

April 1, 2021

Summary

The United States has 30,520,491 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 552,942 reported related deaths. Today, President Joseph Biden's administration unveiled its first TV ads encouraging Americans to get vaccinated as part of the "We Can Do This" campaign. At the same time, Vice President Kamala Harris met virtually with members of the COVID-19 Community Core, a new coalition of community, religious, and celebrity leaders who will promote immunizations.

Americans' confidence in COVID vaccines is steadily rising, as new data show the Pfizer vaccine to be 100% effective among teens. 15 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which were expected to be shipped out later this month, have been ruined by an ingredient error. Scientists are also warning that the vaccines may offer protection for only one year or less and that modified vaccines may be required in the future due to the emergency of new variants of the virus. CDC announced this week that COVID-19 was the third-leading cause of death in the United States in 2020, with death rates for communities of color more than double that of the non-Hispanic white population.

COVID-19 cases continue to rise amid growing outbreaks in the Northeast and Midwest. However, infections, deaths, and hospitalizations remain far lower than during the January peak. Michigan leads the country in recent cases per capita, and hospitalizations in the State have more than doubled over the last two weeks. While some areas of the United States continue to struggle, infection rates are relatively low in many parts of the South and West.

As of March 31, New York reported 56 deaths, 4,604 hospitalizations, and 894 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 8,888, or 3.71% of the 239,652 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 9,655,705 doses of the vaccines to patients, and 31% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 18.5% are fully vaccinated. Beginning April 1, New York State will open another State-run, mass vaccination site at Rockland Community College's Eugene Levy Fieldhouse. On April 1, Governor Cuomo announced that New York officially reported 45 million COVID-19 test results throughout the pandemic. On the same day, New York State also lifted its mandatory, two-week quarantine period for travelers entering the region from other states.

U.S. Government

- [*Biden Unveils Pro-Vaccine TV Ads, Network of Grass-Roots Leaders, to Push Shots*](#), April 1
 - Today, the Biden administration unveiled its first TV ads encouraging Americans to get vaccinated as part of the “We Can Do This” campaign.
 - The campaign will air on broadcast and cable news stations across the United States and will include Spanish-language media.
 - As part of the campaign, the administration will also roll out pro-vaccines images people can use to frame their profile pictures on social media.
 - Also today, Harris met virtually with members of the [COVID-19 Community Core](#), a new coalition of community, religious, and celebrity leaders who will promote immunizations.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine 100 Percent Effective in Teens*](#), March 31
 - Pfizer and BioNTech [announced](#) preliminary results from a late-stage trial of nearly 3,200 U.S. adolescents aged 12 to 15 years. The data show that zero participants developed COVID-19 after receiving the companies’ vaccine, while 18 participants in the placebo group became infected. No vaccinated participant experienced serious side effects.
 - The study has not yet been [peer-reviewed](#) or published in a scientific journal.
 - Pfizer plans to [submit](#) the new data to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “as soon as possible,” so that adolescents in the age group could be eligible for the vaccine before the new school year.
 - Separately, Pfizer also [announced](#) that its vaccine provides protection for at least six months.
- [*Baltimore Plant Ruins 15 Million Johnson & Johnson Coronavirus Vaccines*](#), March 31
 - According to a [statement](#) released by Johnson & Johnson, an error at a Baltimore plant run by Emergent BioSolutions led to the destruction of a batch of 15 million Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Workers at the plant had conflated the vaccine’s ingredients with those of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which the plant also manufactures.
 - The error will [affect](#) future shipments. It will not affect Johnson & Johnson doses currently being distributed and administered across the U.S. The plant, which was projected to ship tens of millions of doses next month, must now cease production of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine while FDA investigates the incident.
 - Meanwhile, a whistleblower has [alleged](#) that FDA downplayed critical safety and hygiene concerns in 2017 and 2018 at a North Carolina Merck facility that is now being retrofitted to help manufacture the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- [*New Vaccines Needed Globally Within a Year, Say Scientists*](#), March 30
 - The People’s Vaccine Alliance, a coalition of organizations including Amnesty International, Oxfam, and UNAIDS, surveyed 77 scientists from 28 countries. Two-thirds of respondents said that it could be one year or less before the first-generation COVID-19 vaccines are ineffective and modified versions are needed. Nearly one-third responded that the time frame was more likely nine months or less.

- 88% of the scientists surveyed agreed that persistent low vaccination coverage in many countries would make it more likely for vaccine-resistant mutations to appear.
- [*Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccination Keeps Rising Significantly in the U.S., But Pockets of Resistance Remain*](#), March 30
 - Vaccine eligibility across the country is rapidly expanding—all 50 states now have [expanded](#) or have announced that they will expand COVID vaccine eligibility to everyone 16 and up.
 - As eligibility and distribution expand, evidence shows that Americans’ confidence in COVID vaccines is increasing. Roughly 61% of adults have either received their first dose or are planning to receive one, according to the latest monthly [survey](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation. This figure is up from 47% in January.
 - The number of Americans taking a “wait-and-see” approach to receiving the vaccine shrunk from 31% to 17%. 20% of adults say they would either definitely refuse a vaccine or get one only if required to do so by their job or school.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), March 31
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 40 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates 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 remain stable or have an uncertain trend over the next four weeks. It predicts between 3,100 and 10,200 new deaths and between 565,000 and 585,000 cumulative deaths by April 24.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 12 models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. The forecast predicts daily hospitalizations will remain stable or have an uncertain trend nationally over the next four weeks, with between 2,300 and 8,700 new hospitalizations per day by April 26. It predicts that hospital admissions will increase in six jurisdictions and decrease in 12 jurisdictions.
- [*COVID-19 Was 3rd-Leading Cause of Death In 2020, People of Color Hit Hardest*](#), March 31
 - CDC [announced](#) this week that COVID-19 was the third-underlying cause of death last year after heart disease and cancer. Approximately 375,000 deaths were attributable to the virus in 2020.
 - CDC Director Rochelle Walensky stated that deaths were higher among American Indian and Alaskan Native persons, Hispanics, Blacks and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander persons. The death rates among all of these groups, she continued, were more than double the death rate of non-Hispanic white persons.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), April 1
 - New York reported 56 deaths, 4,604 hospitalizations, and 894 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on March 31, 2021.
 - Approximately 8,888, or 3.71% of the 239,652 tests administered in New York on March 31 were positive for COVID-19.

- As of March 31, New York has administered 9,655,705 doses of the vaccines to patients. 31% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 18.5% are fully vaccinated.
- Beginning April 1, New York State will [open](#) another State-run, mass vaccination site in Rockland County at Rockland Community College’s Eugene Levy Fieldhouse. New Yorkers were able to begin scheduling appointments for vaccination on March 30. Governor Cuomo credited the federal government in announcing the new site, stating, “Thanks to increasing vaccine supply from our federal partners, we can utilize more of our state’s capacity to distribute doses to continue to get shots into arms on a large scale.”
- On April 1, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York officially reported 45 million COVID-19 test results throughout the pandemic. Governor Cuomo credited New Yorkers for this accomplishment, stating, “We’ve been aided throughout the state’s fight with COVID-19 by the willingness of New Yorkers to play by the rules and keep themselves and their families safe.”
- As of April 1, New York State [lifted](#) its mandatory, two-week quarantine period for travelers entering the region from other states. While no longer required, New York State Department of Health recommends quarantining after domestic travel as an added precaution.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), April 1
 - Beginning April 1 through April 4, New York City will [establish](#) seven pop-up COVID-19 vaccination sites in various New York City Housing Authority locations. Mayor de Blasio commented that these vaccine sites aim to increase equitable distribution of vaccines.
 - As of March 30, New York City Department of Sanitation (NYDOS) will [increase](#) street litter-basket service by more that 100 trucks each week, and will restore Sunday litter-basket service. The NYDOS will use federal COVID-19 relief funds to increase pick-ups, after cutting them by 63% in the prior year due to pandemic-related budget restraints.

International

- On Tuesday, [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) released its much-anticipated report on the origins of COVID-19. According to the report, data indicates animals in livestock farms in Southeast Asia were likely responsible for the earliest COVID-19 cases in humans. However, WHO [Director-General](#) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said WHO needs to further investigate other theories, including the hypothesis that a laboratory in Wuhan introduced the virus.
- [Spain](#) is welcoming tourists, while keeping locals locked down. The Spanish government has argued that visitors from other countries do not present the same COVID-19 risk as locals, because all travelers must test negative for the virus before entering the country. However, residents point out they are unable to travel within the country even if they have proof of negative COVID test.
- On Wednesday, [Italian](#) Prime Minister Mario Draghi issued a decree requiring health care workers at hospitals be vaccinated and allowing hospitals to suspend without pay any

employees who refuse. The [decision](#) comes after patients who tested negative before entering certain hospitals in Italy later died from COVID-19 that was presumably contracted from unvaccinated health care workers.

- [Hong Kong](#) plans to resume use of Pfizer's vaccine amid an investigation into packaging defects discovered in two vaccine batches. The manufacturer, BioNTech, has found no evidence that packaging defects impacted the vaccine's efficacy or safety. Two weeks ago, Hong Kong suspended distribution of the vaccine after discovering loose lids and leakages in some vials.
- [France](#) is entering its third nationwide lockdown, which is expected to last through the end of April. French President Emmanuel Macron blamed recently rising COVID-19 infection rates on faster-spreading COVID-19 variants, which he called "an epidemic within the epidemic."
- About two dozen [world leaders](#), including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta have signed a letter calling for an international agreement to "dispel the temptations of isolationism and nationalism" in this and future pandemics. The signatories seek to "ensur[e] universal and equitable access to safe, efficacious and affordable vaccines, medicines and diagnostics." The letter comes as more than [half](#) of worldwide vaccines doses have been administered in four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and India. Neither the United States nor China signed the letter.

Other Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), April 1
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 719,000 workers filed initial claims (seasonally adjusted) for unemployment benefits last week.
 - The number of new claims had trended downward since March 2020, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. However, claims began spiking again around December of last year.
 - Last week, 237,025 people filed new claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not eligible for state jobless benefits.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Phase 5 Stimulus Package – Highlights of Certain Key Tax-Related Provisions in ARPA](#), March 26
- [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – Summary of Key Provisions](#), March 25
- [Key Employee Benefit Provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#), March 19

Send questions to:

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