

July 19, 2021

Summary

The United States has 34,080,890 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 609,021 reported related deaths. On Friday, the White House COVID-19 Response Team warned that the coronavirus pandemic is “becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated.” Pfizer announced Friday that the FDA is fast-tracking review of Pfizer’s application for full approval of its COVID-19 vaccine. Full approval requires more rigorous analysis compared to emergency approval. Pfizer is expected to obtain approval sometime before January. Likewise, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are planning to seek full authorization. The FDA will also consider authorizing COVID-19 vaccines for children under 12. Pfizer and Moderna currently have trials underway, the data of which will be submitted to the FDA in the fall for a likely decision by early to mid-winter.

Today, the CDC reclassified the UK as a Level 4, or highest risk, travel destination—meaning all travel thereto is strongly discouraged, even for fully vaccinated travelers. The CDC Director recently gave a statement warning that surging Delta infections in the US are linked to low rates of vaccination in many parts of the country. Meanwhile, the CDC will conduct an advisory panel on July 22 to consider whether immunocompromised individuals should receive a third COVID-19 vaccine dose. Infections rose in more than half the nation’s counties last week, but those with low vaccination rates were far more likely to see bigger jumps. Among the 25 counties with the sharpest increases in cases, all but one had vaccinated under 40% of residents, and 16 had vaccinated under 30%.

As of July 18, New York reported 3 deaths, 378 hospitalizations, and 79 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 823, or 1.18%, of the 69,665 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 21,812,432 doses of the vaccines to patients; 61.7% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 56% are fully vaccinated.

U.S. Government Updates

- [*Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials*](#), July 16
 - On Friday, the White House COVID-19 Response Team said that this is “becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated,” pointing to recent increases in cases in counties with low vaccination rates.

- Last week, just four states accounted for more than 40 percent of all cases, with one in five cases occurring in Florida alone. These cases are predominantly occurring among unvaccinated individuals.
- However, states with the highest case rates are seeing their vaccination rates go up; in the past week, the five states with the highest case rates—Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, and Nevada—had a higher rate of people getting newly vaccinated compared to the national average.
- The response team also issued a warning about the dangers of health misinformation—information that is “false, inaccurate, or misleading information according to the best evidence at the time” —and urged technology companies to take steps to avoid amplifying misinformation.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*FDA grants priority review to Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine; agency official says approval decision expected within two months*](#), July 16
 - Pfizer announced Friday that the FDA has granted priority review to Pfizer’s application for full approval of its COVID-19 vaccine—both for adults over 16 and adolescents between 12 and 15. An agency decision is required by January, but the FDA is likely to fully approve the Pfizer vaccine well before then.
 - Full approval requires a more rigorous review of a vaccine’s efficacy and safety than a review for emergency use. Unlike in emergency use reviews, the FDA will be assessing the real-life results of millions of vaccinations, rather than results of large trials or laboratory tests. Experts hope the rigor behind this review will help convince vaccine skeptics to shift their perception of the vaccine’s risk.
 - Moderna has also begun submitting data to the FDA in advance of a full approval application; Johnson & Johnson is expected to apply for the same.
- [*Covid vaccines for kids under 12 expected midwinter, FDA official says*](#), July 15
 - On Thursday, an FDA official stated that COVID-19 vaccines could receive emergency use authorization for children under 12 in early or mid-winter.
 - Pfizer and Moderna launched trials on the under-12 age group in March, with results expected in the fall. The FDA will then review.
 - The FDA is asking the companies to collect four to six months of follow-up data—as opposed to two months for adults—to ensure the vaccine’s safety for children.

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

- [*COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review*](#), July 16
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for last week.
 - As of July 14, the seven-day average number of daily new cases reported was 26,306. This is a 69.3% increase compared to the previous week’s average, and an overall 89.6% decrease compared to the national peak on January 10, 2021.
 - As of July 15, 336.1 million vaccine doses have been administered in the United States. Overall, approximately 185.1 million people in the United States have received at least one dose of vaccine, which is 55.8% of the population. Approximately 160.4 million people are fully vaccinated, which is 48.3% of the population. The seven-day average number of reported vaccine dose administrations was 270,592, a 35.7% decrease compared to the previous week.

- As of July 13, the seven-day average of new daily hospital admissions was 2,794, a 35.8% increase compared to the previous week's average.
- As of July 14, the seven-day average of reported deaths was 211 per day, a 26.3% increase compared to the previous week's average.
- [CDC tells individuals to 'avoid travel' to the UK as Covid cases rise](#), July 19
 - The CDC has reclassified the UK as a "Level 4" travel destination in light of surging infection rates in that country.
 - Level 4 is the CDC's highest risk category. Even fully vaccinated travelers are warned against all travel to these countries.
- [Covid cases, deaths rising in U.S., as CDC warns of 'pandemic of the unvaccinated'](#), July 16
 - On Friday, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky described the surge of the Delta variant in the US as a "pandemic of the unvaccinated," citing data that shows areas with the highest rates of infection among the areas with the lowest vaccination rates.
 - Dr. Walensky warned that the failure to raise vaccine rates in these at-risk areas could lead to preventable infections, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- [CDC advisory panel to consider third COVID-19 shot for immunocompromised](#), July 15
 - A CDC panel will meet on July 22 to consider recommending a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to individuals with weak or compromised immune systems.
 - This follows a joint statement by the CDC and FDA last week that the general population does not need a third dose.
 - Israel has already begun administering third doses to the immunocompromised.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 19
 - New York reported 3 deaths, 378 hospitalizations, and 79 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on July 18, 2021.
 - Approximately 823, or 1.18%, of the 69,665 tests administered in New York on July 18 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of July 18, New York has administered 21,812,432 doses of the vaccines to patients; 61.7% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 56% are fully vaccinated.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 19
 - Mayor Bill de Blasio said that there are no [plans](#) to return to mandatory mask wearing similar to what was recently re-enacted in Los Angeles County, as the highly contagious Delta variant of the novel coronavirus spreads

International

- Southeast Asian countries such as [Vietnam](#), Laos, and Thailand that had avoided large-scale outbreaks of the coronavirus are now facing a devastating third wave of the pandemic, spurred by the Delta variant. On Sunday, Indonesia reported 73,582 deaths from COVID-19 and more than 2.8 million confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic, making it the world's leader in new infection rates.

- Just hours before [England](#) lifted nearly all COVID-19 restrictions on Monday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was forced to go into self-isolation after his health secretary tested [positive](#). Case numbers in the country have continued to surge.
- The first person has tested positive for COVID-19 at the Olympic Village in [Tokyo](#). So far, 44 people affiliated with the Games have tested positive since the beginning of July, most of them contractors.
- More than 100,000 people protested across [France](#) over the weekend in opposition of President Emmanuel Macron’s new vaccination [strategy](#), which will restrict access to restaurants, cafes, movie theaters, long-distance trains, and more for those who are not vaccinated.
- [Singapore](#) reported its highest daily tally of new locally transmitted cases since August, reporting 163 new cases on Monday.
- The vaccination rate in [Canada](#) has surpassed the United States, with over 49 percent of eligible Canadians now fully vaccinated and 70 percent having received at least one dose as of Saturday.
- On Monday, [South Korea](#) started vaccinating high school seniors and members of the teaching staff in advance of the country’s college entrance exam.

Other Updates

- [5 Texas Democrats who fled their state to stall a voting bill test positive in Washington](#), July 19
 - Five of the approximately 60 Texas Democrats who [left](#) the state last week in an attempt to prevent a restrictive new voting [law](#) from passing have tested positive for the coronavirus in Washington, D.C.
 - According to the Texas House Democratic Caucus, all five lawmakers were fully vaccinated and had mild or no symptoms.
 - Only two of the representatives— Celia Israel and Trey Martinez Fischer—have identified themselves.
- [Facebook suggests it's more effective than Biden on vaccinations](#), July 17
 - Facebook pushed back after President Biden suggested on Friday that social media platforms “are killing people” by not fighting harder against misinformation.
 - In response, the company’s vice president of integrity pointed out that 85% of Facebook users are vaccinated or want to be; 3.3 million users have used Facebook’s vaccination finder tool; and “vaccine hesitancy” has declined by 50% among users since January.

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

Send questions to:

- COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com