Safely\*](#), August 7
  - According to New York Times interviews with doctors, epidemiologists, and other public health experts, New York State is well positioned to re-open schools, so long as safety precautions remain in place.
  - Less than 1% of coronavirus tests statewide are positive, well below the 5% positivity threshold that both CDC and WHO have targeted as a safe standard for re-opening schools.

- Most experts agree schools should skip activities like chorus, band, and sports involving physical contact; have children eat in classrooms instead of a central cafeteria; and take steps to prevent crowding in hallways.
- Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University, said re-opening the schools in New York was a bit of a “social experiment” or “trial run,” but added that the odds of success were good.
- Experts highlighted the need to sufficiently circulate fresh air. Many school buildings are too old and underfunded to overhaul their ventilation systems, but experts suggested a variety of other measures to properly ventilate the space including: opening doors and windows; adjusting heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system settings to bring in more outdoor air instead of recirculating the indoor air; upgrading system filters; and placing portable air purifiers in some rooms.

### **New York City**

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), August 9
  - Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) [began](#) the installation of social distancing decals in subways and buses to encourage passengers to appropriately distance themselves from operators and conductors. MTA Chief Customer Officer Meyer commented that “protecting our colleagues is just as crucial as protecting our customers.”
  - New York City officials [stopped](#) 353 cars at the City’s major bridges and tunnels to warn travelers of the mandatory two-week quarantine rule between Wednesday and Friday of last week. Occupants were asked if they spent more than 24 hours during the previous 14 days in any state on New York’s travel advisory list.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [Department of Health COVID-19 Updates](#), August 7
  - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [published](#) a fact sheet on Operation Warp Speed, the federal government’s initiative to deliver 300 million doses of a safe, effective vaccine for COVID-19 by January 2021.
  - HHS [announced](#) an upcoming \$5 billion CARES Act-authorized nursing home Provider Relief Fund (PRF) distribution. Approximately \$2.5 billion will support increased testing, staffing, and personal protective equipment (PPE) needs in nursing homes. Unlike prior distributions, however, the balance of the \$5 billion will be linked to nursing home performance and a facility’s ability to minimize COVID-19 spread and COVID-related fatalities among its residents.
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), August 7
  - FDA [revoked](#) its emergency use authorization (EUA) for Autobio Diagnostics’s COVID-19 antibody test, due to performance concerns with the accuracy of the test.
  - FDA issued a [warning letter](#) to one company for selling fraudulent COVID-19 treatments.
  - FDA updated its COVID-19 Treatment Acceleration Program [webpage](#) with new metrics and FAQs. There are now more than 570 drug development programs for COVID-19 in the planning stages. FDA has reviewed over 270 of these programs.

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

Send questions to:

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