

October 16, 2020

Summary

The United States has 8,015,380 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 218,137 reported related deaths. The United States recorded more than 65,000 new COVID-19 cases on October 15, its highest daily count since July. Dr. Fauci criticized the Great Barrington Declaration, a document drafted by three infectious disease experts from Harvard, Stanford, and Oxford Universities that advocates for allowing the virus to spread freely among the young and healthy to reach herd immunity while taking precautions to protect the vulnerable. Fauci called the declaration “absolute nonsense” and warned that it is not feasible to protect the vulnerable while the virus spreads freely among healthy individuals. Pfizer announced that it will not seek an emergency use authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine until at least the third week of November. The Biden campaign suspended Senator Harris’s campaign travel through October 18 after two individuals that traveled with her tested positive for COVID-19. House Speaker Pelosi announced that she and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin made progress towards a stimulus deal.

Health officials in Minneapolis connected at least two dozen new COVID-19 cases to presidential campaign events; at least 16 were connected to a Trump campaign rally at an airport on September 18, and at least two were connected to a Biden campaign event. Colorado issued public health guidelines for ski areas, including mask requirements, social distancing guidelines, group size limits, and cleaning protocols. Pennsylvania state officials proclaimed the state is seeing the start of the “fall resurgence,” but said there are no plans for a new statewide stay-at-home order. North Carolina governor Roy Cooper announced that the state will accept applications to assist moderate- and low-income renters experiencing hardship due to COVID-19. The program will provide \$117 million for rent and utility assistance for renters affected by the pandemic who have a household income 80% of the area median or lower. Oklahoma City hospitals ran out of ICU beds on October 13 as cases surge throughout the state.

New York reported 10 deaths, 918 hospitalizations, and 200 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, October 16. Approximately 1,707, or 1.25%, of the 136,039 tests administered in New York on October 16 were positive for COVID-19. New York State reported a 3.25% increase in initial jobless claims during the week ending October 10 compared to the previous week. Another group of Jewish organizations has sued the State, arguing that the new, targeted lockdowns unfairly impact Jewish communities. On October 14, New York City announced new winter guidelines as part of Open Restaurants, the city program allowing restaurants to offer outdoor seating options to guests. The same day, New York City announced the opening of new protected bike lanes, a recently popular and socially distanced method of travel.

Presidential updates

- [*President Trump Discusses Pandemic During Televised Town Hall*](#), October 15
 - President Trump attended a televised town hall event hosted by NBC News in lieu of the second presidential debate.
 - Trump fielded questions regarding his administration's response to the pandemic. He opined that the United States is "coming around a corner" in terms of the pandemic. He said that "vaccines are coming," and noted that "the economy is very strong."
 - Trump also expressed skepticism regarding the efficacy of masks, [claiming](#) that the CDC issued a report indicating that 85% of mask wearers contract the virus.
 - Trump had made the same claim earlier in the day during an [interview](#) with the press.
 - After the interview, CDC said that the President mischaracterized its data. The President was referring to a CDC report indicating that dining out may raise the risk of contracting COVID-19 more than other activities, like shopping or going to a salon. CDC said that the President's interpretation of the report that "more mask-wearers are getting infected compared to non-mask wearers is incorrect."

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [*WHO COVID-19 Updates*](#), October 16
 - WHO Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan [said](#) that while the world may have one or more safe and effective vaccines available in 2021, due to limited supply, an average healthy young person might have to wait until 2022 to get vaccinated.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), October 16
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 44 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.
 - CDC's national ensemble forecast indicates an uncertain trend in new COVID-19 deaths over the next four weeks. CDC predicts that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 229,000 and 240,000 by November 7.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from ten models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. Three models predict an increase in daily hospitalizations over the next four weeks and five models are uncertain about the trend or predict stable numbers. The forecasts estimate 1,900 to 6,700 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day by November 9.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), October 16
 - New York reported 10 deaths, 918 hospitalizations, and 200 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, October 16.
 - Approximately 1,707, or 1.25%, of the 136,039 tests administered in New York on October 16 were positive for COVID-19.

- Unemployment claims have [continued](#) to rise in New York, as state residents filed 69,000 initial jobless claims during the week ending October 10, a 3.25% increase from the prior week. The New York Department of Labor received more than 29,000 applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, a federal program that extends benefits to freelance and contract workers.
- Three Rockland County Jewish organizations [sued](#) New York State and Governor Cuomo in federal court over new restrictions in red zone areas across the state. The Jewish leaders contend that the new restrictions unfairly target Jews. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Agudath Israel sued for similar relief last week.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), October 16
 - Mayor de Blasio again [announced](#) that COVID-19 cases had leveled off in hot-spot neighborhoods that have been under tighter restrictions for the past two weeks. Positivity rates reduced to 4.84% on Thursday, compared to 6.29% on Wednesday.
 - On October 14, 2020, Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) the winter guidelines for the City's Open Restaurants program, which was extended year-round and made permanent in September. Among other things, the guidelines inform restaurants of safe options to heat outdoor seating areas with radiant heaters.
 - Also on October 14, Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) the opening of protected bike lanes on Sixth Avenue and Central Park West as part of a city-wide effort to make cycling safer. Residents have embraced cycling as a socially distant method of travel.

Other Related Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), October 15
 - Department of Labor (DOL) [reports](#) that another 898,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week up from 845,000 the prior week.
 - The number of new claims has been trending downward since March, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. The numbers spiked briefly in July and then again in August.
 - 372,891 new claims were filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not normally eligible for state jobless benefits.
- [Biden Campaign Suspends Senator Harris's Campaign Travel After Aid Tests Positive](#), October 15
 - Joe Biden's presidential campaign suspended vice presidential candidate Senator Kamala Harris's campaign travel through October 18 after her communications director and a crew member on one of her flights tested positive for COVID-19. Harris will return to the campaign trail on October 19.
 - Biden's campaign manager, Jennifer O'Malley, said that Harris "was not in close contact, as defined by CDC, with either of these individuals during the two days prior to their positive tests; as such, there is no requirement for quarantine" but the campaign was suspending her travel through October 18 "out of an abundance of caution." Harris tested negative for the virus on October 15 and 16.

- An employee who worked on the Biden campaign’s charter plan on October 12 and 13 also tested positive for COVID-19. O’Malley said that the employee was more than 50 feet away from Biden at all times.
- Biden has not suspended his campaign travel and appeared at a televised town hall event on October 15. Biden tested negative for the virus on October 14.
- [*Pelosi and Mnuchin Make Progress Towards Stimulus Deal*](#), October 15
 - A spokesperson for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin made progress towards a stimulus deal to address the economic damage caused by the pandemic during a call on October 15.
 - Pelosi and Mnuchin have been negotiating a second round of stimulus spending for several weeks. Pelosi has proposed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package; the White House, through Mnuchin, has proposed a \$1.8 trillion package. However, at times, President Trump has expressed a desire for more than \$1.8 trillion in additional stimulus spending.
 - Pelosi and Mnuchin made progress towards resolving one of Pelosi’s key demands – funding for a nationwide COVID-19 testing program. According to the spokesperson, Mnuchin said the White House will accept Pelosi’s testing plan with “minor” modifications.
 - The Senate will vote on a narrower \$500 billion stimulus package next week; Senate Majority leader McConnell has repeatedly indicated that he and other Senate Republicans are unwillingly to pass a large stimulus bill.
 - Pelosi raised the issue of the Senate with Mnuchin during their October 15 call; according to Pelosi’s spokesperson, Mnuchin indicated that President Trump would “weigh in with Leader McConnell should an agreement be reached.”
- [*Humans can Transmit SARS-CoV-2, Virus that Causes COVID-19, to Cats and Dogs*](#), October 15
 - Researchers [found](#) that both cats and dogs are susceptible to infection by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. There is no evidence that cats or dogs play a significant role in infecting humans.
 - Researchers inoculated a small number of cats and dogs intranasally with SARS-CoV-2 to test transmissibility.
 - Dogs did not shed virus following infection, but did mount an effective antiviral neutralizing antibody response and develop antibodies.
 - Cats were highly susceptible to infection, with a prolonged period of oral and nasal viral shedding and the ability to infect other cats through aerosol. Cats did not show clinical signs of disease.
 - Researchers noted that cats immune response to the virus protected them from future infection, which may make cats a useful animal model for studying vaccines and treatments for COVID-19.
- [*NIH Begins Large Clinical Trial to Test Immune Modulators for COVID-19 Treatment*](#), October 16
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) [launched](#) a Phase 3 trial to evaluate the safety and efficacy of three immune modulator drugs in hospitalized adults with COVID-19.

- Some COVID-19 patients experience a severe immune response wherein the immune system unleashes excessive proteins that trigger inflammation - a “cytokine storm” - that can lead to acute respiratory distress syndrome, multiple organ failure, and other complications.
 - The trial, ACTIV-1 Immune Modulators (IM), hopes to determine if modulating that immune response can reduce the need for ventilators and shorten hospital stays.
 - The trial is part of the Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines ([ACTIV](#)) initiative coordinated by NIH. The trial is randomized, double-blinded, and placebo-controlled using an adaptive master protocol.
 - All participants in the trial will receive remdesivir, the current standard of care treatment for all hospitalized patients with COVID-19.
 - Enrollment is open now, and the trial is expected to last approximately six months.
- [FDA COVID-19 Updates](#), October 16
 - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will [host](#) a town hall for on October 28 from 12:15 pm–1:15 pm ET for COVID-19 test developers. The purpose of the town hall is to help answer technical questions about development and validation of tests.
 - FDA [re-issued](#) emergency use authorization (EUA) for certain filtering face-piece respirators manufactured in China. FDA removed three eligibility criteria from their June 6 EUA, and will no longer review requests for EUAs for additional respirator models.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [HHS Provider Relief Fund Opens Portal for Phase Three General Distribution](#), October 8
- [House Funding Bill Proposes Repayment Relief for Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payment Programs Participants](#), October 1

Send questions to:

- COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com
- COVID-19RecoveryPolicies@ropesgray.com