

March 24, 2022

Summary

Since COVID-19 was first identified in the United States, the government has confirmed a total of 79,861,484 COVID-19 cases and 975,277 reported related deaths in the country. On March 23, the White House COVID-19 Response Team addressed the prevalence of the new Omicron variant BA.2 and reiterated the severe consequences if Congress does not provide further pandemic response funding, including dwindling supplies of vaccines, testing and treatments.

Moderna announced on March 23 that it plans to soon seek authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years.

Cases and hospitalizations remain well below their winter Omicron peaks across the country, with every state showing a marked improvement in COVID-19 metrics in recent weeks.

On March 23, New York reported 5 deaths, 911 hospitalizations, and 150 COVID-19 patients in intensive care. Approximately 3,450, or 2.13%, of the 162,273 tests administered in New York on March 23 were positive for COVID-19.¹ New York has administered 37,362,271 doses of the vaccines to patients; 89.4% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 76.0% are fully vaccinated.²

On March 24, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced that Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray was on-site for delivery of 100,000 home COVID-19 tests in Syracuse, as food banks across the State receive test kits this week.

U.S. Government Updates

- [Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials](#), Mar. 23
 - On Wednesday, the White House COVID-19 Response Team discussed the prevalence of the new Omicron variant BA.2, which the Team estimates accounts for 35% of variants nationally. At this time there is no evidence that the BA.2

¹ Testing data come from a New York State Department of Health database containing reported results from all labs testing samples from New York State residents and pooled/batch tests reported by institutions of higher education. The data does not include at-home tests.

² For surveillance purposes, CDC data counts people as “fully vaccinated” if they have received two doses on different days (regardless of time interval) of the two-dose mRNA series or received one dose of a single-dose vaccine.

variant causes any more of a severe reaction or that the current immunity protections in place are any less effective against it, but it is more transmissible than BA.1, the variant that caused a spike in U.S. cases in December.

- The Team also reiterated the severe consequences if Congress does not provide further pandemic response funding, including dwindling supplies of vaccines, testing and treatments.
- National case numbers remain close to historic lows, with the current seven-day daily average of cases at about 28,600 per day. The seven-day average of hospital admissions is about 1,900 per day and the seven-day average daily deaths are about 900 per day, both an over 20% decrease from the previous week.

Vaccines and Therapeutics

- [*Moderna wants the FDA to authorize its COVID-19 vaccine for kids under 6*](#), Mar. 23
 - This week, Moderna announced that it would seek FDA authorization “in the coming weeks” for a two-dose 25 microgram COVID-19 vaccine for children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years old.
 - According to the company, clinical trials have revealed “a robust neutralizing antibody response” similar to adults’ doses, with “a favorable safety profile.” Those same trials showed an efficacy at preventing infection of 43.7% in children 6 months to 2 years old, and 37.5% in children from 2 to 5 years old.
 - Currently, children below 5 years old are not eligible to receive any COVID-19 vaccine; children aged 5 to 11 years old can receive Pfizer’s vaccine.

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

- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), Mar. 21
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 20 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. The CDC’s national ensemble forecast predicts that the number of newly reported COVID-19 deaths will likely decrease over the next four weeks. It forecasts between 900 and 2,900 new deaths in the week ending April 16, 2022, with a total of 980,000 to 986,000 deaths reported by this date.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 11 models projecting the number of new daily confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations. The forecast predicts that the number of daily hospitalizations will likely decrease over the next four weeks, with between 100 and 3,900 new hospitalizations reported on April 15, 2022. It predicts that hospital admissions over the next four weeks will decrease in 25 jurisdictions and have a stable or uncertain trend in other states and territories.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), Mar. 24
 - New York reported 5 deaths, 911 hospitalizations, and 150 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on March 23, 2022.
 - Approximately 3,450, or 2.13%, of the 162,273 tests administered in New York on March 23 were positive for COVID-19.

- As of March 23, New York has administered 37,362,271 doses of the vaccines to patients; 89.4% of New York residents have received at least one dose of the vaccines; and 76.0% are fully vaccinated.
- On March 24, Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) that Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray was on-site for delivery of 100,000 home COVID-19 tests in Syracuse, as food banks across the State receive test kits this week. This delivery is part of Governor Hochul’s previously announced plan to make 20 million home test kits available to organizations like schools and adult-care facilities throughout the spring.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), Mar. 24
 - Mayor Eric Adams [announced](#) on March 22 that the City’s school mask mandate will end for children under the age of 5 on April 4, so long as coronavirus cases remain low.
 - Mayor Adams also [said](#) on March 24 that the City’s private employer vaccine mandate won’t apply to professional athletes and performers based in the City, linking the decision to the need to make sure that the City remains “economically healthy” in addition to physically healthy.

International

- Like many other countries in Europe, [Poland](#) is lifting almost all of its COVID-19 restrictions, including mask mandates and quarantine requirements for travelers.
- [New Zealand](#) is easing some COVID-19 restrictions after a surge in cases due to the Omicron variant.
- [South Africa](#) will also begin to ease some COVID-19 restrictions, including no longer requiring outdoor masking and allowing music venues and sports stadiums to operate at 50% capacity.

Other Updates

- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), Mar. 24
 - Department of Labor (DOL) reports that 187,000 workers filed initial claims (seasonally adjusted) for unemployment benefits last week, falling by 28,000 from last week and marking the lowest number of claims filed in a single week since 1969. President Biden lauded the news in a [statement](#) issued today.
 - The number of new claims had trended downward since March 2020, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. After a spike in claims in December 2020, claims had fallen for about a year and, by the end of 2021, had even dipped below the pre-pandemic average of 220,000 claims per week.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [In Food and Drug Law Journal, Attorneys Analyze COVID-19 Impact on American Medical Product Supply Chain and Initiatives to Strengthen Supply Chain Security](#), Oct. 19
- [Doug Brayley Discusses Vaccine Mandates in the New York Times](#), Oct. 7

- [In Barron's and USA Today, Mark Barnes Examines Whether President Biden's New Vaccine Mandate Can Withstand Legal Challenges](#), Sept. 13

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