

July 26, 2021

Summary

The United States has 34,453,851 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 610,912 reported related deaths. The White House COVID-19 response team said on Thursday that the Delta variant now represents more than 83 percent of the coronavirus circulating in the US. In addition, the Biden-Harris administration announced a package of guidance and resources for those suffering from long-term symptoms of COVID-19. Democrats in the House have continued their inquiry into alleged political meddling into the nation's COVID-19 pandemic response by the Trump administration, calling 11 former and current federal health officials to testify.

Some Americans have started mixing and matching vaccine doses in a bid to increase their protection against the Delta variant. Other countries have authorized combinations of COVID-19 vaccines, and evidence increasingly supports the safety and efficacy of this practice. A UK study recently found that the Pfizer vaccine is most protective against the Delta variant when the first and second doses are spread out by eight months.

CDC data suggests breakthrough cases are still rare in the US, despite the surging Delta variant. Vaccinated individuals only account for 3% of hospitalizations. 44% of these breakthrough hospitalizations afflict immunocompromised individuals, leading experts to call for booster shots to better protect these individuals. On Thursday, an independent group of experts studying the topic called on the FDA to hasten its decision on whether to approve booster shots for immunocompromised persons.

There is a fourfold increase in new cases per day over the last month—every state is reporting significant case growth, but the latest surge has been driven largely by severe outbreaks in a handful of states. The highly infectious Delta variant has caused huge spikes in cases in Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Florida.

As of July 25, New York reported 4 deaths, 546 hospitalizations, and 123 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 1,296, or 2.28%, of the 56,868 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 22,055,646 doses of the vaccines to patients; 62.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 56.6% are fully vaccinated. Positive COVID-19 cases have nearly doubled in New York State in the past week as vaccinations slow and the highly contagious Delta variant spreads. Governor Cuomo announced the allocation of \$15 million from the New York State budget to promote vaccination in communities across the State that were hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. Government Updates

- [*Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials*](#), July 22
 - On Thursday, the White House COVID-19 response team addressed the Delta variant, announcing that the strain now represents more than 83 percent of the virus circulating in the US.
 - Dr. Anthony Fauci also addressed breakthrough infections of COVID-19, which occur when COVID-19 is detected 14 or more days after the completion of all recommended doses of a vaccine. Fauci stressed that the vaccines for COVID-19 are highly effective, although not 100 percent, and that the effectiveness of the vaccines against severe disease is substantial.
 - The response team also announced that \$100 million will be sent to rural health clinics to support vaccine education and outreach in communities with low vaccination rates.
- [*FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Marks Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act and Announces Resources to Support Individuals with Long COVID*](#), July 26
 - On Monday, the Biden-Harris administration announced a package of guidance and resources to support individuals who are suffering from long-term symptoms of COVID-19.
 - As part of this package, the Office for Civil Rights at Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice provided guidance explaining that some individuals with long COVID-19 may have a disability under civil rights laws, entitling them to discrimination protection. Individuals may also be entitled to disability support services and/or accommodations in the workplace.
 - Additionally, some children for whom long COVID-19 is a disability may be entitled to reasonable modifications according to the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.
- [*Lawmakers summon former top health officials to discuss political meddling in the U.S. pandemic response*](#), July 26
 - On Monday, House Democrats called 11 current or former top federal health officials for interviews with investigators as part of an inquiry into the Trump administration's potential interference with the pandemic response.
 - The officials received requests from the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis requesting that they make voluntary appearances before the committee.
 - The subcommittee was appointed last year by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to investigate all aspects of the federal response to the pandemic.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*Americans are 'mixing and matching' Covid vaccines over concerns about the delta variant*](#), July 26
 - Some Americans are mixing doses of two different vaccines, amid concerns about the Delta variant and decreased efficacy. Data already suggests the Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are less protective against the variant than originally thought.

- Other countries, such as Germany, Italy and Canada, have authorized vaccine combinations. Growing evidence demonstrates that at least some combinations, such as AstraZeneca and Pfizer, are safe and offer enhanced protection.
- [*Covid vaccine: Eight-week gap seen as sweet spot for Pfizer jab antibodies*](#), July 24
 - A study conducted in the UK suggests that Pfizer's two-dose vaccine regimen is most effective against the Delta variant when the first and second shots are spaced eight weeks apart. Current guidelines recommend a gap of three weeks.

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

- [*COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review*](#), July 23
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for last week.
 - As of July 21, the seven-day average number of daily new cases reported was 40,246. This is a 46.7% increase compared to the previous week's average, and an overall 84.2% decrease compared to the national peak on January 10, 2021.
 - As of July 22, 339.8 million vaccine doses have been administered in the United States. Overall, approximately 187.2 million people in the United States have received at least one dose of vaccine, which is 56.4% of the population. Approximately 162.2 million people are fully vaccinated, which is 48.8% of the population. The seven-day average number of reported vaccine dose administrations was 291,565, a 35.2% decrease compared to the previous week.
 - As of July 19, the seven-day average of new daily hospital admissions was 3,521, a 32.2% increase compared to the previous week's average.
 - As of July 21, the seven-day average of reported deaths was 223 per day, a 9.3% increase compared to the previous week's average.
- [*Symptomatic breakthrough COVID-19 infections rare, CDC data estimates*](#), July 26
 - CDC [data](#) indicates breakthrough infections are still relatively rare in the US. As of last week, only 153,000 of the 156 million fully vaccinated individuals (0.098%) had experienced a symptomatic infection. Vaccinated individuals account for only 3% of COVID-19 infections requiring hospitalization.
- [*CDC advisory group urges action on vaccine booster for immune-compromised people*](#), July 22
 - On Thursday, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices urged the FDA to act quickly in deciding whether to approve booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine for immunocompromised individuals. The committee, a group of independent advisors, made its plea after reviewing the latest research on the subject with the CDC.
 - 2.7% of the population is immunocompromised. Data suggests that two doses of the vaccine do not yield a strong immune response in these individuals. Over 44% of breakthrough infections resulting in hospitalization involve immunocompromised persons.
 - Scientists and doctors fear the FDA's approval delay could have consequences. The CDC has attempted to find alternative ways to give immunocompromised persons extra protection, such as enrolling them in booster shot vaccine studies.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 26
 - New York reported 4 deaths, 546 hospitalizations, and 123 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on July 25, 2021.
 - Approximately 1,296, or 2.28%, of the 56,868 tests administered in New York on July 25 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of July 25, New York has administered 22,055,646 doses of the vaccines to patients; 62.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 56.6% are fully vaccinated.
 - Positive COVID-19 cases have nearly [doubled](#) in New York State in the past week as vaccinations slow and the highly contagious Delta variant spreads. Due to these growing numbers, Governor Cuomo emphasized that it's "absolutely vital that every New Yorker who hasn't gotten vaccinated yet does so immediately."
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) the allocation of \$15 million from the New York State budget to promote vaccination in communities across the State that were hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 26
 - As COVID-19 cases are on the rise in New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio is [encouraging](#) private employers to consider mandating employees to get vaccinated in an effort to fight a surge of the Delta variant.

International

- On Friday, [New Zealand](#) suspended its quarantine-free travel bubble with Australia in response to a growing COVID-19 outbreak in Sydney. The bubble will be suspended for at least 8 weeks.
- On Monday, the parliament in [France](#) approved a law requiring special virus passes for all restaurants and domestic travel and mandating vaccinations for all health workers. The measures have led to protests and political tension.
- In [Australia](#), people gathered in Sydney and other cities on Saturday to protest lockdown [restrictions](#) in light of surging coronavirus cases.
- On Saturday, [Vietnam](#) began a 15-day lockdown in the capital city of Hanoi in response to a coronavirus surge coming from the southern Mekong Delta region.
- In [Tokyo](#), at the Olympic Village, organizers announced on Monday 16 new positive COVID-19 tests among those connected to the Games.
- On Sunday, [Malaysia](#) reported a record number of new COVID-19 infections, passing the one million mark for total cases in the country. Malaysia currently has the highest infection rate in Southeast Asia.
- [Germany](#) is considering reinstating some COVID-19 restrictions for unvaccinated adults if daily infection rates substantially increase in the coming months.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Three new General Licenses expand scope of COVID-19-related activity with Iran, Syria, and Venezuela under U.S. Sanctions](#), July 6
- [Regulatory Trends in Pharma Deal-making: Transitioning from the “Year of the Pandemic” to “Another Year of the Pandemic.”](#) June 3
- [Non-binding Guidance: The Defense Production Act and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), May 27
- [Doug Brayley Discusses Employer Vaccination Policies on CNN](#), May 24

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