

February 11, 2021

### Summary

The United States has 27,366,838 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 474,554 reported related deaths. On Thursday, President Joseph Biden announced he secured another 200 million vaccine doses. This puts the United States on track to inoculate the “overwhelming majority” of Americans by the end of summer. Earlier in the day, Dr. Anthony Fauci predicted that vaccines will be available to all Americans by April. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office is predicting a \$2.3 trillion federal deficit for the 2021 fiscal year, a slight decrease from 2020’s \$3.1 trillion deficit. The predicted number does not take into account Biden’s proposed \$1.9 trillion stimulus package.

From February 7 – 9, the United States reported fewer than 100,000 new cases of COVID-19 per day—the lowest total since November 3, 2020. The death rate is beginning to decrease, yet remains high; with eight states still averaging over 100 deaths per day. As of February 9, every state—except Rhode Island—has administered at least 60% of its COVID-19 vaccines supply. As of February 9, 34 states have identified and confirmed cases of the B.1.1.7 COVID variant (first found in the U.K.). Throughout the United States, some universities have decided to hold spring classes online, while others have reopened their campuses. In August of 2020, college towns experienced some of the highest per capita COVID-19 case growth in the country; with Texas, Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois each reporting over 15,000 collective cases on their campuses.

New York reported 122 deaths, 7,342 hospitalizations, and 1,402 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, February 10, 2021. Approximately 10,099, or 3.54%, of the 285,499 tests administered in New York on February 10 were positive for COVID-19 (the lowest positivity rate since November 25). As of February 10, New York has received 2,002,055 first doses of the vaccines and administered 1,787,189 first doses to patients. New York State has received 1,031,650 second doses of the vaccines and administered 660,083 second doses to patients. Beginning on February 20, New York State will launch a 100-day rollout of 300 free concerts, recitals, and performances in venues across the State to facilitate the reemergence of the performing arts. On February 10, Governor Cuomo announced that, beginning on February 23, large sports and entertainment venues could re-open at limited capacity (10%), subject to New York State Department of Health approval, and other conditions (including testing requirements for patrons). On February 9, New York State officials announced that around 10% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccines. Beginning on February 11, New York will open 11 community-based pop-up vaccination sites throughout the State for limited periods of time. Governor Cuomo expects these sites to vaccinate 3,100 people.

## **U.S. Government Updates**

- [\*Fauci Predicts Vaccine 'Open Season' by April\*](#), February 11
  - Fauci has predicted that by April it will be “open season” on COVID-19 vaccines, meaning the vaccines will likely no longer be restricted to certain groups of individuals.
  - During an appearance on NBC’s “Today” show, he hypothesized, “As we get into March and April, the number of available doses will allow for much more of a mass vaccination approach, which is really much more accelerated than what you’re seeing now.”
  - He also predicted that the “overwhelming majority” of people could be vaccinated by the end of summer. Later in the evening, Biden announced he has secured another [200 million](#) vaccine doses, putting the United States on track to realize Fauci’s prediction.
- [\*Congressional Forecasters Predict \\$2.3 Trillion Federal Deficit for 2021\*](#), February 11
  - The Congressional Budget Office is predicting a \$2.3 trillion federal deficit for this fiscal year. This number does not take into account Biden’s proposed \$1.9 trillion stimulus package.
  - This predicted deficit is smaller than the \$3.1 trillion deficit recorded in 2020, but it will still be the second-largest deficit in the United States since World War II. The \$3.1 trillion debt composed 14.9% of the country’s GDP last year.
  - The Office noted that the federal government was already running large deficits before the pandemic, but that falling tax revenue and increased spending widened the budget gap.

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

- [\*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations\*](#), February 10
  - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 40 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors. CDC’s national ensemble forecast indicates that the number of newly reported COVID-19 deaths will likely decrease over the next four weeks. It predicts between 10,300 and 20,400 new deaths and between 515,000 and 540,000 cumulative deaths by March 6.
  - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 11 models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. The models predict daily hospitalizations will likely decrease nationally and decrease in 48 jurisdictions. The forecasts estimate 3,900 to 12,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations reported on March 8.
- [\*Tight-Fit Masks or Double Masking Increases Protection\*](#), February 10
  - CDC [announced](#) new research Wednesday that indicates wearing a mask that fits tightly to the wearer’s face can help limit the spread of the virus. Lab tests showed that exposure to potentially infectious aerosols decreased by about 95% when one of two tightly fitted masking [options](#) were employed: (1) wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, and (2) wearing a medical procedure mask with knotted ear loops and tucked-in sides. Other effective options, according to the research, include mask fitters and nylon coverings over a mask.

- [Fully Vaccinated People Don't Need to Quarantine if Exposed to COVID](#), February 10
  - CDC [released](#) updated clinical considerations for use of the currently authorized vaccines. The new considerations are intended to provide clarifications on a number of topics, including administering and scheduling vaccine doses and administering vaccines to people already infected with or exposed to the virus, people with underlying medical conditions, people who are pregnant or lactating, and children and adolescents.
  - CDC continues to recommend that vaccinated persons follow current [guidance](#) to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask, staying at least six feet away from others, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated spaces, covering sneezes and coughs, washing hands, and following CDC [travel](#) guidance.
  - However, CDC now advises that vaccinated persons who have been exposed to someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 need not [quarantine](#). This guidance applies only to fully vaccinated people, meaning that it has been at least two weeks since receiving the vaccine (or, in the case of a two-dose vaccine, two weeks since receiving the second dose), who are within three months following receipt of the vaccine and have remained asymptomatic since exposure.
  - Adolescents aged 16 – 17 who are part of a group recommended to receive a vaccine may be vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine. There is no reason to believe there is any additional risk compares to adults 18 and older. Children under 16, however, are not authorized to receive the vaccine at this time.

### **New York State**

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), February 10
  - New York reported 122 deaths, 7,342 hospitalizations, and 1,402 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, February 10, 2021.
  - Approximately 10,099, or 3.54% of the 285,499 tests administered in New York on February 10 were positive for COVID-19.
  - As of February 10, New York has received 2,002,055 first doses of the vaccines and administered 1,787,189 first doses to patients. As of February 10, New York has received 1,031,650 second doses of the vaccines and administered 660,083 second doses to patients.
  - Beginning on February 20, New York will [launch](#) a 100-day rollout of 300 free concerts, recitals, and performances in venues across the State to facilitate the reemergence of the performing arts. The first performance will take place at the Javits Center and serve as a tribute to healthcare workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - On February 9, New York State officials [announced](#) that around 10% of New York State residents have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccines. Overall, the State has administered nearly 2.5 million doses of the vaccines. Although New York continues to make progress vaccinating residents, Governor Cuomo noted that demand for the vaccines often exceeds supply.
  - New York will [open](#) 11 more community-based pop-up vaccination sites throughout the State from February 11 – 14. Each site will administer first dose vaccines for 1 – 2 days at a time, depending upon the location, and then close. The sites will then reopen three weeks after their respective closing date to administer second doses. Governor Cuomo expects these sites to vaccinate around 3,100 people.

- [\*New York Sports Venues to Reopen After Covid-19 Closures\*](#), February 10
  - On February 10, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that large sports and entertainment venues could reopen at limited capacity beginning on February 23.
  - Before hosting events, venues must gain approval from New York State Department of Health (“NYDOH”).
  - NYDOH will grant approval if venues implement certain safety standards, including: a 10% capacity limit; requiring staff and patrons to show a negative COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours of attendance; mandating face coverings, socially distanced seating, and temperature checks; and collecting information from those in attendance for contact tracing.

### **New York City**

- [\*New York City COVID-19 Updates\*](#), February 10
  - On February 10, the State [opened](#) a COVID-19 mass-vaccination center at Citi Field in Queens. When Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the site, he claimed it would administer between 5,000 and 7,000 shots per day. However, due to short supply, the site received just 250 doses for its first day of operation. Mayor de Blasio commented that he hopes the site will receive more in the future and expects 4,000 doses to arrive sometime next week.
  - On February 8, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York City restaurants can resume indoor dining with limited capacity beginning on February 12—two days earlier than the governor previously announced.
- [\*Largest NYS Mass Vax Sites to Date Coming to Brooklyn, Queens to Reach Most Vulnerable\*](#), February 11
  - On February 10, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that Federal Emergency Management Agency will establish two community-based mass-vaccination sites at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn and York College in Queens.
  - The sites will vaccinate approximately 3,000 people per day over an eight week period. Both sites will inoculate only residents of the borough where the site is located. This residency restriction is part of an effort to make the vaccines available to communities and populations that have been historically underserved by the traditional healthcare system.
  - Governor Cuomo hopes that these mass-vaccination centers will serve as a national model for the equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines.

### **Vaccines and Therapeutics**

- [\*WHO Recommends AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 Vaccine\*](#), February 10
  - World Health Organization (WHO) issued an interim [recommendation](#) in favor of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine. WHO advises that adults over the age of 18 receive two doses of the vaccine, spaced 8 to 12 weeks apart.
- [\*Americans’ Intent to Be Vaccinated / Recommendations in Pregnancy\*](#), February 9
  - A recent [study](#) noted increased intent among Americans to get vaccinated against COVID-19 between September and December 2020. The proportion of Americans who

now say that they are “absolutely certain” or “very likely” to be vaccinated rose from 39% to 49%. Among adults 65 and older, intent to receive a vaccine is particularly high, at 66%, compared to 49% previously. Among essential workers, vaccine intent is now at 46%, up from 37%. The proportion of Americans who do not intend to get vaccinated decreased from 38% to 32%.

- Physicians writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association [recommend](#) that pregnant or lactating people discuss the benefits and potential risks of vaccination with their doctor. However, such a discussion should be optional, as requiring a consultation prior to vaccination may impose an unnecessary barrier to vaccine receipt.
- [FDA Authorizes Monoclonal Antibodies for Treatment of COVID-19](#), February 9
  - U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an emergency use [authorization](#) for bamlanivimab and etesevimab administered together for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients age 12 and older who are at high risk for progressing to severe COVID-19 or hospitalization.
  - Bamlanivimab and etesevimab are monoclonal antibodies, which are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system’s ability to fight off viruses and other harmful pathogens.
  - In a clinical trial, a single intravenous infusion of the antibodies administered together significantly reduced deaths and hospitalizations among high-risk patients.
- [Officials Investigating Reports of Thrombocytopenia After COVID-19 Vaccine](#), February 8
  - Vaccine manufacturers and regulators are [examining](#) rare instances of immune [thrombocytopenia](#), or low blood platelet count, among people who have received one of the two authorized vaccines in the U.S.
  - 40 cases, including one fatality, have been reported out of approximately 31 million people who have received at least one vaccine dose.
  - Thrombocytopenia is a rare side effect of other vaccines, as well, including the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine.

## **International**

- Governments around the world are using the pandemic as an excuse to clamp down on [free speech](#). According to Human Rights Watch, at least 83 countries have silenced critics or cracked down on peaceful assembly in the name of pandemic control.
- Many countries are using COVID-19 vaccines as a form of [diplomacy](#). Countries like India, China, and the United Arab Emirates are gifting doses of the vaccine to countries they consider strategically important.
- When [Japan](#) begins inoculating its population later this month, it will have fewer vaccine doses than anticipated, due to a shortage of the syringes necessary to get all 6 doses out of each vial. Though Japan expected to have 72 million doses, it will have only 60 million.
- On Tuesday, [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) wrapped up its first visit to China as part of its investigation into the sources of the coronavirus. The WHO said the virus appears to have originated in an animal, not a lab, but that “the introduction through an intermediary host species . . . will require more studies and more specific, targeted research.”

- [Germany](#) has extended its country-wide lockdown by another month. Though cases of COVID-19 have dropped, the country remains concerned about the spread of the more contagious COVID-19 variants.
- [Britain](#) will impose its strictest COVID-19 travel restrictions to date, including mandatory hotel quarantines upon arrival in the country and potential 10-year prison terms for people who lie on entry forms.

### **Other Updates**

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), February 11
  - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 793,000 workers filed initial claims (seasonally adjusted) for unemployment benefits last week.
  - The number of new claims had trended downward since March, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. However, claims began spiking again around December. Cases are now slowing decreasing once again.
  - 334,524 new claims were filed 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.
- [Federal Officials Investigating Shipments of Counterfeit Masks](#), February 11
  - On Wednesday, federal investigators from Department of Homeland Security announced an investigation into millions of counterfeit masks that were unwittingly purchased by U.S. hospitals, medical institutions, and government agencies in five states.
  - The masks looked like N95s, were stamped with the 3M logo, and shipped in boxes reading “Made in the U.S.A.”
  - Investigators said the masks could be dangerous, because they may not offer the same level of protection against COVID-19 as do real N95s.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Nine Key Takeaways for Providers as Illinois Returns to Phase 4 of the “Restore Illinois” Plan](#), February 11
- [Unexpected Uses of Personal Data in the Coronavirus Pandemic Continue](#), January 13
- [To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate – That is the Question, but Who Should Know the Answer?](#), January 13

Send questions to:

- [COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com](mailto:COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com)