

July 15, 2021

Summary

The United States has 33,953,628 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 608,167 reported related deaths. On Monday, Vice President Kamala Harris spoke in Detroit, Michigan at a Vaccine Mobilization event, where she urged people to get vaccinated, especially in light of the spread of the Delta variant. On Thursday, the US Surgeon General released an advisory urging greater efforts to combat COVID-19 misinformation, especially myths about the vaccines. The advisory calls on Americans to be more responsible about the information they share and for tech companies to regulate misinformation more aggressively, among other recommendations.

Thailand plans to authorize mixed doses of the Sinovac and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines, amid growing evidence that two doses of the Sinovac vaccine do not adequately protect against the Delta variant and in light of early studies that show the combination is safe and effective. US regulators have added a warning to the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine after finding a possible link between the vaccine and Guillain-Barre syndrome, a potentially serious neurological condition that has developed in 100 J&J vaccine recipients to date.

Recent CDC data indicates that 2020 was the deadliest year in US history for overdoses, which experts partially attribute to the disruption and diversion of resources caused by the pandemic.

Case numbers are climbing across the country as the Delta variant spreads among unvaccinated people. Arkansas, Missouri, Florida, and Nevada are experiencing full-fledged outbreaks.

As of July 14, New York reported 3 deaths, 340 hospitalizations, and 75 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 956, or 1.17%, of the 81,951 tests administered in New York were positive for COVID-19. New York has administered 21,685,467 doses of the vaccines to patients; 61.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 55.6% are fully vaccinated. Governor Cuomo announced that four mass vaccination sites will cease operations as part of the ongoing downscaling that will allow New York State to focus on localized vaccination efforts.

U.S. Government Updates

- [*Remarks by Vice President Harris at a Vaccine Mobilization Event*](#), July 12
 - On Monday, Vice President Kamala Harris spoke in Detroit, Michigan at a Vaccine Mobilization event where she praised the city's resilience and urged people to get vaccinated.

- According to the Vice President, more than 4.75 million people in Michigan have been fully vaccinated. She said the administration is trying to boost that number even further by sending volunteers door to door to provide information about the vaccines and by sending vaccines to primary care doctors and pediatricians. The administration is also setting up clinics in workplaces and sending mobile clinics into communities.
- Harris stressed that “virtually every person” hospitalized with COVID-19 right now is unvaccinated and stressed that vaccination is even more important now in light of the continuing spread of the Delta variant.
- [*The U.S. Surgeon General Is Calling COVID-19 Misinformation An ‘Urgent Threat’*](#), July 15
 - US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy today released his first advisory, which calls for greater efforts to combat misinformation about COVID-19. The advisory specially targets misinformation about the vaccines and vaccine side effects, a driving force behind vaccine hesitancy in many areas where the Delta variant is surging.
 - Murthy urges Americans to have respectful, open conversations about the vaccines with people in their lives and to avoid sharing information unless they are certain of its reliability. Moreover, Murthy calls on tech companies to play a larger role in regulating misinformation on their platforms.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*Thailand plans to mix Sinovac and AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines. Critics say that's risky*](#), July 13
 - On Tuesday, a virologist and adviser to Thailand’s government endorsed a plan to mix doses of the coronavirus vaccines of AstraZeneca and Sinovac. Thailand is suffering its worst COVID-19 outbreak since the start of the pandemic. Officials fear the Sinovac vaccine is not as effective against the Delta variant as once thought, based in part on recent data showing 618 of the 677,000 Thai medical personnel who received two doses of Sinovac have been infected with the variant.
 - According to early data from a study of 1,200 people in Thailand, the Sinovac-AstraZeneca combination has produced a strong immune response, without causing any serious side effects. Yet, critics object that more research is needed and a mass rollout of the vaccine combination would be unethical.
- [*FDA adds warning about rare reaction to J&J COVID-19 vaccine*](#), July 12
 - On Monday, FDA added a warning to the J&J COVID-19 vaccine based on a potential link between the vaccine and Guillain-Barre syndrome, a potentially serious neurological condition. Guillain-Barre syndrome causes the body’s immune system to attack nerve cells, resulting in muscle weakness and occasionally paralysis (typically temporary).
 - CDC and FDA have reviewed over 100 reported cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome following a J&J vaccination. All cases led to hospitalization, and one to death. Still, experts have not concluded there is a definitive link to the vaccine. In addition, experts have stressed that, notwithstanding a causal link, reported cases are extremely rare in view of the 13 million Americans who have received a J&J shot.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), July 14
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 31 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors. CDC's national ensemble forecast predicts the number of newly reported COVID-19 deaths will remain stable or have an uncertain trend over the next four weeks. It forecasts between 800 and 3,900 new deaths in the week ending August 7, 2021, and between 611,000 and 619,000 cumulative deaths by this date.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from nine models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. The forecast predicts daily hospitalizations will increase over the next four weeks, with between 2,100 and 11,000 new hospitalizations per day by August 9, 2021. It predicts that hospital admissions will increase in 14 jurisdictions, while remaining stable or uncertain in the remaining states and territories.
- [*Pandemic fueled deadliest year for drug overdoses, CDC data shows*](#), July 14
 - According to recent [data](#) from the CDC, 2020 was the deadliest year in history for overdoses. 93,331 people died from drug overdoses in 2020—most of which were caused by opioids—compared to 70,980 the year before.
 - Experts suggest the COVID-19 pandemic contributed significantly to the spike, diverting resources from local health centers, prevention and recovery programs, and social services, among other disruptions.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), July 15
 - New York reported 3 deaths, 340 hospitalizations, and 75 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on July 14, 2021.
 - Approximately 956, or 1.17%, of the 81,951 tests administered in New York on July 14 were positive for COVID-19.
 - As of July 14, New York has administered 21,685,467 doses of the vaccines to patients; 61.3% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 55.6% are fully vaccinated.
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that four mass vaccination sites will cease operations as part of the ongoing downscaling that will allow New York State to focus on localized vaccination efforts.

New York City

- [*New York City COVID-19 Updates*](#), July 15
 - A new report [shows](#) that approximately 250,000 New York City residents did not get COVID-19 this year because they were vaccinated. Additionally, according to the data, over 98% of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in New York City related to COVID-19 this year were in unvaccinated people.

International

- In [Myanmar](#), the military, which seized power of the country in February in a [coup](#), has ordered that oxygen be denied to private clinics which are largely staffed by doctors who oppose the army's takeover.
- On Wednesday and Thursday, the Prime Minister of [Australia](#), Scott Morrison, blamed the slow rollout of vaccines in the country on Australia's vaccine advisory body, in the wake of a coronavirus outbreak in Sydney.
- A third wave of COVID-19, driven by the Delta variant, is sweeping over [Africa](#); one million COVID-19 infections were reported on the continent in the last month alone.
- A shipment of 500,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses from the US arrived in [Haiti](#) on Wednesday; these are the first shots to reach the nation, which has not yet begun a coronavirus vaccination program.

Other Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), July 15
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that another 360,000 workers filed initial claims (seasonally adjusted) for unemployment benefits last week.
 - The number of new claims had trended downward since March 2020, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. However, claims began spiking again around December of last year.
 - Last week, 96,362 people filed new claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not eligible for state jobless benefits.

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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