

October 26, 2020

### Summary

The United States has 8,661,917 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 225,379 reported related deaths. The country recorded more than 85,000 cases on October 23, a new daily record. At least five aids to Vice President Pence have tested positive for COVID-19, including chief of staff Marc Short. Despite being in close contact with Short, Vice President Pence tested negative on October 25 and 26. Vice President Pence will continue campaigning and performing his official duties in person. CDC director Redfield hosted a telebriefing regarding Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's COVID-19 vaccine acceleration initiative. During the briefing, CDC's Deputy Director of Infectious Disease Butler said that CDC is cautiously optimistic that the United States will have an effective vaccine by the end of 2020.

The United States seven-day average of new cases is now the highest it has ever been, at an average of 69,814 new cases for the week ending October 25. A new poll in California showed only 57% of residents would definitely or probably get immunized, and fewer than one-third of black residents plan to get immunized. Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker announced that police patrols will sanction bars and restaurants violating public health restrictions. Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot ordered non-essential businesses to close by 10pm and asked city residents to restrict gatherings to six people. In Texas, El Paso officials imposed a 10pm to 5am curfew, and city health officials asked residents to stay home for two weeks to stop the spread of the virus. Mayor Ras Baraka of Newark, New Jersey announced an 8pm curfew for all nonessential businesses beginning October 26. Administrators representing Utah's hospitals informed Governor Gary Herbert that hospitals may be days away from rationing health care based on age, health, and other factors in intensive care units.

New York reported 12 deaths, 1,059 hospitalizations, and 237 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Sunday, October 25, 2020. Approximately 1,191, or 1.45% of the 82,117 tests administered in New York on October 25 were positive for COVID-19. On Saturday, October 24 New York had its highest number of positive test results since May 21, registering 2,061 new confirmed cases. On October 23, Governor Cuomo announced that New York would provide \$4.9 million in incentives to eight New York companies to help manufacture items to assist in the COVID-19 response and recovery. In New York City, only 26% of students have returned to public schools for in-person learning. City museums report they are struggling to survive with the 25% occupancy rates imposed by the State.

## Presidential updates

- [Aids to Vice President Pence Test Positive for COVID-19](#), October 24
  - At least five aids to Vice President Pence have tested positive for COVID-19, including Chief of Staff Marc Short.
  - Pence and his wife, second lady Karen Pence, tested negative for the virus on October 24 and 25.
  - Pence has continued traveling to campaign events and performing his official duties in-person despite his possible exposure. On October 25, he flew to North Carolina to attend a campaign rally. On October 26, he is scheduled to visit the Senate to preside over a vote to confirm Supreme Court Nominee Judge Amy Coney Barrett.
  - Spokesperson Devin O'Malley said that, “[w]hile Vice President Pence is considered a close contact with Mr. Short, in consultation with the White House Medical Unit, the Vice President will maintain his schedule in accordance with the CDC guidelines for essential personnel.”
  - CDC [advises](#) individuals who are exposed to the virus to quarantine for 14 days but allows an [exemption](#) for critical infrastructure workers who are not experiencing symptoms as long as they socially distance and wear face coverings at all times.
  - CDC does not have a firm definition of “critical infrastructure worker;” instead it has [identified](#) 16 critical infrastructure sectors including “government facilities.” Some public health experts, including the vice dean for public health practice at Johns Hopkins University, have [queried](#) whether campaigning constitutes “critical infrastructure.”
  - On October 24, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that White House Chief of Staff Meadows tried to prevent news of the outbreak among Pence’s aids from reaching the public.
  - On October 25, Meadows defended the White House’s secrecy during a press interview, citing concerns regarding the infected staffers’ privacy; he [explained](#) that “sharing personal information is not something that we should do, not something that we do actually do — unless it’s the vice president or the president or someone that’s very close to them where there’s people in harm’s way.”
  - During the same interview, Meadows responded to questions regarding the lack of mask-wearing at President Trump’s campaign events. Meadows [explained](#), “We’re not going to control the pandemic. We are going to control the fact that we get vaccines, therapeutics and other mitigations.”

## World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO COVID-19 Updates](#), October 26
  - WHO Director-General Tedros [stated](#) the northern hemisphere is facing a critical juncture in the pandemic, repeating his call from February: “This is not a drill.”
  - Tedros recommended governments carry out five key actions immediately: 1. Assess the outbreak in their country based on data; 2. In countries where cases are rising, make adjustments as quickly as possible; 3. Be honest with the public about the pandemic’s status; 4. Put systems in place to help citizens comply with safety measures; and 5. Reach out to infected people and their contacts to give specific instructions on next steps.
  - WHO and Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit that administers Wikipedia, [announced](#) a collaboration to expand public access to the latest and most reliable COVID-19

information. Information shared through the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike [license](#) will allow users on Wikipedia and other websites to share WHO information and media without fear of copyright infringement.

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

- [COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity](#), October 23
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending October 17.
  - The national average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased from 5.6% to 6.3% from October 10 to October 17.
  - Regionally, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased in most of the country except the Mid-Atlantic and Pacific Northwest Regions.
  - The national increase in percent positivity was driven primarily by increases in the Southeast, Midwest, South Central, and Mountain Regions. Smaller increases were reported in the New England, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and South/West Coast Regions.
  - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 193.7 per 100,000, up from 188.2 per 100,000 during the previous week.
  - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 increased 0.4% from October 10 (7.2%) to October 17 (7.6%). The percentage remains above the epidemic threshold and will likely increase as more death certificates are processed.
  
- [CDC Director Redfield Hosts Telebriefing Regarding Operation Warp Speed](#), October 23
  - CDC Director Redfield, CDC Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases Butler, and Health Secretary Azar conducted a telebriefing regarding Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's COVID-19 vaccine acceleration initiative.
  - During the briefing, Deputy Director Butler said that the United States is seeing a "distressing trend," with COVID-19 cases increasing in nearly 75 percent of the country. Butler admonished the public to adhere to measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, like wearing masks.
  - Redfield and Butler said that the government is cautiously optimistic that the United States will have an effective vaccine by the end of 2020, though there will be limited quantities initially.
  - Butler announced that all jurisdictions have submitted to the federal government their initial vaccine program plans in preparation for distributing COVID-19 vaccines.

### **New York State**

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), October 26
  - New York reported 12 deaths, 1,059 hospitalizations, and 237 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Sunday, October 25, 2020.
  - Approximately 1,191, or 1.45% of the 82,117 tests administered in New York on October 25 were positive for COVID-19.
  - On Friday, October 23, New York had 2,061 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, the [highest](#) daily total since May 21.

- On October 23, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York would provide \$4.9 million in incentives to eight New York manufacturers to produce medical and personal protection equipment in preparation for a second wave. To date, New York has provided \$16 million in grants to 28 New York-based companies to retool their businesses to manufacture supplies necessary for the ongoing COVID-19 response

### **New York City**

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), October 26
  - Only 26% of New York City students have [returned](#) to attend in-person classes. Students who started the year remotely have until November 15 to opt back in to classroom learning. Random testing in City schools has resulted in a very low positivity rate of .15% as of last week.
  - New York City museums, [limited](#) to 25% capacity by state-mandated restrictions, are facing challenges, as administrators say they may not survive meager occupancy without significant cuts to staffing or programming.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [Near-Universal Mask Use Could Save Over 100,000 Lives by February](#), October 23
  - A modeling [study](#) published in Nature Medicine found that near-universal mask wearing and social distancing restrictions imposed at certain thresholds could save hundreds of thousands of lives by February 2021.
  - The study used COVID-19 case and mortality data from February 2020 through September 21, 2020 to model three possible COVID-19 scenarios for the coming months in the United States.
  - The first scenario, where states continue to ease their social distancing mandates at the current pace even as cases rise, showed over one million cumulative COVID-19 related deaths by the end of February 2021.
  - The second scenario, where states begin tightening restrictions as mortality rates increase - considered the “plausible reference scenario” by researchers - showed over 500,000 cumulative deaths could occur by the end of February.
  - The third scenario, in which 95% of the populations wear masks in public in addition to states tightening restrictions, showed roughly 382,000 deaths by the end of February.
  - Researchers wrote “the implementation of [social distancing mandates] as soon as individual states reach a threshold of 8 daily deaths per million could dramatically ameliorate the effects of the disease; achieving near-universal mask use could delay, or in many states, possibly prevent, this threshold from being reached and has the potential to save the most lives while minimizing damage to the economy.”
- [FDA COVID-19 Updates](#), October 26
  - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a consolidated [database](#) to provide stakeholders easy access to information about drug and biologics development and manufacturing for products to diagnose, cure, mitigate, treat, or prevent COVID-19, and for other critically needed products to treat symptoms or provide supportive care.
  - FDA published a new [update](#) to the FDA COVID-19 Response At-A-Glance Summary, which provides a quick look at facts, figures, and highlights of FDA’s response efforts.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [FDA Announces It Will No Longer Review EUA Requests for COVID-19 Laboratory Developed Tests](#), October 9
- [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:

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