

COVID-19 Daily Update

May 19, 2020

Summary

The United States has 1,519,986 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 91,179 reported related deaths. President Trump issued a letter to WHO, threatening to withhold funding permanently and reconsider the United States' membership in the organization if WHO does not commit to "major substantive improvements within the next 30 days." The President claimed that WHO has repeatedly made "inaccurate or misleading" claims about COVID-19 that have been "extremely costly for the world." Treasury Secretary Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chair Powell testified before the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday, May 19. Mnuchin warned that the economy could suffer "permanent damage" if states extend their shutdowns. Powell testified that the Federal Reserve and Congress "may need to do more" to help revive the economy. National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched a study to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on pregnancy.

Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) lowered its prediction of COVID-19 deaths in the United States from 147,000 to 143,360 deaths by August 4. A recent study found that COVID-19 lockdowns had an "extreme" effect on daily carbon emissions, causing a 17% global drop in emissions by early April. Researchers concluded that "most changes observed in 2020 are likely to be temporary as they do not reflect structural changes in the economic, transport, or energy systems." Several universities announced schedules to bring back students for the fall semester. Notre Dame plans to start its fall semester early and skip fall break, so that students can go home at Thanksgiving and not return. University of South Carolina stated that students will finish the semester online after Thanksgiving because the University's "best current modeling predicts a spike in cases" at the beginning of December. Apple announced plans to re-open 25 locations across the United States; all customers must wear a face covering and agree to a temperature check.

New York State reported 105 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, May 19. The Albany area will re-open on Wednesday, May 20; six regions in upstate New York previously met the State's criteria to re-open. New York announced a pilot program to allow visitors at 16 hospitals, including nine hospitals in New York City. Visitors will be required to wear masks and will be subject to temperature checks. A three-judge panel from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the New York State Board of Elections to re-instate its June 23 presidential primary. The City expects around 16% of its 1.1 million students to attend virtual summer school, nearly four times as many as last year, after falling behind on their coursework during the pandemic. New York City reports 145 cases of suspected multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19.

Presidential updates

- [Trump Writes Letter Criticizing WHO's Response to the Pandemic](#), May 19
 - President Trump wrote a letter to WHO Director-General Tedros criticizing WHO's response to the pandemic.
 - The President stated that WHO has repeatedly made "inaccurate or misleading" claims about COVID-19 that have been "extremely costly for the world."
 - The President threatened to withdraw U.S. funding permanently from WHO and to "reconsider [the United States'] membership in the organization," if "WHO does not commit to major substantive improvements within the next 30 days."
 - The letter claims that WHO "consistently ignored credible reports of the virus spreading in Wuhan in early December 2019 or even earlier, including reports from the *Lancet* medical journal."
 - President Trump lamented that WHO "strongly praised China's strict domestic travel restrictions" but that WHO was "inexplicably against" Trump's order to close the U.S. border to Chinese immigration.
 - Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China's foreign ministry, [commented](#) that Trump's letter was "smearing and slandering China's efforts in epidemic prevention to shift responsibility [from the United States'] own incompetence in handling the epidemic."
- [Remarks by President Trump in a Roundtable with Restaurant Industry Leaders](#), May 18
 - President Trump stated that he has been taking hydroxychloroquine as preventative measure against COVID-19 for the last week and a half, with the approval of the White House physician.
 - President Trump noted that "I take it because... I hear very good things." Trump added that, "all I can tell you is so far I seem to be okay." President Trump noted that he shared the news "to be open with the American public."
 - The White House physician, Dr. Sean Conley, released a [statement](#) noting that "after numerous discussions" with President Trump, "we concluded the potential benefit from treatment outweighed the relative risks." The President continues to test negative for COVID-19.
 - FDA previously [warned](#) that hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial drug, could cause serious heart problems for COVID-19 patients.
 - The President's comment drew [criticism](#) from a range of medical experts who warned of the dangerous example it set for the public. A chief academic officer at the Cleveland Clinic expressed concern that the public would "believe that taking this drug to prevent COVID-19 is without hazards [when], in fact, there are serious hazards."

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [U.S. Statement on Taiwan's Participation at the World Health Assembly](#), May 19
 - The first ever virtual [World Health Assembly](#) (WHA) began on May 18, with a focus on the pandemic. WHO member states will report on their COVID-19 progress, and consider a draft resolution on COVID-19. WHA is livestreaming the event [here](#).
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [statement](#) condemning WHO's decision to exclude Taiwan from WHA. HHS stated that "this is extremely

concerning especially when this pandemic is partly aggravated by a lack of transparent information sharing and inclusion of all necessary stakeholders in global health.”

- State Department issued a similar [statement](#), highlighting that “Taiwan has mounted one of the world’s most successful efforts to contain the pandemic to date, despite its close proximity to the original outbreak in Wuhan, China.”

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

- [How to Manage Workplace Fatigue During COVID-19](#), May 19
 - CDC issued guidance for employers and workers on how to manage workplace fatigue during the pandemic.
 - CDC notes that emergency responders, health care workers, and others providing essential services have been “stretched thin, [and] working longer hours than usual.” CDC warns that fatigue increases the risk for injury and deteriorating health.
- [Updated Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 in Health Care Settings](#), May 18
 - CDC updated its COVID-19 guidance for health care settings.
 - CDC removed its prior recommendation that all elective procedures be postponed.
 - Decisions to postpone elective procedures and non-urgent outpatient visits should consider the level of COVID-19 community transmission, any staffing or personal protective equipment shortages, the number of COVID-19 patients being cared for in the facility, and the potential for patient harm if care is deferred.
- [Detection of SARS-Cov-2 RNA on Surfaces in Quarantine Rooms](#), May 18
 - A study, published by CDC as an early release, examined the potential for pre-symptomatic COVID-19 patients to contaminate surfaces.
 - Researchers collected surface swab specimens from two rooms in a quarantine hotel in China which housed two pre-symptomatic COVID-19 patients. Researchers collected 22 surface samples approximately three hours after the individuals tested positive. Eight (36%) samples were positive for SARS-CoV-2 RNA, including those from the sheets, duvet cover, pillow cover, and towels.
 - The study found “extensive environmental contamination of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in a relatively short time (<24 hours) in rooms” occupied by pre-symptomatic individuals.
 - The results indicated a higher viral load after prolonged contact with sheets and pillow covers than with intermittent contact with the door handle and light switch. Researchers highlighted the need for extra precautions when laundering the bed linens of COVID-19 patients.

New York State

- [Governor Cuomo Holds Press Conference on COVID-19](#), May 19
 - New York State reported 105 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, May 19.
 - The Albany area will re-open on Wednesday, May 20. Six regions in upstate New York previously met the criteria to re-open, including Western New York, Central New York, the North Country, the Finger Lakes, the Southern Tier, and the Mohawk Valley.

- New York announced a pilot program to allow visitors at [16 hospitals](#), including nine hospitals in New York City. Almost all hospital visitors had been banned since March 18. Visitors will be required to wear masks and will be subject to temperature checks.
- The State will allow ceremonies to mark Memorial Day, so long as they involve no more than 10 people. The State will also allow vehicle parades, provided that participants adhere to social distancing.
- [Court of Appeals Orders New York to Re-Instate June 23 Presidential Primary](#), May 19
 - A three-judge panel from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the New York State Board of Elections to re-instate its June 23 presidential primary.
 - The Court found that Board's decision to cancel the election over COVID-19 health and safety concerns infringed on the constitutional rights of Andrew Yang, Bernie Sanders, and other Democratic candidates.
 - The Court upheld the district court's [decision](#). State election commissioners announced that they do not plan to appeal the decision.
- [New York Hires Experts to Advise on State's Re-Opening](#), May 18
 - New York State announced that two new experts will advise on the State's re-opening plan. Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, and Dr. Samir Bhatt, Senior Lecturer at Imperial College London, will provide technical advice and monitor New York's progress.

New York City

- [Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19](#), May 19
 - The City expects around 177,000 summer school students, compared to 44,000 last summer. Nearly 16% of New York City's 1.1 million students will be asked to attend online summer school for six weeks after falling behind on their coursework during the pandemic.
 - Roughly 6,000 teachers will lead summer classes. Mayor de Blasio commented that "it's going to be a huge... unprecedented effort."
- [City Scales Up COVID-19 Testing Capacity](#), May 18
 - NYC Health + Hospital testing sites are now using the first COVID-19 test kits manufactured in New York City through the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC).
 - Manhattan-based Print Parts produces 100,000 3D printed swabs per week and Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx produces transport medium for the swabs. Collab, a Brooklyn-based fabrication lab, assembles all components into completed kits.
 - Beginning on May 18, first responders and health care personnel in the City can receive free COVID-19 antibody [testing](#) through a partnership with CDC.

- [*Updated Reporting Requirements for Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children Associated with COVID-19*](#), May 18
 - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued a health advisory on multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19.
 - NYCDOH reports 145 patients meeting criteria for suspected MIS-C in the City. Patients range in age from 0-21 years.
 - Providers must report all suspected cases, regardless of laboratory evidence of SARS-CoV-2 infection. NYCDOH asked that providers conduct molecular and serologic testing for COVID-19 in all suspected cases.

- [*COVID-19: Guide to Doula Support During the Pandemic*](#), May 18
 - NYCDOH issued two guidance documents for doulas working with pregnant, birthing, and postpartum people during the pandemic.
 - NYCDOH [highlighted](#) Governor Cuomo’s executive order requiring that hospitals “allow any patient giving birth to have present with them: a support person . . . and/or a doula.” Some hospitals have interpreted this as allowing a single support person while others allow two support people, including a doula.
 - NYCDOH issued [guidance](#) on preparing pregnant people for unforeseen circumstances during the pandemic. NYCDOH notes that people may need to stay at home and “birth in place” due to city lockdowns or hospitals experiencing a surge as a result of the pandemic.

Other Related Updates

- [*Treasury Secretary and Federal Reserve Chair Testify Before Senate Banking Committee*](#), May 19
 - Treasury Secretary Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chair Powell testified before the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday, May 19.
 - Mnuchin warned that the economy could suffer “permanent damage” if states extend their shutdowns.
 - Powell testified that the Federal Reserve and Congress “may need to do more” to help revive the economy. Powell noted that “there is clear evidence that [when]... people are unemployed for long periods of time, that can permanently weigh on their careers and ability to go back to work.”

- [*IMHE Revises Predicted United States COVID-19 Death Toll*](#), May 19
 - The University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IMHE) lowered its prediction of COVID-19 deaths in the United States from 147,000 to 143,360 deaths by August 4.
 - An IMHE researcher expressed surprise at the result and noted that “we were expecting [the projections] to probably go up because of the big surge in mobility.” IMHE researchers attribute the lower projections to the use of masks and social distancing measures.

- [*Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Updates*](#), May 19
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) a \$354 million agreement with Phlow Corporation to manufacture pharmaceuticals to alleviate or prevent drug shortages during the pandemic.
 - HHS [delivered](#) \$11 billion in new funding to support state COVID-19 testing. State recipients must submit a plan to HHS, describing the number of diagnostic and serological tests needed, month-by-month estimates of lab capacity, and how the resources will be used for testing.

- [*ACLU Warns Against Fever-Screening Tools for COVID-19*](#), May 19
 - A report by American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) contends that reliance on fever-scanning cameras and infrared temperature-sensing guns to facilitate the return to work is flawed and intrusive.
 - The report highlights that infrared temperature-sensing guns may be unreliable because they gauge skin temperature, in contrast to oral thermometers, which calculate core body temperature. ACLU describes skin temperature as a superficial measure, because it can vary if a person is sunburned, is sweating, or has just come in from outside.
 - ACLU warns that these technologies could give people a false sense of security, leading them to be less vigilant about public health measures, such as wearing masks or social distancing. ACLU cautioned that allowing the use of temperature-sensing technology could usher in permanent new forms of surveillance and social control.

- [*Colleges Announce Plans to Re-Open in the Fall*](#), May 19
 - Notre Dame became one of the first major universities in the country to announce detailed plans to bringing back students for the fall semester.
 - Notre Dame plans to implement a regimen of testing and contact tracing, and to require students to maintain social distance and wear masks in public. Notre Dame will start its fall semester early, on August 10, and skip fall break so that students can go home at Thanksgiving and not return.
 - University of South Carolina announced a similar schedule, where students finish the semester online after Thanksgiving because the University's "best current modeling predicts a spike in cases" at the beginning of December.
 - Ithaca College will start its fall semester on October 5, to provide more time to prepare for returning students.

- [*NIH-funded study to investigate pregnancy outcomes resulting from COVID-19 pandemic*](#), May 19
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched a study to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on pregnancy.
 - Researchers will analyze the medical records of up to 21,000 women to evaluate: (1) whether changes in health care delivery led to higher rates of pregnancy-related complications; and (2) the risk of pregnant women with COVID-19 transmitting the virus to their fetus.
 - The study will also track 1,500 pregnant women with confirmed COVID-19, monitoring their health for six weeks after childbirth.

- [Cross-neutralization of SARS-CoV-2 by a human SARS-CoV antibody](#), May 18
 - A recent study, published in *Nature*, identified an antibody in a patient who was infected with SARS in 2003 that effectively neutralizes SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - The antibody, named S309, potentially neutralizes SARS-CoV pseudoviruses as well as authentic SARS-CoV-2. Researchers concluded that “these results pave the way for using S309- and S309-containing antibody cocktails for prophylaxis in individuals at high risk of exposure or as a post-exposure therapy to limit or treat severe disease.”
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), May 18
 - FDA issued an [update](#) on measures taken to ensure the safety of imported food and medical products during the pandemic.
 - FDA approved an [application](#) to increase the availability of generic hydroxychloroquine sulfate for the treatment of malaria, chronic lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis. FDA reports shortages of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine due to a significant surge in demand during the pandemic.
 - FDA issued [warning letters](#) to two companies for selling fraudulent COVID-19 products.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [“Disputing Tax” Newsletter on COVID-19 Tax Issues](#), May 19
- [Federal Reserve Releases Additional Terms and Conditions and FAQs on the Term Asset-Backed Securities Loan Facility \(TALF\)](#), May 19
- [House Passes Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act \(HEROES Act\)](#), May 19
- [Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness Application](#), May 18
- [U.S. Employer Return-to-Work FAQs](#), May 18
- [ESG Considerations for Asset Managers in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), May 18

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