

# COVID-19 Daily Update

July 16, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 3,533,317 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 137,846 reported related deaths. Department of Labor reported that another 1,300,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. Department of Commerce reported a 7.5% increase in retail spending from May to June, boosting revenue in stores and restaurants nationally. Consumer spending increased by 1.1% from 2019 – the first annual increase since the pandemic began. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recommended that public school districts prioritize full-time, in-person classes for grades K-5 and students with special needs, because these two groups struggle with online learning and require the most supervision. Republican National Convention organizers announced that most events at the August convention in Jacksonville, Florida would be limited to “regular delegates only,” allowing for approximately 2,500 attendees.

School districts in Houston and San Francisco announced plans to begin the year with distance learning, with tentative plans to resume in-person classes at a later date. Kansas announced that public schools would not re-open until after Labor Day, to allow schools additional time to acquire masks, thermometers, hand sanitizer, and other supplies. In Florida, several hospitals report “low or no supplies” of remdesivir to treat COVID-19 patients. In Georgia, Governor Kemp signed an executive order on Wednesday, July 15, banning local and city officials from issuing their own mask mandates while re-iterating that residents of the state “are strongly encouraged” to wear face coverings. The order also voids existing local mask mandates, such as those issued recently by Atlanta, Savannah, Athens, and Augusta. In Washington State, Governor Inslee warned that if the current increase in cases and hospitalizations across the state continues, “we would have to prepare to go back to where we were in March.” Amazon announced that “employees who work in a role that can effectively be done from home are welcome to do so until January 8.”

Approximately 769, or 1.06%, of the tests conducted in New York on July 15 were positive for COVID-19. Governor Cuomo plans to issue a final decision by Friday, July 17 on whether New York City may enter phase four of re-opening on Monday, July 20. Mayor de Blasio expressed concern about COVID-19 spreading indoors and indicated that indoor activities “should proceed only with caution and very strict rules.” Governor Cuomo announced limitations on alcohol service statewide. Restaurants and bars may serve alcohol only to patrons who are ordering and eating food. The State will shut down any bar or restaurant in New York City that receives three social distancing or mask violations. New York City plans to serve 100,000 families through free child care initiatives as schools partially re-open in the fall.

## Presidential updates

- [\*Dr. Fauci Comments on Public White House Criticism\*](#), July 16
  - The Atlantic interviewed Dr. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, on recent White House efforts to discredit his public health expertise.
  - White House aides recently released a [statement](#) to the Washington Post, noting that “several White House officials are concerned about the number of times Dr. Fauci has been wrong on things” during the pandemic. President Trump commented that Dr. Fauci “is a nice man, but he’s made a lot of mistakes.”
  - Fauci noted that he “stands by everything” he said and that “contextually, at the time I said it, it was absolutely true.” Fauci described the attack as “nonsense,” “completely wrong,” and “a bit bizarre.”
  - Dr. Fauci expressed that some states “prematurely jump[ed] over some checkpoints” and re-opened too soon.” Fauci urged the country to focus on “how can we get our control over [the virus] now, and, looking forward, how can we make sure that next month, we don’t have another example of California, Texas, Florida, and Arizona?”

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [\*New England Journal of Medicine Commentary on the United States’ Withdrawal from WHO\*](#), July 15
  - An article published in New England Journal of Medicine commented on the United States withdrawal from WHO.
  - The United States is responsible for the largest amount of funding for WHO, 22% of assessed dues, and provides the largest voluntary contributions for programming across polio eradication, nutrition, and vaccine programs.
  - The article noted that “WHO has not been a highly effective rapid-response organization” but highlighted WHO’s importance in providing global standards for drug approval, therapies for common diseases, and guidelines for disease treatment.
  - The article argues that the United States “needs” WHO to effectively navigate through the pandemic and cautioned against making “the mistake of firing the firefighter in the midst of a fire.”
- [\*COVID-19 Situation Report – 177\*](#), July 15
  - WHO [detailed](#) efforts to support ongoing vaccination programs during the pandemic.
  - WHO [increased](#) deliveries of medical equipment to countries in need, including personal protective equipment, diagnostics, and biomedical equipment.

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

- [\*CDC Remarks on COVID-19 Data Collection\*](#), July 16
  - CDC Director Redfield commented on the new Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) system created to collect and organize real-time hospital data on COVID-19.
  - States are now required to send data directly to the HHS Protect system, instead of CDC’s National Health Safety Network. HHS Protect is described as “a secure set of capabilities powered by eight commercial technologies for sharing, parsing, housing, and accessing COVID-19 data.”

- Access to HHS Protect is granted to authorized federal employees and contractors on an as-needed basis. HHS Protect is partially operated by Palantir Technologies, a California-based data analytics company, and TeleTracking Technologies, a Pittsburgh-based health data firm.
  - Redfield noted that “no one is taking access or data away from CDC.” CDC, other federal response teams, and state and local health departments will have access to all HHS data.
  - HHS Chief Information Officer Arrieta stressed that the system was developed with the goals of “transparency, sharing, privacy, and security” and noted that “there is no manipulation of this data possible within the system.”
- [\*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Hospitalizations\*](#), June 24
    - CDC consolidated data from six models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. On August 10, the forecasts estimate 4,500 to 13,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day.
    - National forecasts from three models suggest an increase in the number of daily hospitalizations over the next four weeks, while the other three models forecast stable numbers or slight declines.
    - Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.

#### **New York State**

- [\*New York State COVID-19 Updates\*](#), July 16
  - New York reported 14 deaths, 813 hospitalizations, and 165 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, July 16.
  - Approximately 769, or 1.06%, of the tests conducted in New York on July 15 were positive for COVID-19.
  - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) limitations on alcohol service statewide. Restaurants and bars may serve alcohol only to patrons who are ordering and eating food. Bar top service will be limited to seated customers who are socially distanced by six feet or separated by physical barriers.
  - Compliance with New York States’ travel form policy increased to 92% after the State announced fines for failure to complete the form. The policy requires out-of-state travelers from 22 designated states with the highest infection rates to provide local authorities with their contact information upon entering New York.
  - Governor Cuomo [launched](#) a national advertising campaign to promote widespread mask use through public service announcements.
  - New York [established](#) two COVID-19 testing sites in minority communities in Houston, Texas; the sites have the capacity to conduct up to 1,000 tests per day. New York State sent more than 20 health care workers and public health experts to Houston to consult on the city’s COVID-19 response.

## **New York City**

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 16
  - Governor Cuomo [created](#) the “Three Strikes and You’re Closed” initiative for bars and restaurants in New York City. Any establishment that receives three social distancing or mask violations will be shut down. An “egregious” violation will result in an immediate loss of the facility’s liquor license or closure before a third strike.
  - New York City plans to [serve](#) 100,000 families through free child care initiatives as children return to school in the fall. Libraries, community centers, and other spaces will be used to provide tutoring and support for about 10% of the City’s students whose schools continue blended learning. Social distancing guidelines will limit rooms to 15 children at any one time.
- [New York Attractions Plan Re-Openings](#), July 16
  - High Line Park re-opened on Thursday, July 16, with a ticketed [reservation](#) system.
  - Governors Island [re-opened](#) to the public for “passive recreation” with daily ferry service from Lower Manhattan on July 15.
  - Liberty and Ellis Islands announced [plans](#) to partially re-open pending the City’s move into phase four.
  - Metropolitan Museum of Art, the country’s largest museum, announced plans to [re-open](#) on August 29. The building will be limited to 25% capacity and visitors will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
- [New York City Issues Phase Four Guidance](#), July 15
  - Governor Cuomo plans to issue a final decision by Friday, July 17 on whether New York City may enter phase four of re-opening on Monday, July 20.
  - If the City is approved to enter phase four, the State indicated that it would not allow additional indoor activities to resume, such as malls and cultural institutions.
  - Mayor de Blasio [expressed](#) concern about COVID-19 spreading indoors and indicated that indoor activities “should proceed only with caution and very strict rules.”
  - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) released guidance for businesses potentially eligible to re-open in phase four, including: low-risk [indoor](#) and [outdoor](#) arts and entertainment; [malls](#); [media production](#); and [professional sports competitions](#).
  - The guidance outlines the steps businesses are required to take before re-opening, available City resources, and advice on managing employee and customer safety.

## **Other Related Updates**

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), July 16
  - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 1,300,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week.
  - More than 49 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last seventeen weeks. Initial applications for unemployment insurance have steadily declined for several months, from a record 6.9 million claims in late March.
  - 928,488 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.

- [\*Intelligence Agencies Report Russian Hackers Trying to Steal Coronavirus Vaccine Research\*](#), July 16
  - American, British, and Canadian intelligence agencies published advisories that Russian hackers are attempting to steal information on medical supply chains and coronavirus vaccine research from health care organizations.
  - National Security Agency (NSA) warned that APT29, the hacking group known as Cozy Bear and associated with Russian intelligence, is using spear-phishing and malware to target health care data.
  - APT29 “has a long history of targeting governmental, diplomatic, think-tank, health care, and energy organizations for intelligence gain.”
  - Government officials declined to identify victims of the hacks, although academic organizations and labs doing vaccine research appear to have been their focus.
  - A Kremlin spokesperson rejected the allegations, claiming they were not backed by proper evidence.
  
- [\*Coronavirus Widening the Gender Gap for Working Mothers\*](#), July 14
  - A recent [study](#), published in *Gender, Work, and Organization*, examined how school and daycare closures due to the pandemic have increased caregiving responsibilities for working parents.
  - Researchers found that mothers with young children have reduced their work hours four to five times more than fathers from February through April. The impact was greatest among mothers of primary school-aged children or younger children for whom caregiving and homeschooling demands are most intense. Consequently, the gender gap in work hours has grown by 20% to 50%.
  - The study warns that “scaling back work is part of a downward spiral that often leads to labor force exits — especially in cases where employers are inflexible with schedules or penalize employees unable to meet work expectations in the face of growing care demands.”
  - Future merit-based promotions and pay raises may further disproportionately benefit men whose work commitments remained high during the pandemic.
  
- [\*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup\*](#), July 15
  - FDA updated its [FAQ](#) on COVID-19 testing to include a [list](#) of COVID-19 tests that should no longer be used due to problems that cannot be, or have not been addressed promptly.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [\*Disputing Tax: CARES Act Payroll Tax Provisions and Factors Employers Should Consider in Their Coronavirus Response\*](#), July 15
- [\*US Universities and Hospitals Facing Increased Cyber Attacks in Time of COVID-19\*](#), July 14
- [\*European Regulatory Update for Asset Managers\*](#), July 13

Send questions to:

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