

October 2, 2020

Summary

The United States has 7,303,914 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 208,304 reported related deaths. President Trump and first lady Melania Trump tested positive for COVID-19; Vice President Pence and presidential candidate and former Vice President Biden continue to test negative. The White House Coronavirus Task force urged some states to adopt mask mandates and halt school re-openings to slow the spread of COVID-19. Moderna CEO Bancel said that the general public likely will not have access to the company's COVID-19 vaccine until March or April 2021. CDC published data indicating that COVID-19 cases are rising among young adults. House of Representatives passed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package to address the economic damage caused by the pandemic; the bill is unlikely to pass in the Senate, but Speaker Pelosi said negotiations regarding additional stimulus spending are ongoing.

California announced a new equity measure requiring large counties to reduce infections in the hardest-hit neighborhoods where poor and minority communities are concentrated. Counties will not be permitted to advance to new re-opening phases until they comply with the measure. Families of COVID-19 victims are planning a national day of mourning, called the National COVID-19 Remembrance, to be held in Washington D.C. on October 4. New Jersey increased taxes on gasoline and diesel by 9.3 cents per gallon on Thursday to offset the revenue losses caused by a decline in driving during the pandemic. Wisconsin is struggling with a major spike in COVID-19 cases that overlaps with a ramp-up in campaigning activity in the swing state. A major Massachusetts hospital, Brigham and Women's in Boston, is facing a significant outbreak; 33 staff members and 12 patients have tested positive for COVID-19. Florida reported a spike in cases, reporting 3,266 new positive cases on September 30, just days after governor Ron DeSantis lifted all restrictions on restaurants and small businesses.

New York reported 1 deaths, 648 hospitalizations, and 146 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, October 1. Approximately 1,382, or 1.26% of the 109,218 tests administered in New York on October 1 were positive for COVID-19. Moody's downgraded both New York State and New York City's credit rating from Aa1 to Aa2 due to declining sales and income tax revenue and rising debt obligations associated with recovery spending. New York State announced the release of a mobile contact tracing application, COVID Alert NY, which uses Bluetooth to track users and alert them when they have been in close contact with infected persons. Governor Cuomo announced a new initiative, through Empire State Development, to provide training and resources to small business to aid their financial recovery. Indoor dining resumed this week in New York City; restaurants are permitted to operate at 25% indoor-seating capacity.

Presidential updates

- [President Trump and First Lady Test Positive for COVID-19](#), October 2
 - President Trump announced that he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for COVID-19; Vice President Pence continues to test negative.
 - Presidential candidate and former Vice President Biden, who debated President Trump on September 29, [announced](#) that he and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden, continue to test negative.
 - White House Chief of Staff Meadows said that President Trump is experiencing mild symptoms. This evening the White House announced that Trump will be admitted to Walter Reed Hospital.
 - Trump Campaign Manager Stepien announced that upcoming campaign events will be held virtually or postponed.
 - On October 1, prior to testing positive, President Trump attended a fundraiser at his golf club in Bedminster, NJ; New Jersey Governor Murphy said the state is attempting to identify all those who attended the fundraiser and urged attendees to get tested.
- [White House Coronavirus Task Force Urges States to Adopt Mask Mandates, Other Measures](#), September 30
 - The White House Coronavirus Task Force sends weekly reports to the states regarding COVID-19; in this week's reports, Task Force urged some states to adopt more stringent measures to combat the virus as case counts climb.
 - The Task Force recommended some states, including Georgia, Wyoming, Utah, and Iowa, adopt mask mandates.
 - The Task Force advised Utah and Idaho to move to remote learning in areas where case counts are high and opined that re-opening the University of Wyoming was "ill-advised" due to local outbreaks.
 - The Task Force's advice is in tension with comments by President Trump [criticizing](#) former Vice President Biden for frequently wearing a mask and [urging](#) schools to re-open.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO COVID-19 Updates](#), October 2
 - WHO [welcomed](#) nearly \$1 billion in new funding commitments from United Kingdom, Canada, German, and Sweden for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator initiative. The ACT Accelerator needs an additional \$35 billion in funding to realize its goal of producing two billion vaccine doses, 245 million treatments, and 500 million tests.

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

- [CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations](#), September 30
 - 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 219,000 and 232,000 by October 24.

- CDC [consolidated](#) data from nine models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. Three models predict an increase in daily hospitalizations over the next four weeks, two models predict a decrease, and four models are uncertain about the direction of the trend or predict stable numbers. The forecasts estimate 1,800 to 5,200 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day by October 26.
- [CDC Reports Recent Increase in COVID-19 Cases Reported Among Young Adults](#), September 29
 - CDC published data indicating that the incidence of COVID-19 cases [increased](#) by 55% among adults age 18-22 between August 2 and September 5.
 - The increase was particularly large in the Northeast (144%) despite the weekly incidence remaining relatively low in the region for other age groups. The Midwest also saw an increase of 123% among young adults over the same period.
 - CDC scientists commented that because 45% of persons in this age group attend college, it is “likely that some of this increase is linked to resumption of in-person attendance at some colleges and universities.”
 - CDC scientists also noted that prior research indicates that young adults are less likely than other age groups to adhere to recommended COVID-19 prevention measures.
 - Separately, CDC [reported](#) that between May and the end of August, the median age of COVID-19 infection shifted downward by nearly a decade. The national median age of infection shifted from 46 years old in May to 38 years old in August.
- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), October 1
 - New York reported 1 deaths, 648 hospitalizations, and 146 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, October 1.
 - Approximately 1,382, or 1.26% of the 109,218 tests administered in New York on October 1 were positive for COVID-19.
 - Governor Cuomo and New Jersey Governor Murphy [announced](#) the launch of free contact tracing applications called COVID Alert NY and COVID Alert NJ. The applications use Bluetooth to track users and alert them if they have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. The application does not disclose the identities of infected persons.
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) the launch of Empire State Digital, an initiative to help small businesses’ grow their online presence in a partnership with Shopify, Square, Clearbanc, and Etsy. These partners and others will offer education, free resources, marketing support, and discounted pricing suited to assist small businesses. Governor Cuomo explained that “[t]his pandemic has been painful in so many ways and forced us all to find innovative ways to forge ahead By helping small businesses grow their digital presence, we’re providing them with the tools to be more competitive, resilient, and successful.”
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) on September 30 that the federal government awarded New York State \$18 million in federal grants to fund programs to train New Yorkers for in-demand jobs and support entrepreneurs in an effort to boost the recovery of small businesses effected by the pandemic.
 - On September 29, the State Liquor Authority [suspended](#) liquor licenses for another 16 bars and restaurants in New York State after finding egregious violations of pandemic-

related Executive Orders. To date, 217 liquor licenses have been suspended during the pandemic. Over the last week, a multi-agency task force led by the State Police and the State Liquor Authority conducted 8,634 compliance checks and documented violations at 40 establishments.

- [Moody's Downgrades New York State, New York City Credit Ratings](#), October 2
 - Moody's downgraded New York State and New York City's credit ratings from Aa1 to Aa2 because of heavy borrowing due to the coronavirus pandemic.
 - New York State lowered its expected revenues by \$14.5 billion as a result of the pandemic. New York State and New York City's sales and income tax revenues have plummeted due to sweeping business closures, while the state and the city have increased spending to offset the effects of the pandemic. Consequently, New York City has withheld 20% of scheduled payments to municipalities, social service organizations, and some school districts.
 - State financial documents indicate that the state government will operate at an \$8.4 billion budget deficit for the fiscal year starting April 1, 2020.
 - Robert Mujica, Governor Cuomo's budget director, calls Moody's downgrade further evidence that state and local governments throughout the country need half a trillion dollars in aid from Congress to assist in the pandemic recovery.

New York City

- [As Nation's Largest School District Opens for All Grade Levels, Few Coronavirus Cases Emerge](#), October 1
 - On October 1, New York City middle- and high-school students returned to the classrooms, joining elementary school students who returned earlier this week.
 - Roughly three dozen New York City schools remain temporarily closed due to coronavirus infections among their student populations.
 - About half of the City's students have chosen to study online full time, and many teachers have received permission to teach from home because they or a family member have a medical condition that puts them at highest risk.
 - Mayor de Blasio said that the City will shut down schools once more if the seven-day rolling average of COVID-positive tests rises above 3%.
 - As part of a deal with the teacher's union, the city negotiated an in-school testing plan that promised random monthly testing of 10% to 20% of students and staff who enter school facilities.
- [New York City to Resume Indoor Dining at Restaurants](#), September 29
 - Indoor dining resumed in New York City on September 30, with indoor capacity capped at 25% and tables required to be spaced six feet apart. Bar seating will remain closed, and eateries must shut down by midnight.
 - New York City aims to allow 50% indoor-capacity seating by November 1.
 - Indoor dining had been prohibited in New York City for the past six months. The *Wall Street Journal* previously [covered](#) a report by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, who estimated that 1,289 New York City restaurants have permanently shut their doors as a result of the pandemic.

Other Related Updates

- [*Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report*](#), October 1
 - Department of Labor (DOL) [reports](#) that another 837,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last 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. This week's report marks the lowest weekly total since March.
 - 650,120 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.
- [*Moderna Chief Says COVID-19 Vaccine Won't Be Widely Available Before Late March*](#), October 1
 - Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel [said](#) that, if his company's vaccine candidate is proven safe and effective, the general population may be able to access it by late March or early April 2021.
 - Bancel said that Moderna hopes to file for a Biologics License Application (BLA) with FDA by early February 2021.
 - Bancel noted that Moderna may file for an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from FDA as early as November 2020; however, he indicated that the vaccine will mainly be available to high-risk populations under the EUA, such as health care workers and the elderly.
 - Regarding concerns that drug makers have faced political pressure to expedite development of a COVID-19 vaccine, Bancel explained that "nobody . . . from any party, any branch of government . . . has asked us to go faster or to go slower."
 - This week Pfizer CEO Bourla [told](#) employees that the company is "moving at the speed of science" and will "never succumb to political pressure."
- [*National Institute of Health \(NIH\) to Assess and Expand COVID-19 Testing for Underserved Communities*](#), September 30
 - NIH [awarded](#) nearly \$234 million to improve COVID-19 testing for underserved and vulnerable populations as part of the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics ([RADx](#)) initiative.
 - The RADx Underserved Populations ([RADx-UP](#)) program will support 32 institutions across the United States and focus on populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including black, Latino, Native American, Alaskan, and Hawaiian, older adults, pregnant women, homeless, and incarcerated populations.
 - RADx-Up has three primary components: 1) a collaborative clinical research network with relationships with underserved communities; 2) research on the social, ethical, and behavioral implications of health disparities; and 3) a coordination and data center at Duke University that provides overarching guidance on administration and logistics.
 - The RADx-UP program will award additional funding in coming months to address evolving needs of the pandemic response, integrate new scientific advances such as vaccines and novel therapeutics, and expand the populations being reached.

- [FDA COVID-19 Updates](#), October 2
 - FDA [updated](#) the SARS CoV-2 Reference Panel Comparative Data on the FDA’s website to reflect the latest information on diagnostic products. The panel allows for a more precise comparison of the analytical performance of different molecular in vitro diagnostic (IVD) assays intended to detect COVID-19.
 - FDA [revised](#) its Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Veklury (remdesivir) to reflect changes in the distribution and allocation of the antiviral drug. FDA previously required Gilead to distribute Veklury through the federal government, but beginning October 1, hospitals can purchase the drug [directly](#) from AmerisourceBergin Corp., the sole distributor of Veklury.
 - FDA issued warning letters to [Tonic](#) Therapeutic Herb Shop & Elixir Bar and [KetoKerri](#) LLC for selling unapproved products with fraudulent COVID-19 claims. Both companies made misleading claims that their products could mitigate, prevent, treat, diagnose, or cure COVID-19.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [House Funding Bill Proposes Repayment Relief for Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payment Programs Participants](#), October 1
- [Non-Binding Guidance: Real-World Evidence in Drug Development and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), September 30
- [HHS Releases Provider Relief Fund Reporting Requirements](#), September 25

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