

COVID-19 Daily Update

May 21, 2020

Summary

The United States has 1,562,714 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 93,863 reported related deaths. There are now more than 5 million COVID-19 cases reported worldwide. Democratic leaders in the House and Senate asked President Trump to lower the flags on all government buildings to half-staff when the country reaches 100,000 virus-related deaths, “to serve as a national expression of grief.” A new study from Columbia University epidemiologists suggests that the United States could have avoided 36,000 deaths if social distancing measures that began on March 15 started one week earlier. CDC Director Redfield expressed concern that the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the southern hemisphere suggests that the virus is likely to flare up in the United States in autumn and winter. Department of Labor reports that another 2,438,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. More than 38 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last nine weeks.

The Smithsonian launched a project to collect coronavirus “artifacts” to document the pandemic, including photographs, handwritten grocery lists, letters from patients, personal protective equipment, test kits, and ventilators. NCAA Division I Council announced that college football and basketball players will be allowed to resume voluntary on-campus workouts on June 1. Many cities are closing down streets to allow additional space for outdoor dining, including Cincinnati, Long Beach, Chicago, and Indianapolis. Michael Cohen, President Trump’s former personal lawyer, was released from federal prison on furlough over health concerns tied to COVID-19. Additional states will ease social distancing guidelines on Friday, May 22. Alaska will resume life as it was “prior to the virus,” with a full re-opening of the economy without restrictions. Iowa will re-open movie theaters, museums, and zoos. Kentucky will allow restaurants to operate at 33% capacity indoors, with unlimited outdoor seating.

New York reported an average of 108 COVID-19 deaths per day over the last three days. New Jersey continues to report almost 200 deaths per day and now reports more fatalities per 100,000 residents than any other state. Seven of New York’s ten regions have met the State’s criteria to re-open; Long Island, New York City, and Mid-Hudson remain shut down. New York State is now investigating 159 cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19. Governor Cuomo cautioned that “until we know how widespread this issue is, I wouldn’t send my children to day camp.” Cuomo noted that it is too early to determine whether children will physically return to school in the fall. New York City subway ridership increased from a low of 400,000 riders in April to around 700,000 riders in the first three weeks of May. The City reports that more than two million residents, nearly 25% of the City’s population, are in need of food.

Presidential updates

- [President Trump to Visit Ford Plant in Michigan](#), May 21
 - President Trump is scheduled to visit a Ford Plant which has been re-purposed to produce ventilators in Ypsilanti, Michigan on Thursday, May 21. The President is also scheduled to participate in a listening session with African-American leaders.
 - Michigan Attorney General Nessel [called](#) on President Trump to adhere to health guidelines and wear a facial covering during his visit. Nessel noted that “it is not just the policy of Ford, by virtue of the Governor’s Executive Orders, it is currently the law of this State.” The President has yet to wear a mask in public.
- [President Trump Holds Meeting with the Governors of Arkansas and Kansas](#), May 20
 - President Trump remarked that he will complete his regimen of hydroxychloroquine “in a day or two.” President Trump recently announced that he has been taking hydroxychloroquine as preventative measure against COVID-19, with the approval of the White House physician.
- [Memorandum on Providing Continued Federal Support for Governors’ Use of the National Guard to Respond to COVID-19](#), May 20
 - President Trump issued an order directing the Secretary of Defense to request that the Governor of Utah order National Guard forces to engage in emergency COVID-19 assistance.
 - The President also directed FEMA to fund 100% of the emergency assistance activities undertaken by the National Guard in Utah. The federal cost share is effective for orders of any length authorizing duty through June 24, 2020.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 121](#), May 20
 - WHO [reported](#) more than 100,000 new COVID-19 infections over the past 24 hours, the highest one-day total since the outbreak began. Nearly two-thirds of the new infections came from just four countries, including the United States.
 - Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Etienne [highlighted](#) the need to protect vulnerable groups from COVID-19, including women. PAHO notes that women make up 70% of the health workforce in the Americas and are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 due to income disparities, inadequate access to health service, and gender-based violence.

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

- [CDC Director Comments on Potential Second Wave of COVID-19](#), May 20
 - CDC Director Redfield recently expressed concern that the rapid spread of the virus in the southern hemisphere suggests that COVID-19 is likely to flare up again in the United States in autumn and winter.
 - Redfield noted that he “can’t guarantee” that the United States would not experience a second round of stay-at-home orders this winter.
 - Redfield blamed the United States’ high death rate on two factors: (1) a lack of funding for public health organizations; and (2) high levels of underlying health conditions such as obesity and diabetes. Redfield stated that avoiding a similar public

- health disaster in the future would involve “doubling or tripling” investment in the public health system.
- Redfield noted that data on COVID-19 are regularly “delayed” and “incomplete,” making it difficult for CDC to manage the outbreak.
 - [*Guidance on How COVID-19 Spreads*](#), May 20
 - CDC previously warned that “it may be possible” to become infected with COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching one’s mouth, nose, or eyes.
 - Updated CDC guidance notes that “touching surfaces or objects” “is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads” and that COVID-19 “does not spread easily” in this manner.
 - [*Delayed Laboratory Response to COVID-19 Caused by Molecular Diagnostic Contamination*](#), May 20
 - A recent study, published by CDC as an early release, found that COVID-19 testing capabilities in Europe were delayed due to the contamination of commercially ordered primer and probe batches.
 - Molecular testing for COVID-19 was available in 38 laboratories across 24 European countries by January 29. Labs expected full regional testing coverage by mid-February.
 - At least 15 labs in nine countries reported receiving contaminated testing materials. Six labs reported needing to delay the implementation of SARS-CoV-2 diagnostics; three were central labs responsible for the roll-out of diagnostic testing to regional and hospital laboratories within their country.
 - [*Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children \(MIS-C\) associated with COVID-19*](#), May 20
 - CDC issued guidance for parents on multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19. CDC defines MIS-C as a serious “condition in which different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.”
 - CDC urges parents to contact a doctor if their child shows the following symptoms: fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, or feeling extra tired. CDC notes that “not all children will have all the same symptoms.”

New York State

- [*Governor Cuomo Holds Press Conference on COVID-19*](#), May 20
 - New York reported an average of 108 COVID-19 deaths per day over the last three days.
 - Seven of New York’s ten regions have met the State’s criteria to re-open; Long Island, New York City, and Mid-Hudson remain shut down. Governor Cuomo urged residents to proceed cautiously noting that “if people get arrogant and casual about this pandemic, you will see the infection rate go up.”
 - New York State is now investigating 159 cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19. New York City reports 89

confirmed cases, with another 43 under investigation. New Jersey reports 15 cases. Governor Cuomo cautioned that that “until we know how widespread this issue is, I wouldn’t send my children to day camp.”

- Governor Cuomo noted that it is too early to determine whether children will physically return to school in the fall. State summer school will be conducted through distance learning. The State will issue re-opening guidelines for schools and colleges in June.
- New York announced new partnerships with Northwell Health and SOMOS Community Care to expand testing in the State’s hardest-hit communities.
- [*New York State Launches COVID-19 Domestic Violence Task Force*](#), May 20
 - The New York State Council on Women and Girls created a task force to identify new ways to help domestic violence survivors during the pandemic. The task force will present recommendations to Governor Cuomo by March 28.

New York City

- [*Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19*](#), May 20
 - New York City reports that more than two million residents, nearly 25% of the City’s population, are in need of food. The City plans to increase its meal distribution efforts to provide 1 million meals per day.
 - Mayor de Blasio urged residents to donate blood; the Mayor announced personal plans to donate blood this week. For the last two months, blood banks across New York City, Long Island, Hudson Valley, and New Jersey have been able to maintain reserves large enough to last only one to three days, depending on the blood type.
 - Subway ridership increased from a low of 400,000 riders in April to around 700,000 riders in the first three weeks of May. The Staten Island Ferry will resume half-hourly service during rush hour. 123 Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) workers have died from COVID-19 complications; all but three worked in the agency’s subway and bus divisions.
- [*What New Yorkers Need to Know Now About COVID-19*](#), May 20
 - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) released updated guidance on COVID-19 symptoms, testing, hospital care, and recommended precautions.
 - Newly released [data](#) on New York City show a significant increase in deaths at home and in other non-hospital settings due to COVID-19 and other health conditions. NYCDOH highlighted the importance of promptly seeking “emergency medical care for COVID-19 and other health problems when needed.”
- [*City Urges New Yorkers to Install Window Guards During Pandemic*](#), May 20
 - The City urged landlords, homeowners, and tenants to install window guards to prevent window falls, as residents spend more time indoors during the pandemic.
 - Window guard installation and repair is an “essential service” and does not have to be deferred until the City eases social distancing measures. Since the start of the pandemic, three young children in New York City sustained injuries after falling from windows.

Other Related Updates

- [*Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report*](#), May 21
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 2,438,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week. More than 38 million workers have filed for unemployment benefits over the last nine weeks. Initial applications for unemployment insurance have steadily declined for eight weeks, from a record 6.9 million claims in late March.
 - A recent Census Bureau survey [found](#) that 47% of nearly 75,000 survey participants either lost employment income or had a another adult in their household lose employment income since March 13. A Federal Reserve [survey](#) found that 40% of people in households making under \$40,000 report being laid off.
- [*Operation Warp Speed Accelerates AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine to be Available Beginning in October*](#), May 21
 - Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) announced a partnership with AstraZeneca to make 300 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine available as early as October 2020. AstraZeneca will begin a phase three trial for its COVID-19 vaccine, AZD1222, this summer with approximately 30,000 volunteers.
 - Under Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's effort to accelerate the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, BARDA can provide up to \$1.2 billion to support vaccine development. AZD1222 is the fourth vaccine candidate to receive BARDA support.
- [*Study Finds that United States Could Have Saved Lives if Social Distancing Started One Week Earlier*](#), May 21
 - A recent study, published by medRxiv, examined how implementing social distancing measures one or two weeks earlier could have mitigated the spread of COVID-19 in the United States. The study was funded in part by National Institutes of Health (NIH).
 - Researchers applied transmission models to data drawn from the pandemic's actual course from March 15 to May 3.
 - The study found that the U.S. could have avoided at least 700,000 infections and 54,000 deaths if social distancing protocols that began on March 15 started two weeks earlier, on March 1. If stay-at-home orders were implemented one week earlier, on March 8, the study found that 36,000 fewer people would have died.
- [*COVID-19 Infection Provides Protective Immunity in Rhesus Macaques*](#), May 20
 - A study performed in macaques, published in *Science*, suggests that infection with SARS-CoV-2 offers protective immunity against re-infection.
 - Researchers inoculated nine adult rhesus macaques with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. 35 days later, after the macaques cleared the virus, researchers re-inoculated the monkeys with the same dose of SARS-Cov-2. The study detected little to no viral RNA in the re-challenged macaques; all demonstrated enhanced immune responses.

- The study concluded that “immunologic approaches to the prevention and treatment of [COVID-19] may, in fact, be possible,” but cautioned that there are important differences between the treatment of COVID-19 infections in humans and macaques.
- [*Nasal Gene Expression of Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme in Children and Adults*](#), May 20
 - A study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, attributed the lower risk of COVID-19 among children to the differential expression of angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) in children and adults. ACE2 is the receptor that SARS-CoV-2 uses for entry into the body.
 - Researchers conducted a retrospective analysis of ACE2 expression in nasal samples taken from roughly 300 patients in a New York City health system from 2015 to 2018.
 - Researchers found that children younger than 10 years old have the lowest level of ACE2 gene expression in their nasal cells, and that ACE2 gene expression increases with age. Researchers note that “lower ACE2 expression in children relative to adults may help explain why COVID-19 is less prevalent in children.”
- [*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup*](#), May 20
 - FDA issued an [emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for the use of an isolation chamber system to prevent exposure to airborne particulates during patient transport and procedures. The system is a barrier device constructed by draping a large clear plastic bag over a box-like frame that is placed over the head, neck, and shoulders of the patient.
 - FDA and Federal Trade Commission issued [warning letters](#) to two companies for promoting the sale of fraudulent COVID-19 products.
- [*Health Department COVID-19 Updates*](#), May 20
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [highlighted](#) that health care providers have until June 3 to attest to the receipt of payments from the Provider Relief Fund and accept the terms and conditions.
 - HHS [provided](#) \$225 million to more than 4,500 rural health clinics to expand access to COVID-19 testing in rural communities, through the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Credit Agreements: Amendments to Consider in Light of COVID-19](#), May 21
- [The UK Information Commissioner’s Regulatory Approach and Priorities During COVID-19](#), May 21
- [“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](#)

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