

April 12, 2021

### Summary

The United States has 31,198,546 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 562,067 reported related deaths. On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that certain of China's actions at the start of the pandemic contributed to acceleration of the global spread of the virus, with "much more egregious results" than if it had cooperated with outside experts. The same day, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell warned that reopening the economy too quickly could lead to another worrisome spike in coronavirus cases. On Monday, the White House stated that it expects increased economic inflation over the next few months due to the pandemic.

Half of American adults are expected to have received at least one dose of vaccine by the end of this week. This coincides with Pfizer's request on Friday for FDA emergency-use authorization of its vaccine in adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15. Supply of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is expected to drop by 80% this week, while European researchers have linked rare blood clots to an uncommon antibody reaction to the AstraZeneca vaccine. A new study was announced by the COVID-19 Prevention Network that will aim to determine whether vaccinated people can still spread the virus, which may shed light on whether public mask mandates may eventually cease. CDC now says that surface transmission of COVID-19 is very rare. CDC is also facing a lawsuit from the state of Florida over its continued shutdown of the cruise industry.

As of April 12, COVID-19 cases nationally have plateaued, with slight variations per day. Rapidly increasing positivity rates in the Midwest have offset notable improvements in most of the West and South. New York and New Jersey's positivity rates have stabilized yet remain high in comparison to the rest of the United States. New Mexico, South Dakota, Rhode Island, Maine, Alaska, Connecticut, and North Dakota have each fully vaccinated at least 25% of residents.

As of April 11, New York reported 58 deaths, 4,118 hospitalizations, and 860 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 4,962, or 3.75%, of the 131,436 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 12,033,813 doses of the vaccines to patients; 37.9% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 24.9% are fully vaccinated. On April 9, New York State Department of Education updated its reopening guidance for schools, reducing its recommendation on social distancing in classrooms from six feet to three. On the same day, Governor Cuomo acknowledged that New York will receive just 34,900 Johnson & Johnson vaccines in its next delivery—a drop of 88% week-over-week. Governor Cuomo commented, "While no appointments should have to be cancelled, we will not be able to get as many shots into New Yorkers' arms as we would like."

## **U.S. Government Updates**

- [\*Secretary of State Blinken Says China Secrecy Accelerated Spread of COVID-19\*](#), April 11
  - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) in an NBC interview Sunday that China's actions at the start of the pandemic helped accelerate the global spread of the virus, with "much more egregious results" than if it had cooperated with outside experts.
  - The Biden administration has been critical of a joint China-World Health Organization study into the pandemic's origins, [saying](#) that it has "deep concerns" about the way the investigation has been carried out.
- [\*Fed's Powell Says Reopening Economy Too Quickly Could Cause New Coronavirus Spike\*](#), April 11
  - Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell warned in an interview broadcast Sunday that reopening the economy too quickly could lead to another worrisome spike in coronavirus cases. He further stated that the country has not completely turned the corner and that the pandemic continues to pose major risks to any recovery.
  - Powell, speaking in a "60 Minutes" interview, also said that the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated economic disparities in the United States and that these disparities could take time to address during an uneven recovery.
  - Powell described the economy as being at "an inflection point," showing signs of acceleration but still facing numerous risks.
- [\*Pandemic Prices: Assessing Inflation in the Months and Years Ahead\*](#), April 12
  - Monday morning, the White House published a blog post regarding the Biden Administration's expectation of increased economic inflation over the next few months due to the pandemic.
  - Three factors identified in the post as potential drivers of inflation are base effects impacting the inflation growth rate, supply-chain disruptions, and pent-up demand, particularly for services substantially impacted by the pandemic such as air travel and hospitality.
  - The post further predicted after rising over the next several months, inflation will thereafter assume a slower pace in line with longer-term expectations.

## **Vaccines and Therapeutics**

- [\*50% of US Adults Expected To Have At Least One Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine By End of This Week\*](#), April 12
  - Over the past week, more than 3.1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the U.S. each day on average. Each day, more than 1.8 million people, or about 1% of the U.S. population, were added to the total number of Americans who have received at least one dose of vaccine.
  - With 46% of U.S. adults having already received at least one dose of vaccine, the country is on track to surpass the 50% threshold this week. More than 30% of adults in the U.S. are expected to be fully vaccinated by week's end.
- [\*Pfizer Requests FDA Clearance For Vaccine in Kids Ages 12 to 15\*](#), April 9
  - Pfizer on Friday requested that U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expand the emergency use authorization for its vaccine to include adolescents ages 12 to 15. FDA

- originally granted emergency use authorization to Pfizer for use with people ages 16 and older late last year. FDA's review of the request is expected to take several weeks.
- Though not yet peer reviewed, Pfizer is relying on the previously announced results of its Phase 3 clinical trial, which show that the vaccine is safe and 100% effective in 12- to 15-year-olds.
  - Pfizer stated that its goal is to start vaccinating this new age group before the start of the next school year.
- [\*Blood Clots Linked to AstraZeneca Vaccine Stem From Rare Antibody Reaction\*](#), April 9
    - Researchers from Germany and Norway have identified certain antibodies in some people who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine. In very rare cases, the scientists explain, the antibodies activate platelets, a blood component involved in clotting, which may contribute to blood clots.
    - Younger people appear to be more susceptible than older people, but no preexisting health condition has been identified that predisposes people to the rare reaction.
    - European regulators say that there have been 222 reports of the rare blood-clotting problem, out of about 34 million people who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine in Britain and the 30-nation European Economic Area. The regulators have conducted detailed reviews of 86 of these cases, 18 of which have been fatal.
  - [\*CDC Says Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Supply Will Drop 80%\*](#), April 9
    - Only 700,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson have been [allocated](#) for distribution this week, compared to the 4.9 million doses that were distributed last week. Previously reported errors at a Baltimore plant manufacturing the vaccine are the [cause](#).
    - Meanwhile, Georgia has [become](#) the third state to shut down a site administering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine after some patients experienced adverse reactions, including dizziness, fainting, and lightheadedness, usually within 15 minutes of vaccination. Several experts have [explained](#), however, that there is no reason to doubt the vaccine's safety.
  - [\*A Vaccine Study in College Students Will Help Determine When It's Safe To Take Masks Off\*](#), April 12
    - Though [evidence](#) is mounting that people who receive vaccines are protected from various types of COVID infection, including symptom-free infections, research on this question remains incomplete.
    - Now, a new [study](#) of 12,000 students across 20 colleges and universities will seek to determine whether the Moderna vaccine prevents vaccinated people from becoming unwitting carriers of the virus.
    - If so, the wearing of masks in public by vaccinated people, which is still [recommended](#), may eventually become unnecessary as vaccination rates increase.
    - The study participants will be split into two groups, one to be vaccinated now and the other in four months. The volunteers will swab their noses daily so that researchers can track how well the vaccine works in stanching the virus' spread.

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

- [COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review](#), April 9
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the past week.
  - The current seven-day average number of daily new cases reported is 64,152. This is a 2% increase compared to the previous week's average, but an overall 74.3% decrease compared to the highest national peak on January 8, 2021.
  - As of April 8, 174.9 million vaccine doses have been administered in the United States. Overall, approximately 112 million people in the United States (or 33.7% of the population) have received at least one dose of vaccine. Approximately 66.2 million people (or 19.9% of the population) are now fully vaccinated. The seven-day average number of reported vaccine dose administrations was 3 million, a 4.5% acceleration compared to the previous week.
  - The current seven-day average of new hospital admissions is 5,336 per day, a 7.3% increase compared to the previous week's average.
  - The current seven-day average of new reported deaths is 711 per day, a 20.6% decrease compared to the previous week's average.
- [Florida To Sue CDC To Allow Cruises To Resume U.S. Sailings, Industry Asks To Be Treated Like Airlines](#), April 8
  - Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced last week that the state will file a lawsuit against CDC demanding that cruise ships be allowed to resume sailing immediately and citing the thousands of Floridians who depend on the industry for employment.
  - According to a September 2020 report by Federal Maritime Commission, Florida lost \$3.2 billion from the shutdown of the cruise industry, including 50,000 jobs paying \$2.3 billion in wages, during the first six months of the pandemic. Florida Department of Transportation said that it expects the state's seaports to reach a nearly \$400 million decline in operating revenue by July of this year.
  - In its October 2020 Framework for Conditional Sailing [order](#), CDC cited research showing that COVID spreads more easily on cruise ships than in other environments studied. According to a study [published](#) in the Journal of Travel Medicine, the virus [spread](#) on the Diamond Princess [cruise](#) in January 2020 at a rate that was four times higher, with one person spreading it to an average of 15 others, than in the virus' original epicenter of Wuhan, China, where one person spread the virus to an average of four others.
- [CDC Said The Risk of Getting COVID-19 From Surfaces Is 'Low,' Suggesting Deep-Clean Protocols Are Overkill](#), April 6
  - CDC has [released](#) new research supporting the conclusion that although people can be infected with COVID-19 through contact with surfaces, surface transmission is not the main route by which the virus spreads and the risk is "low."
  - CDC also [said](#) that "routine cleaning performed effectively with soap or detergent, at least once per day, can substantially reduce virus levels on surfaces." Deep-cleaning disinfection is only recommended in indoor settings where there has been a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

## **New York State**

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), April 12
  - New York reported 58 deaths, 4,118 hospitalizations, and 860 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on April 11, 2021.
  - Approximately 4,962, or 3.75%, of the 131,436 tests administered in New York on April 11 were positive for COVID-19.
  - As of April 11, New York has administered 12,033,813 doses of the vaccines to patients. 37.9% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines and 24.9% are fully vaccinated.
  - On April 9, New York State Department of Education (NYSDOE) [updated](#) its reopening [guidance](#) for public schools. Notably, NYSDOE reduced its recommendation for social distancing in classrooms from six feet to three.
  - On April 9, Governor Andrew Cuomo [announced](#) that, as part of the FY 2022 Enacted Budget, direct payments made to families of Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) employees through the COVID family death benefit program would be exempt from State income taxes. MTA’s COVID family death benefit program began in April 2020 and has to date issued \$62 million in approved direct payments to the families of MTA employees who died from COVID-19.
  - On April 9, Governor Cuomo [acknowledged](#) that New York will receive just 34,900 Johnson & Johnson vaccines in its next delivery—a drop of 88% week-over-week. Cuomo further stated, “While no appointments should have to be cancelled, we will not be able to get as many shots into New Yorkers' arms as we would like. We hope the production issues are resolved as soon as possible, and that production ramps up quickly so we can expand the number of New Yorkers who are vaccinated.”
  - New York State will [open](#) 16 more community-based, pop-up vaccination sites throughout the State from April 10 – 14. Each site will administer first dose vaccines for 1 – 2 days at a time, depending upon the location, and then close. The sites will then reopen three weeks after their respective closing date to administer second doses. Governor Cuomo expects these sites to vaccinate around 7,100 people.

## **New York City**

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), April 12
  - On April 8, City officials [announced](#) new COVID-19 closure rules for schools, aimed at reducing disruptions to in-person classroom instruction. Under the rules previously in effect, schools would close after reporting at least two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19. Now, Schools will close for 10-days when four or more cases in different classrooms can be traced to a known exposure to COVID-19 in the school. Schools will only increase testing, not close, when there are three or fewer cases in a school within one week.

## **International**

- On Monday, [Britain](#) took its first major step in a phased reopening that is scheduled to culminate on June 21, when the government has said that it hopes to lift almost all COVID-19 related restrictions in England. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are following separate but similar timetables, under which some restrictions eased in England will remain in place a while longer.

- [India](#) surpassed Brazil as the country second-most-affected by COVID-19 in the world, with more than 13.5 million total reported cases as India is in the throes of a surge. This past weekend, hundreds of thousands of people flocked to the ongoing Kumbh Mela religious [festival](#). About 100 vaccination centers abruptly shut down on Friday in India's financial capital, Mumbai, amid a [shortage](#) of doses. That same day, the country confirmed its highest daily increase in coronavirus cases since the pandemic began.
- [Thailand](#) reported a record number of coronavirus cases on Monday, registering 985 new infections as health officials pledge to ramp up hospital capacity in the capital, [Bangkok](#).
- [Australia](#)'s leader has abandoned targets for the country's coronavirus vaccine rollout after the country's health regulators advised against using the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for people under age 50. In a Facebook post on Sunday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that while the government would like everyone to receive a first dose by the end of the year, "it is not possible to set such targets given the many uncertainties involved."

### **Other Updates**

- The [Supreme Court](#) on Friday blocked a California coronavirus restriction on religious gatherings, saying the State's limits on home-based Bible study and prayer sessions violated constitutional rights.
- A Florida woman who, without wearing a mask, purposefully coughed on another customer in a Pier 1 store last year has been [sentenced](#) to 30 days in jail.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Phase 5 Stimulus Package – Highlights of Certain Key Tax-Related Provisions in ARPA](#), March 26
- [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021– Summary of Key Provisions](#), March 25

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