

# COVID-19 Daily Update

May 29, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 1,731,035 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 102,201 reported related deaths. CDC issued a press release, stating that “reaching the milestone of 100,000 persons lost in such a short timeframe is a sobering development and a heart-breaking reminder of the horrible toll of this unprecedented pandemic.” CDC consolidated data from 15 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate; all models indicate that the death rate is declining but that United States will reach 115,000 deaths by June 20. Consumer spending fell by 13.6% in April, the steepest one-month drop since the government started tracking data in 1959. Personal income increased by 10.5% in April, which the Department of Commerce attributed to the one-time \$1,200 federal stimulus payments. The House passed a bipartisan bill easing loan repayment and spending restrictions on the Paycheck Protection Program. The Senate could take up the bill as early as next week.

A group of more than 100 scientists issued an open letter raising “methodological and data integrity concerns” about a recent study on hydroxychloroquine that found the drug could cause heart problems in COVID-19 patients. The letter calls for “independent validation of the analysis” by at least one other independent institution. Federal officials recently warned that an international fraud ring appears to be targeting state unemployment systems, with a particular focus on Washington State. Washington State announced on May 29 that it has recovered \$300 million in fraudulent payments. Costco announced plans to bring back free samples in its wholesale clubs in mid-June. The Boston Marathon was cancelled for the first time in its 124-year history. The Grammys announced that it will host a two-hour special to honor essential workers across America. San Francisco’s stay-at-home order, which was set to expire on May 31, was extended “indefinitely.”

New York State reported 67 deaths on Friday, May 29, the lowest one-day death toll in over two months. Five upstate regions entered phase two of the State’s re-opening plan on Friday afternoon, including Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, Central New York, Southern Tier, and North Country. Governor Cuomo extended the stay-at-home “New York on PAUSE” order through June 27 for any region that has yet to meet the State’s re-opening benchmarks. All regions have met the required criteria, except for New York City. Governor Cuomo stated that New York City is on track to re-open its economy on June 8 “to a new normal.” The City will require industries in the first phase of re-opening to implement mandatory health screenings, create distance markers and post social distancing signage throughout the workplace, reduce occupancy in tightly confined spaces to under 50% capacity, provide employees with free face coverings, and encourage the use of face coverings at all times.

## Presidential updates

- [\*Vice President Hosts Call with Summer Camp Owners and Operators\*](#), May 28
  - Vice President Pence hosted a call with members of the American Camp association to discuss guidelines to safely open summer camps for the upcoming season.

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [\*COVID-19 Situation Report – 129\*](#), May 28
  - WHO Europe [noted](#) that 94% of COVID-19 deaths were people over the age of 60 years; 59% of those who died were men, and 97% of deaths were among those with at least one underlying health condition. Cardiovascular disease was the leading co-morbidity.
  - WHO updated [guidance](#) on the clinical management of COVID-19 to cover the following issues: treatment of acute and chronic infections, management of neurological and mental manifestations, rehabilitation, palliative care, ethical principles, and death reporting.

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

- [\*CDC Statement on COVID-19 Death Toll\*](#), May 28
  - CDC issued a press release on the COVID-19 death toll.
  - CDC stated that “reaching the milestone of 100,000 persons lost in such a short timeframe is a sobering development and a heart-breaking reminder of the horrible toll of this unprecedented pandemic.”
  - CDC urged Americans “to embrace prevention strategies, including social distancing, practicing good hand hygiene on a regular basis, improved sanitation, and wearing a cloth face covering in public... to protect the most vulnerable,” including the “elderly with co-morbid health conditions and those with compromised immune systems.”
- [\*Interpretation of COVID-19 Death Forecasts\*](#), May 28
  - CDC consolidated data from 15 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. All 15 models indicate that the rate of increase continues to decline. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.
  - National forecasts suggest that the number of cumulative reported deaths is likely to exceed 115,000 by June 20. State-level forecasts indicate that in some states, cumulative deaths will increase at roughly the same rate as they have in recent weeks, while other states are likely to experience only a small number of additional deaths from COVID-19.
- [\*Guidance on How to Wash Cloth Face Coverings\*](#), May 28
  - CDC issued guidance on how to wash cloth face coverings.
  - CDC recommends washing face coverings after each use. Face coverings can be placed in the washing machine, using regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting. Face coverings can also be soaked in a mixture of household bleach and water for five minutes.

## **New York State**

- [\*Governor Cuomo Holds Press Conference on COVID-19\*](#), May 29
  - New York State reported 67 deaths on Friday, May 29, the lowest one-day death toll in over two months.
  - Governor Cuomo extended the State's stay-at-home [executive order](#) through June 27 for any region that has yet to meet the required metrics to re-open. All regions have met the criteria to enter phase one of the State's re-opening plan, except for New York City. Governor Cuomo announced that he expects New York City to meet the re-opening benchmarks by June 8.
  - Five upstate regions entered phase two of the State's re-opening plan on Friday afternoon, including Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, Central New York, Southern Tier, and North Country. The regions were the first to enter the phase one of the State's re-opening process on May 15. Under phase two, many stores can fully re-open, office-based jobs can resume, and personal-service businesses like hair salons can offer limited service.
- [\*New York State Passes Emergency Rent Relief Act\*](#), May 28
  - The State legislature passed the Emergency Rent Relief Act of 2020 on Thursday, May 28. The bill has yet to be formally delivered to Governor Cuomo; if he chooses to sign the bill, it will become effective immediately.
  - The bill provides up to \$100 million in rental assistance vouchers to landlords on behalf of tenants struggling to pay rent after losing a job during the pandemic.
  - The bill would cover rent due from April 1 through July 21, and would be funded by New York's share of the \$2 trillion federal relief package passed several weeks ago.

## **New York City**

- [\*Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19\*](#), May 29
  - New York City reported that 5% of residents tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, May 26, the lowest daily rate since the beginning of the outbreak. In early April, more than 70% of those tested in the City were positive for COVID-19.
  - The City plans to provide 10,000 tablets with built-in internet to senior citizens in public housing to allow isolated New Yorkers to see their doctors via telemedicine appointments.
- [\*Details Released on Phase One of New York City's Re-Opening\*](#), May 28
  - Mayor de Blasio outlined guidance for the industries permitted to restart in phase one of the City's re-opening, including construction, manufacturing, wholesale suppliers, and non-essential retail stores.
  - Employers must implement mandatory health screenings, create distance markers and post social distancing signage throughout the workplace, reduce occupancy in tightly confined spaces to under 50% capacity, provide employees with free face coverings, and encourage the use of face coverings at all times.
  - The City plans to launch a business hotline to clarify regulations, and will gather feedback on the re-opening process to address industry-wide concerns.

- [\*NYC Department of Health COVID-19 Resources by Neighborhood\*](#), May 29
  - New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) updated its listing of COVID-19 resources for neighborhoods across all five boroughs on health services, food, community assistance organizations, and financial stability.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [\*House Passes Bipartisan Bill Altering Paycheck Protection Program\*](#), May 29
  - The House passed a bipartisan bill easing loan repayment and spending restrictions on the Paycheck Protection Program. The Senate could take up the bill as early as next week.
  - The Paycheck Protection Program, established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, provides forgivable loans to eligible small businesses. Small Business Administration (SBA) will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities.
  - Critics have stated that the program’s structure is too rigid to accommodate different types of small businesses, especially restaurants whose rent-heavy expenses do not fit well in a program that prioritizes paying employees.
  - The proposed changes decrease the minimum portion of loans that must be spent on payroll from 75% to 60%, extend the amount of time the loan covers from eight weeks to 24 weeks, and extend the amount of time before the loan must be paid back from two years to five years.
- [\*Commerce Department Issues April Consumer Spending Report\*](#), May 29
  - Department of Commerce (DOC) published its consumer spending [report](#) for April.
  - Consumer spending fell by 13.6% in April, the steepest one-month drop since the government started tracking data in 1959.
  - Personal income, which includes wages, interest, and dividends, increased by 10.5% in April. DOC attributed the increase to “an increase in government social benefits... from federal economic recovery programs,” primarily the one-time household stimulus payments of \$1,200.
- [\*Scientists Question Validity of Major Hydroxychloroquine Study\*](#), May 29
  - An observational [study](#), published in the Lancet on May 22, found that hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine were “associated with no evidence of [clinical] benefit” in COVID-19 patients but were associated with an increased risk developing serious heart arrhythmia.
  - Following the study, several large stakeholders paused clinical trials of hydroxychloroquine, including WHO and the United Kingdom’s Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MRHA). France revoked a decree that previously allowed hospitals to prescribe the drug in some COVID-19 cases.
  - A group of more than 100 clinicians, medical researchers, statisticians, and ethicists issued an [open letter](#) raising “methodological and data integrity concerns” about the study.

- The letter highlights that the study did not have an ethics review, failed to mention the countries or hospitals that contributed to the data source, and did not adequately adjust for known and measured confounders.
- The letter calls for “independent validation of the analysis” by WHO or “at least one other independent and respected institution.”
- [\*Republican National Committee Issues Letter on Required COVID-19 Safety Protocols for August Convention\*](#), May 29
  - The Republican National Committee wrote a [letter](#) to North Carolina’s governor, issuing a deadline of June 3 to approve a list of COVID-19 safety measures for the party’s convention, planned for August.
  - The listed safety measures include daily health care questionnaires and thermal scans for participants, and aggressive sanitizing protocol for all public areas.
  - On May 26, President Trump said that he wanted to know “within a week” whether the convention could be held in North Carolina. The President told reporters that, “if the governor can’t tell us very soon, unfortunately we’ll have no choice [but to select a different venue]. The people want it.”
  - North Carolina issued a [letter](#) in response on Friday, May 29, asking RNC to “further elaborate on its plans.” The letter states that RNC “indicated a desire... to hold the event with ‘people together in a crowd-like setting’ and without social distancing or face coverings for attendees.” The letter highlights that North Carolina had its “highest day of lab confirmed COVID-19 cases in the state” this past week.
  - North Carolina is undergoing a phased re-opening of the state and currently does not allow gatherings of more than 10 people indoors. The Republican convention is expected to draw up to 50,000 to Charlotte, the state’s largest city. Trump has expressed a desire to be able to “fully occupy” the convention space.
- [\*Department of Labor Issues Alert on Social Distancing at Work\*](#), May 28
  - Department of Labor (DOL) issued an alert on how to implement social distancing in the workplace.
  - DOL recommends isolating any worker who begins to exhibit symptoms until they can either go home or leave to seek medical care; establishing flexible worksites through telecommuting; instituting flexible schedules using staggered shifts; installing plexiglass partitions; and moving workstations to create more distance.
- [\*Prescription Fill Patterns for Commonly Used Drugs During the Pandemic\*](#), May 28
  - A [study](#), published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, examined the prescription patterns of several medications during the pandemic, including hydroxychloroquine, chloroquine, and azithromycin.
  - The data demonstrated a surge in hydroxychloroquine prescription fills, which researchers attributed to “off-label prescriptions for COVID-19” from March through April. The surge in prescriptions corresponds to a previously reported spike in internet searches for purchasing hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine.
  - The growth observed in the week of March 15 to March 21 followed WHO’s declaration of a global pandemic on March 11, the United States’ national emergency declaration on March 13, and President Trump’s support of the drug on March 19.

- A [survey](#) by the Lupus Research Alliance found that 36% of 334 patients with lupus had difficulty filling or could not fill their regular hydroxychloroquine prescriptions in March.
- [\*FINRA Shares Practices Implemented by Firms to Transition to, and Supervise in, a Remote Work Environment During the COVID-19 Pandemic\*](#), May 28
  - Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) issued a [regulatory notice](#) on the steps small, mid-size, and large firms have taken to transition their workplace procedures to a remote work environment.
- [\*FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup\*](#), May 28
  - FDA issued [an emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) for a respirator decontamination system created by Stryker Sustainability Solutions. The system uses vapor hydrogen peroxide (VHP) to decontaminate compatible N95 respirators that are, or potentially are, contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 or other pathogenic microorganisms for reuse by health care personnel.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Federal Reserve Releases Updated Main Street Lending FAQs and Form Agreements](#), May 29
- [Treasury Issues Loan Forgiveness Guidance Regarding Paycheck Protection Program](#), May 27
- [European Data Protection Board \(EDBP\) Sheds Light on Use of Health Data to Aid Research Efforts](#), May 27

Send questions to:

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