

January 14, 2020

Summary

The United States has 23,253,252 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 387,910 reported related deaths. The United States recorded approximately 4,400 deaths on January 12, a new daily record. After President-elect Biden announced plans to release nearly all available vaccine doses to the states, Health Secretary Azar on Tuesday said the federal government would no longer reserve some vaccine supply for second doses. Azar also urged states to open vaccines to adults aged 65 or older, as well as anyone at a high risk for severe COVID-19. On Wednesday, Johnson & Johnson published encouraging data from a Phase 1-2a trial of its one-shot COVID-19 vaccine. Today, 13 experts from WHO arrived in Wuhan to commence long-awaited research on the origin of the virus. Tonight, Biden is expected to outline a \$1.9 trillion plan to combat the economic effects of COVID-19. His plan will seek \$2,000 direct payments to individuals, aid for small businesses and local and state governments, supplemental federal unemployment benefits, and increased funding for vaccinations, testing, contact tracing, and school openings.

After a sharp, nation-wide surge following the holidays, new COVID-19 cases have slightly declined over the past week. Texas became the second state to surpass 2 million confirmed COVID-19 cases on January 13, following California. Governors in Michigan and Minnesota announced extensions of COVID-19 restrictions in the states, as cases throughout the Midwest have begun to rise again after declining sharply through most of December and January. California lifted stay-at-home orders for 13 northern counties with improving hospital conditions; restrictions remain in place throughout Southern California. The state's overall positivity rate has steadied at 13.5%. The more infectious COVID-19 variant that recently emerged in the U.K. has now been discovered in 12 states.

New York reported 202 deaths, 8,823 hospitalizations, and 1,536 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. Approximately 13,661, or 6.42%, of the 212,589 tests administered in New York on January 13 were positive for COVID-19. As of January 13, New York has received 1,872,625 doses of the vaccines and administered 688,576 doses to patients. New York opened four state-run vaccination sites throughout New York State between January 13 and 14; another is scheduled to open on January 15, and more will be opened over the coming weeks. Nursing home deaths have surged throughout New York during the past few weeks. A trade group estimated that New York City tenants owed at least \$1 billion in unpaid rent, spurring tenant advocates to stress the need for greater and more accessible federal relief. New York City Councilmembers criticized the City's slow vaccination roll out, while City and State government officials deflected blame to the federal government

Presidential updates

- [Readout from the Trump Administration's 49th Governors Briefing on COVID-19 Response & Best Practices](#), January 12
 - On Tuesday, Pence met with state leaders and the White House Coronavirus Taskforce to discuss COVID-19 recovery efforts and vaccine distribution.
 - Pence encouraged governors to increase access to therapeutics by leveraging outpatient infusion centers.
 - Administrator Pete Gaynor and Brigadier General David J. Sanford assured the group that the United States has “multiple months” of PPE reserves.
 - Health Secretary [Azar](#) urged states to vaccinate adults aged 65 and older, as well as anyone with a medical condition that puts them at a high risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms or death. CDC has [advised](#) prioritizing about 74 million people for the vaccine, including health-care workers, staff and residents of long-term care facilities, front-line essential workers, and adults 75 and older. The change urged by Azar will increase the number of people seeking vaccines to around 184 million, which risks overwhelming already flooded sign-up systems. It remains unclear how expanding the priority group will affect vaccine access for front-line essential workers.
 - [Azar](#) further stated that the federal government would release all available vaccine doses, rather than reserving some for second doses. [Critics](#) of this new policy argue it risks a delay between the first vaccine shot and the booster shot. Such a delay may decrease the efficacy of the vaccine. However, proponents of the change believe the risk of delaying broad dissemination of the first shot is greater than the risk of delaying booster shots.
 - Azar also warned that states would lose their allocation of doses if not used quickly.
- [Biden's Economic Plan to Focus on Immediate Rescue from COVID-19 Crisis](#), January 13
 - On [Thursday evening](#), Biden is expected to outline his plan to combat the economic effects of COVID-19.
 - According to Brian Deese, who will lead the National Economic Council for the next administration, Biden's plan will seek \$2,000 direct payments to individuals, aid to small businesses and local and state governments, and supplemental federal unemployment benefits.
 - Additionally, it will include increased funding for vaccinations, testing, contract tracing, and school openings.
 - Today, Biden estimated his plan would cost [\\$1.9 trillion](#).

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO COVID-19 Updates](#), January 14
 - A WHO team [arrived](#) in Wuhan to investigate the origins of the pandemic. The team was delayed by months of diplomatic wrangling and bureaucratic red tape. A government spokesman said the team will “exchange views” with Chinese scientists, but gave no indication whether the team will be allowed to gather its own evidence.
 - China is refusing entrance to the country to two team scientists who tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), January 14
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 39 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 increase over the next four weeks. CDC predicts that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 440,000 and 477,000 by February 6.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 12 models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. All models predict a likely increase in the number of daily new confirmed COVID-19 hospital admissions. The forecasts estimate 14,000 to 25,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day by February 8.
- [*CDC Expands Negative COVID-19 Test Requirement to All Air Passengers Entering the United States*](#)
 - According to a new CDC policy going into effect on January 26, all air passengers entering the United States must have a negative COVID-19 test.
 - The policy requires air passengers complete a test no earlier than three days before departure to the United States and present written documentation of the negative test to the airline. If a passenger does not follow these rules, the passenger will be unable to board a flight.
 - CDC also recommends passengers get tested within five days of landing and remain isolated for seven days.
 - The policy [expands](#) a similar policy that was revealed in December in response to reports of the UK variant of the virus.
- [*COVID-19 Trends Among Persons Aged 0-24 Years – United States, March 1-December 12, 2020*](#), January 13
 - A CDC study of COVID-19 infection trends among children, adolescents, and young adults ages 0-24 reveals that infection rates increase with age.
 - The children, adolescents, and young adults were stratified into age groups: 0-4, 5-10, 11-13, 14-17, and 18-24. Trends in these groups were compared with those in adults over 25.
 - During the study's period, 57.4% of cases occurred in the 18-24 group, 16.3% in the 14-17 group, 7.9% in the 11-13 group, 10.9% in the 5-10 group, and 7.4% in the 0-4 group.
 - Trends among children and adolescents ages 0-17 tracked those of adults over 25. The trend among young adults ages 18-24 mostly tracked those of adults over 25, except for a distinct peak during the week of September 6.
 - CDC researchers said the study results give insight into the safety to school reopenings: "Lower incidence among younger children and evidence from available studies . . . suggest that the risk for COVID-19 introduction and transmission among children associated with reopening child care centers and elementary schools might be lower than that for reopening high schools and institutions of higher education. However, for schools to operate safely to accommodate in-person learning, communities should fully implement and strictly adhere to multiple mitigation

strategies . . . to reduce COVID-19 incidence within the community as well as within schools. . .”

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), January 14
 - New York reported 202 deaths, 8,823 hospitalizations, and 1,536 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Wednesday, January 13, 2021.
 - Approximately 13,661, or 6.42% of the 212,589 tests administered in New York on January 13 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of January 14, New York has received 1,872,625 doses of the vaccines and administered 688,576 doses to patients.
 - Between January 13 and January 14, three state-run vaccination sites [opened](#). Sites at the Javits Center, Westchester County Center, and New York State Fair Expo center opened on January 13, and a site at Jones Beach opened on January 14. A vaccination site at SUNY Albany will open on January 15, with additional sites to be announced in the coming days.
 - During January 13’s State of the State speech, Governor Cuomo [laid](#) out his plan to revitalize the New York economy which has been stricken by the consequences of the pandemic. Governor Cuomo pledged to look for ways to rapidly reopen restaurants, theaters, and other cultural sites to patrons who have tested negative or have received the vaccine. He also [proposed](#) to turn vacant commercial properties into affordable housing. Finally, he pledged to create a 1,000-person public health corps to assist vaccination efforts and train 100,000 citizens to volunteer in future health emergencies.
 - Nursing home deaths from the coronavirus have [surged](#) in recent weeks in central and western New York after a relatively calm summer and fall. A spokeswoman for the New York State Department of Health said that it would try to persuade nursing home residents to get the vaccine. Since the pandemic began, more than 8,000 nursing home residents have died from the virus.

New York City

- [*New York City Renters Owe More than \\$1 Billion in Unpaid Rent, Survey Finds*](#), January 14
 - A survey conducted by the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), a landlord trade group, found that New York City apartment tenants are more than \$1 billion in debt in rent-regulated apartments from missed payments during the pandemic.
 - Because rent-regulated apartments account for about half of the city’s total rental apartments, CHIP Executive Director Jay Martin estimated that the total rental debt is closer to \$2 billion.
 - Congress’s December COVID-19 relief bill included \$1.3 billion in pandemic rental assistance for New York State, though it is not clear how much of those funds will be made available to New York City.
 - Tenant advocates have stressed that state eligibility guidelines for rental relief should be made simpler. Nationally, about \$300 million in federal rental assistance provided last spring was still unspent in December, and in New York, only \$40 million of the State’s \$100 million in pledged rental assistance had been spent as of December. Governor Cuomo signed an executive order in December to expand tenant eligibility.

- In December, Governor Cuomo also [extended](#) the eviction moratorium until May 2021.
- [*New York City COVID-19 Vaccine Program Has a Shaky Start, Council Members Say*](#), January 13
 - During a hearing on January 12, New York City councilmembers expressed criticism of the City's vaccination efforts thus far.
 - Councilmembers complained that older residents struggle to navigate the online sign-up process and wait hours on the telephone hotline. Older residents are often homebound, which prevents them from reaching vaccination sites.
 - New York City Health Commissioner Dave A. Chokshi blamed the federal government for the problems with administration, claiming that the City only receives a few days notice from the federal government regarding new shipments of the vaccine. Mr. Chokshi said that the CDC's new guidelines allowing vaccinations for individuals older than 65 years of age would accelerate the pace of vaccinations.
 - Yet Governor Cuomo expressed concern that the CDC's new guidelines would create a longer wait for New Yorkers because vaccination sites would be oversubscribed.
 - The City has received roughly 885,000 doses of the vaccine, but only 239,000 doses have been administered, including more than 23,000 second doses.
 - Previously, Mayor de Blasio announced that New York City would aim to vaccinate one million New Yorkers by the end of January.

Other Related Updates

- [*Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report*](#), January 14
 - Department of Labor (DOL) [reports](#) that another 965,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week.
 - The number of new claims had trending downward since March, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. However, claims have been increasing since December.
 - 284,000 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.
- [*Democrats Want to Fine Colleagues \\$1,000 a day if they refuse to wear a mask on Capitol Grounds*](#)
 - On Tuesday, two House Democrats introduced a bill that could fine lawmakers \$1,000 for refusing to wear a mask on Capitol grounds.
 - Lawmakers introduced the bill after at least three House Democrats tested positive for COVID-19 after sheltering with unmasked colleagues during the attack on the Capitol last Wednesday.
- [*U.S. Buys 1.25 Million Doses of Regeneron's Monoclonal Antibody Treatment*](#)
 - The United States bought 1.25 million doses of Regeneron's monoclonal antibody treatment, which may help prevent people infected with COVID-19 from becoming severely ill.

- The deal, which cost “up to \$2.625 billion,” will increase the supply of the treatment from the 600,000 doses previously purchased.
- Health officials are encouraging patients diagnosed with COVID-19 to ask their doctors where they can get the treatment. A new [website](#) can also help patients determine treatment availability.
- [*Positive Interim Phase 1-2a Vaccine Results from Johnson & Johnson*](#), January 13
 - A single [dose](#) of Johnson & Johnson’s SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidate appears to be safe and induce an immune response in two age groups, according to interim results of a Phase 1-2a trial published on January 13.
 - The trial included 800 adults aged 18-55 or aged 65 and up. Volunteers were randomized to various combinations of low-dose or high-dose vaccines or placebo.
 - Mild adverse events were common, including fatigue, headache, myalgia (muscle aches), and injection-site pain.
 - At day 29 after the first dose, 99% of the younger trial cohort and 96% of the older cohort in both dosing groups showed antibody production. Antibody titers increased further when tested at day 57.
 - Johnson & Johnson began their Phase 3 trial in September, and [hopes](#) to announce results in as little as two weeks.
 - The vaccine likely will require only one dose and remains stable at refrigerator temperatures for months, greatly simplifying logistics compared to the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.
 - Johnson & Johnson agreed to a \$1 billion contract with the federal government in August that promised to produce 12 million doses by the end of February, and 100 million doses by the end of June.
 - However, the company has fallen far behind the proposed production schedule. Federal officials were recently informed the company is as much as two months behind, and won’t catch up until at least the end of April.
- [*Convalescent Plasma Effective in Non-Ventilated Patients*](#), January 13
 - Treatment with convalescent plasma containing high antibody levels was associated with lower 30-day mortality than low-antibody-level plasma, according to a retrospective study published in New England Journal of Medicine.
 - Researchers examined outcomes in roughly 3,100 adults hospitalized with COVID-19 who had at least one risk factor and were treated with convalescent plasma.
 - Patients who received plasma with high anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibody levels had a 30-day mortality of 22%, versus 30% among those in low-titer groups.
 - Results were significant only among those who did not receive mechanical ventilation.
 - Receiving plasma within three days of testing positive was associated with lower mortality rates than receiving it later.
- [*FDA COVID-19 Updates*](#), January 14
 - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [published](#) the FDA COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery and Preparedness Plan Initiative: Summary Report, a third party report reflecting “highlights of the agency’s response, accomplishments and activities,” and describing potential prospective actions for the agency to consider going forward.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate – That is the Question, But Who Should Know the Answer?](#), January 13
- [Podcast: COVID-19: Pandemic Fundraising Insights and What Lies Ahead for Private Equity in 2021: Conversation with Tom Burger, Gridiron Capital](#), January 8
- [Podcast: COVID-19: End of Life Fund Issues](#), January 6
- [Coronavirus Relief Legislation Creates Substantial Changes to Copyright and Trademark Law](#), December 28

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