

COVID-19 Daily Update

July 19, 2020

Summary

The United States has 3,752,257 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 140,395 reported related deaths. UN Secretary General Guterres warned that the world faces “the deepest global recession since World War II, and the broadest collapse in incomes since 1870; 100 million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty and we could see famines of historic proportions.” National Institutes of Health Director Collins highlighted that “the average [COVID-19] testing delay is too long... [which] really undercuts the value of testing.” Former FDA Commissioner Gottlieb noted that “once testing is delayed more than 48 hours, it becomes not very useful” because it makes it harder to isolate active cases and trace their contacts. FDA issued emergency approval to Quest Diagnostics for pooled testing, a testing approach that allows samples from multiple people to be combined to allow for quicker testing.

In Florida, deaths in the state have risen by 78% over the last two weeks compared with the previous two weeks. In Mississippi, Governor Reeves refused to issue a state-wide mask order and noted his preference for a “surgical approach” with precautions varying county by county. In Los Angeles, Mayor Garcetti noted that the city is “on the brink” of a new stay-at-home order due to a steep increase in new COVID-19 cases. In Texas, the Defense Department sent Navy teams to support four medical centers in the south and southwestern parts of the state. Transit agencies across the country are projected to rack up close to \$40 billion in budget shortfalls this year. Authorities warned that this could plunge systems into a “transit death spiral,” where cuts to service and delayed upgrades make public transit a less convenient option for the public, which prompts further drops in ridership and further cuts, until a network eventually collapses.

New York reported 13 deaths, 722 hospitalizations, and 160 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Saturday, July 18. Approximately 502, or 1.08%, of the 46,204 tests conducted in New York on July 18 were positive for COVID-19. New York State Department of Health announced up to \$1 million in funding for long-term care facilities to purchase tablets, webcams, headphones, or other accessories to help residents stay connected with family. Dr. Fauci praised New York for its handling of the pandemic, saying the State responded “correctly.” Governor Cuomo instituted some of the strictest re-opening requirements in the country, insisting that stay-at-home orders remain in place and keeping businesses closed far longer than other states. New York City will enter phase four of re-opening on Monday, July 20, allowing film production and higher education activities to resume. Other indoor activities remain suspended indefinitely, including indoor dining, museums, movie theaters, and malls.

Presidential updates

- [*President Trump Comments on COVID-19 During Press Interview*](#), July 19
 - President Trump commented on the pandemic during a recent press interview.
 - Trump described Dr. Fauci as an “alarmist” who provided faulty information in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic. Trump criticized Dr. Fauci for being “against masks” in March. Fauci has stated that he does not regret urging Americans not to wear masks at the beginning of the pandemic, referencing a severe shortage of protective gear for medical professionals.
 - President Trump reiterated threats to pull federal funding from schools if they do not re-open in the fall.
 - Trump claimed that the United States has “one of the lowest virus fatality rates in the world.” Johns Hopkins ranked the United States eighth highest for its [observed case-fatality ratio](#), out of the 20 counties currently most affected by the pandemic.
- [*Internal White House Coronavirus Task Force Document Leaked*](#), July 17
 - An internal White House coronavirus task force document, published by Center for Public Integrity, suggested that 18 states had more than 100 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people last week.
 - The document urged more than a dozen states to revert to more stringent protective measures, limiting social gatherings to 10 people or fewer, closing bars and gyms, and asking residents to wear masks at all times.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [*COVID-19 Situation Report – 181*](#), July 19
 - WHO announced a global study to [assess](#) the public health and social impact of the pandemic on refugees and migrants.

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

- [*COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity*](#), July 17
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending July 11.
 - The average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased in four surveillance regions, with the highest percentages in the southeast (14%); south central (17.1%); and southwest (11.2%).
 - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 113.6 per 100,000, up from 107.2 per 100,000 during the previous week. The highest rates were in people 65 years and older, at 321.8 per 100,000, up from 316.9 per 100,000.
 - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 decreased from 8.1% to 6.4% from the prior week, but remained above baseline. Mortality is currently above the epidemic threshold and will likely increase as additional death certificates are processed.

- [Duration of Isolation and Precautions for Adults with COVID-19](#), July 17
 - CDC updated guidance on the duration of isolation for adults with COVID-19.
 - Accumulating evidence supports ending isolation and precautions for persons with COVID-19 using a symptom-based strategy.
 - CDC noted that concentrations of SARS-CoV-2 RNA measured in upper respiratory specimens declines after onset of symptoms. People with mild to moderate COVID-19 remain infectious no longer than 10 days after symptom onset. People with more severe to critical illness likely remain infectious no longer than 20 days after symptom onset.
 - Recovered cases can continue to shed detectable SARS-CoV-2 RNA in upper respiratory specimens for up to three months after illness onset. Studies have not found evidence that clinically recovered persons with persistence of viral RNA have transmitted SARS-CoV-2 to others.
 - These findings strengthen the justification for relying on a symptom-based, rather than test-based strategy for ending isolation of patients, so that people who are by current evidence no longer infectious are not kept unnecessarily isolated and excluded from work or other responsibilities.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 19
 - New York reported 13 deaths, 722 hospitalizations, and 160 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Saturday, July 19.
 - Approximately 502, or 1.08%, of the 46,204 tests conducted in New York on July 18 were positive for COVID-19.
 - New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and State Office for the Aging [announced](#) up to \$1 million in funding for long term care facilities to purchase tablets, webcams, headphones, or other accessories to help residents stay connected with family during the pandemic.
 - New York State Department of Health [announced](#) an investigation into reports of potential COVID-19 exposures associated with large public gatherings during the Fourth of July weekend along the River Communities in Jefferson County.
 - State beaches and parks are [admitting](#) only 50% of their full capacity in order to comply with social distancing requirements. As many as 20 New York State beaches reached this reduced capacity by midday on Saturday, July 18, during the heatwave.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 19
 - New York City will [enter](#) phase four of re-opening on Monday, June 20, allowing film and TV production and higher education activities to resume.
 - Museums, movie theaters, malls, and indoor dining all remain closed with no date set for re-opening. The city's zoos will open at one-third capacity on July 24, without indoor exhibits.
 - Reports indicate that New Yorkers aged 20 to 29 are currently seeing a slight increase in COVID-19 infections. NYC Health + Hospitals [set up](#) a COVID-19 testing station near Washington Square Park on Saturday night with the goal of testing more young people.

- New York City Department of Health released [information](#) on how to assist heat-vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [New York City Sues Federal Department of Education](#), July 17
 - New York City Department of Education joined a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) over a proposed rule that would limit the funding available to public schools under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.
 - USDOE’s rule imposes restrictions on the way available funds are distributed under the CARES Act, offering two options to states and local school districts.
 - Under the first option, funds would be allocated based on the number of low-income students, but the funds must be used only for schools qualifying for Title I funding. This would result in a loss of an estimated \$100 million for more than 250 non-Title I New York City public schools.
 - Under the second option, states and local school districts would be required to distribute CARES Act funds without regard to low-income status or residency of students, as is required under Title I. This would divert approximately \$53 million from public schools to private schools, because more private school students would be counted to determine the private school share.

Other Related Updates

- [Leaders Debate Mask Use During Pandemic](#), July 19
 - NIH Director Collins described the politicization of face coverings as “bizarre” and stated that “our best chance is for all of us to get together and do the right thing, and stop fighting so much about the divide between different political perspectives.”
 - Colorado Governor Polis defended his recent decision to institute a statewide mask mandate and noted that it “was a really easy decision” after he saw data suggesting that local mask orders in Colorado were tied to lower case numbers.
 - Mississippi Governor Reeves stated that he refused to issue a state-wide mask order and expressed a preference for a “surgical approach” with precautions varying county by county.
 - Arkansas Governor Hutchinson issued a state-wide mask mandate on Thursday, July 16. Hutchinson expressed that he would not support a national mandate and noted that he waited to institute a mandatory mask policy because it previously was “not popular” in Arkansas.
- [Department of Health Distributes COVID-19 Funding to Hospitals](#), July 17,
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced an additional \$10 billion distribution from the Provider Relief Fund to more than 1,000 hospitals in COVID-19 hotspots under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.
 - The eligibility criteria is based on the number of COVID-19 hospital admissions between January 1 and June 10; hospitals will be paid \$50,000 per eligible admission. HHS distributed the first round of impact funding to 395 hospitals in May.

- [*FDA Issues Emergency Authorization for Sample Pooling in Diagnostic Testing*](#), July 18
 - FDA issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) to Quest Diagnostics to authorize its COVID-19 test for use with pooled samples.
 - Specimens from up to four people can be tested together; if the results come back negative, health officials will know that none of those individuals tested has the virus. A positive result would be followed up by individual testing of the samples. The goal of this approach is to run fewer tests overall.
 - FDA Commissioner Hahn commented that “sample pooling becomes especially important as infection rates decline and we begin testing larger portions of the population.”

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

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