

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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News Highlights

U.S. should have locked down like Italy, says White House coronavirus adviser

As the pandemic death toll in the U.S. crossed 170,000, Dr Deborah Birx, a key coronavirus advisor in the Trump administration, [said in a press conference that the country should have followed Italy's footsteps in locking down harder and sooner](#). Dr Birx, however, suggested that the Italian model, where people weren't allowed out of their homes and had to have a certificate just to buy groceries, would have been difficult to implement in the U.S. because 'American don't react well to that kind of prohibition.'

Australia inks vaccine deal with AstraZeneca; says vaccine will be free for all citizens

Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia, signed a letter of intent with drugmaker AstraZeneca to produce and distribute doses of the vaccine currently being tested by the University of Oxford to its entire population. If the vaccine is successful, [the deal will secure early access to the vaccine for Australians and the government intends to provide the vaccine to all its citizens for free](#).

WHO says Covid-19 now being spread by younger age groups

While the coronavirus has traditionally been seen as especially deadly to older age groups and people with comorbidities, the WHO is now saying that the nature of the epidemic is changing with the spread of the virus being driven by people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Takeshi Kasai, [WHO's Western Pacific regional director, said that this fact increased the spillover risk to the vulnerable population](#), including older relatives and people with underlying health conditions.

Wuhan, ground zero of initial outbreak, sees thousands crowd water park

A music festival at a water park in Wuhan saw several thousand people packed close together, without masks and ignoring social distancing norms, as the fear of Covid-19 seemed to be receding from the area where it first started. [As the rest of the world continues to battle the pandemic](#), Wuhan, which resembled a ghost town during the pandemic, seems to have beaten the virus with no domestically transmitted cases in the region since mid-May.

Lockdown Exit

Coronavirus: Australia signs deal for potential vaccine and says it will be free for all its citizens

Australia's prime minister Scott Morrison says the country has signed a deal with drugmaker AstraZeneca to secure and manufacture a potential coronavirus vaccine, and that it will be made available for free to all citizens if successful. The University of Oxford jab is considered a leader in the global race to deliver an effective vaccine against Covid-19. With several countries moving to secure supplies that some fear may lead to a global shortage, Australia said it had signed a letter of intent with AstraZeneca to produce and distribute enough doses of the Oxford vaccine for its population. "Under this deal we have secured early access for every Australian," Mr Morrison said in

a statement. "If this vaccine proves successful we will manufacture and supply vaccines straight away under our own steam and make it free for 25 million Australians."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-coronavirus-vaccine-deal-free-citizens-astrazeneca-a9675861.html>

Chinese-built lab eases strain in Iraq's virus battle

Iraqi lab staff are busy each day shuffling piles of swab samples that await COVID-19 testing in a Chinese-built facility that has transformed the way they do their vital work. From boosting testing capacities to setting a high standard of testing protocols, the laboratory has played a critical role in helping the Iraqi Ministry of Health battle the disease since its inauguration in Baghdad's Medical City on March 25, lab director Mohammed Ghanim Mahdi said. "The lab was equipped and established by a donation from the Chinese government at a critical time," Mahdi said. "When this lab was established, Iraq had only one working lab fighting COVID-19." Mahdi said the lab has facilitated the Iraqi campaign against the coronavirus, especially in the first few weeks of the outbreak in Iraq.

<https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202008/11/WS5f31f22ea31083481725f7a0.html>

Wuhan coronavirus: From silent streets to packed pools

Thousands of people packed shoulder-to-shoulder with no face masks in sight, frolicking on rubber floats and cheering along to a music festival. It's not a very 2020 image, but it was the scene this weekend in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where Covid-19 first emerged late last year. Pictures of partygoers at the Wuhan Maya Beach Water Park - looking very much removed from the outbreak that the rest of the world continues to battle - have now gone, well, viral. It's worlds apart from the images that came out of Wuhan when it had the world's first Covid-19 lockdown in January - a ghost town devoid of residents and vehicles. The lockdown was lifted in April and there have been no domestically transmitted cases in Wuhan or Hubei province since mid-May.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-53816511>

Wuhan pool party sees thousands of people gather at water park as lockdown is eased

Thousands of people have been pictured crammed into a water park in Wuhan — the Chinese city where the coronavirus first emerged — as lockdown restrictions ease. The Wuhan Maya Beach Water Park was filled with partygoers over the weekend as it hosted an electronic music festival. Photos shared widely online show thousands of revellers in swimming costumes and goggles, floating in inflatable rings whilst enjoying the DJs and performers on stage.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/wuhan-pool-party-lockdown-eased-a4527346.html>

Exit Strategies

Venezuela's COVID-19 infections set to overwhelm testing capacity, says opposition adviser

Venezuela's rate of infection of COVID-19 is set to overwhelm its testing capacity, likely leading to an artificial flattening of the contagion curve, a lawmaker and medical adviser to Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido said on Monday. However, legislator Jose Manuel Olivares, from Guaido's pandemic advisory team, told an online media conference that authorities conduct just 600 to 800 tests a day and the results are delivered up to two weeks later. "We are reaching the point that the number of daily cases is going to be greater than the testing capacity ... and that is going to produce an artificial flattening" of the contagion curve, Olivares said. The apparent flattening "will generate a supposed calm" in the population and "the result will be the population's greater exposure" to the virus, he added.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-venezuela/venezuelas-covid-19-infections-set-to-overwhelm-testing-capacity-says-opposition-adviser-idUKKCN25E05U>

Leicester lockdown: Nail bars, salons and some outdoor venues to reopen from Wednesday

Leicester's local lockdown is to be partially relaxed from Wednesday, with nail bars, outdoor pools and beauty salons all set to reopen. The UK's former coronavirus hotspot has seen its infection levels decrease since a lockdown was imposed there. Current rules against gatherings in private homes and gardens will remain in place.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-08-18/leicester-lockdown-nail-bars-salons-and-some-outdoor-venues-to-reopen-from-wednesday>

Leicester lockdown 'may be eased today' as coronavirus infections halve

Leicester's lockdown could be eased on Tuesday after the city's coronavirus infection rate fell by half in the seven weeks since restrictions were imposed. The East Midlands city was the first in the UK to be put under a local lockdown on June 30 to combat a spike in Covid-19 cases, with an infection rate of 135 per 100,000. However, Health Secretary Matt Hancock could ease the restrictions today as cases have now halved to 67 in 100,000. The Government is set to hold a review of local lockdown measures later on Tuesday. The move comes as public health officials warn that Birmingham could soon be placed under local lockdown after seeing coronavirus cases double. When Leicester's restrictions were imposed in June, Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby claimed the decision was targeted at the Labour-run city and its Liberal Democrat-run neighbour Oadby and Wigson.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/leicester-lockdown-easing-coronavirus-cases-a4527226.html>

Coronavirus: government eases Leicester lockdown

Nail bars, outdoor pools, and beauty salons can reopen in Leicester from Wednesday, but restrictions on gatherings in private homes and gardens will remain in place, Matt Hancock has said. "My gratitude goes out to the people of Leicester who have all made sacrifices to keep the virus at bay and protect their local communities," the health and social care secretary said. "The rate of infection has now dropped to a safe enough level to allow further businesses including beauty salons, nail bars and some outdoor venues to reopen in the area. Current restrictions on gatherings must remain in place to further bring down the rate of infection."

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/18/coronavirus-government-eases-leicester-lockdown-again>

Coronavirus: Germany lockdown easing to be paused amid spike in cases, says Merkel

Angela Merkel has ruled out easing coronavirus restrictions any further after a spike in infections in Germany. The chancellor warned that the recent rise in cases had been caused by greater mobility and more personal contact. And she warned there were people returning from high-risk holiday areas and clusters of private celebrations at which people were gathering in groups. Urging people to stick to the rules, such as wearing masks, to ensure public life can be as open as possible, she said: "For us, the priorities are firstly to keep economic life going as much as possible and to protect jobs - that's why we have stimulus programmes and secondly to make (running) schools and nurseries possible."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/coronavirus-germany-merkel-lockdown-cases-pause-a9675996.html>

German economy set to recover as lockdown eases

Germany's Bundesbank expects the country's economy to rebound strongly in the summer quarter, saying the "broadly based recovery" will continue. But pre-crisis levels of activity wouldn't be reached any time soon.

<https://www.dw.com/en/german-economy-set-to-recover-as-lockdown-eases/av-54603826>

France to make masks compulsory in most workplaces

France imposed some of Europe's toughest lockdown restrictions earlier this year, greatly reducing the rate of coronavirus infections. But in the past few weeks the numbers of new COVID-19 cases ...

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-france-office/france-to-make-masks-compulsory-in-most-workplaces-from-sept-1-idUKKCN25E1JP>

The quarantine rules for Spain, France, Portugal, Greece and other key destinations

There is always an element of risk that comes with booking a holiday. What if the apartment looks nothing like the pictures, or your chosen sun trap chooses that one week of August to be struck by a freak thunderstorm? But the coronavirus pandemic has taken things to a whole new level. Even if you feel comfortable enough to book a trip abroad, you can't know that the country won't change its rules while you're there, or whether the UK might slap your chosen destination back on the quarantine list. That is exactly what happened to holidaymakers in Spain last month, and since then the likes of Belgium and the Bahamas have also had their air bridge statuses revoked.

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/quarantine-in-france-spain-greece-portugal-uk-travel-rules-coronavirus-restrictions-explained-576533>

Chile shuts down street vendors' mall after COVID-19 lockdown easing brings crowds

The Chilean authorities shut down a mall in downtown Santiago on Monday morning after hundreds of people crowded into the precinct to buy merchandise to sell, just hours after a lockdown for the area was eased. At least 300 people queued outside the Asia Pacific mall, which specializes in selling Chinese-made products, ahead of opening hours and rushed inside as private security guards attempted to dispense alcohol gel and take temperatures, in some cases resulting in physical clashes with shoppers. The mall is situated in the capital's Central Station, a low-income area popular with informal workers and migrants, where a strict lockdown over the past three months was eased on Monday morning.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-chile/chile-shuts-down-street-vendors-mall-after-covid-19-lockdown-easing-brings-crowds-idUSKCN25D2F9>

Philippines promises 'refreshed' coronavirus approach as capital exits strict lockdown

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday eased the strict coronavirus lockdown in and around the capital Manila as his government promised a "refreshed" approach to fighting COVID-19 that includes intensified testing. Duterte, in a televised address, said there was a need to reopen the economy with small and medium enterprises "barely surviving", while at the same time calling on the public to "follow the safeguards". The Philippines, which before the pandemic was one of Asia's fastest growing economies, fell into recession for the first time in 29 years with a record slump in the second quarter, due to the pandemic-induced lockdown. The Philippines, which has the most number of coronavirus cases in Southeast Asia, has so far recorded a total of 164,474 infections and the death toll from COVID-19 has risen to 2,681, according to health ministry data.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-philippines/philippines-promises-refreshed-coronavirus-approach-as-capital-exits-strict-lockdown-idUKKCN25D238>

Partisan Exits

White House coronavirus adviser Deborah Birx says she wishes US had locked down like Italy

Dr Deborah Birx, a key coronavirus adviser to the Trump administration, used a press conference in Arkansas yesterday to voice her regret about the US's early response to the pandemic, saying she wished the country had followed the example set by Italy and locked down both harder and quicker. Her comments came with the US's death rate stabilising at an average of roughly 1,000 per day, with the total death toll now above 170,000 - by far the world's highest. Speaking to the press, Dr Birx appeared candid as she gave her thoughts on the US's initial approach to the crisis. "I wish that when we went into lockdown, we looked like Italy," she told the assembled reporters. "But when Italy locked down, people weren't allowed out of their houses and they couldn't come out but once every two weeks to buy groceries for one hour, and they had to have a certificate that said they

were allowed. "Americans don't react well to that kind of prohibition."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/deborah-birx-us-coronavirus-lockdown-italy-death-rate-white-house-a9675811.html>

Dr. Birx says she wishes America's lockdown looked like Italy's nationwide, total quarantine

Dr. Deborah Birx said Monday she wished America had gone into a total lockdown the way Italy did in early March. She said Italians were only allowed out to buy groceries once every two weeks. Dr Birx noted that Americans wouldn't have done well with restrictions like that. She advocated for the wearing of face masks and social distancing in America, saying it could save lives

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8637173/Dr-Birx-says-wishes-Americas-lockdown-looked-like-Italys-nationwide-total-quarantine.html>

Trump calls out New Zealand's 'terrible' Covid surge, on day it records nine new cases

Donald Trump has called out New Zealand for its recent Covid-19 outbreak, saying the places the world hailed as a success story is now facing a "big surge" in cases. "The places they were using to hold up now they're having a big surge ... they were holding up names of countries and now they're saying 'whoops!'. "Do you see what's happening in New Zealand? They beat it, they beat it, it was like front-page news because they wanted to show me something," the US president said at a campaign rally in Mankato, Minnesota.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/trump-calls-out-new-zealands-big-surge-on-day-it-records-nine-covid-cases>

Philippine capital's virus lockdown being eased

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has decided to ease a mild lockdown in the capital and four outlying provinces to further reopen the country's battered economy despite having the most reported coronavirus infections in Southeast Asia. Most businesses, including shopping malls and dine-in restaurants, and Roman Catholic church services will be allowed to partially resume on Wednesday with restrictions, including masks and social distancing.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200818/p2g/00m/0in/105000c>

If New Zealand's Covid-19 outbreak is 'terrible' like Trump says, then how bad is the rest of the world?

Speaking in Minnesota on Monday, United States President Donald Trump was apparently feeling vindicated. Referring to some nations now seeing a new wave of coronavirus cases, Trump said "they were holding up names of countries and now they're saying 'whoops'." "Even New Zealand, did you see what's going on in New Zealand? 'They beat it, they beat it.' It was like front page, they beat it, because they wanted to show me something," he added. "The problem is, big surge in New Zealand ... it's terrible." New Zealand reported nine new cases on Monday. The US reported tens of thousands. Only one state, Vermont, has fewer total cases than New Zealand, and could yet overtake it given the comparative stage of the two countries' outbreaks.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/18/asia/trump-new-zealand-coronavirus-intl-hnk/index.html>

New Zealand anti-lockdown protest is mercilessly mocked online

A group of eight gathered in the middle of Auckland on Saturday to protest. Social media users commented and said they were within the ten person limits. Others wondered if the group were protesters, or whether they had gotten lost. Footage of the lackluster event on YouTube showed lonely protesters.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8637781/New-Zealand-anti-lockdown-protest-mercilessly-mocked-online.html>

Philippines reports 4,836 new coronavirus cases, seven deaths

The Philippines' health ministry on Tuesday confirmed 4,836 novel coronavirus infections, the seventh straight day of reporting more than 3,000 cases, and seven additional deaths. In a bulletin, the ministry said total confirmed cases had increased to 169,213, while deaths had reached 2,687. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday eased the strict coronavirus lockdown in the capital Manila and nearby provinces to reopen the economy and help struggling businesses, despite the country having the highest number of infections in Southeast Asia.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-philippines-cases/philippines-reports-4836-new-coronavirus-cases-seven-deaths-idUKKCN25E0X8>

New Zealand's Ardern hits back at Trump over coronavirus 'surge'

Ardern said there was no comparison between New Zealand's handful of new cases a day and the "tens of thousands" reported in the United States. "I think anyone who's following COVID and its transmission globally will quite easily see that New Zealand's nine cases in a day does not compare to the United States' tens of thousands, and in fact does not compare to most countries in the world," she told reporters. "Obviously it's patently wrong," she said of Trump's comments. "We are still one of the best-performing countries in the world when it comes to COVID ... our workers are focused on keeping it that way."

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand-cases/new-zealands-ardern-hits-back-at-trump-over-coronavirus-surge-idUKKCN25E04Y>

Continued Lockdown

Most parents are worried about their kids' educational growth in lockdown

Two-thirds of parents are worried their child will be below grade level in the fall — as a result of the classroom time lost due to COVID-19, according to new research. The survey of 2,000 parents with school-aged children revealed 65% are concerned about their child being behind due to the disrupted 2019-2020 school year. The average parent surveyed said their child lost about eight weeks of classroom learning at the end of the school year. And while the majority of parents said their child's district continued with distance learning for all or part of the rest of the school year — through video calls or educational worksheets — 13% said their child didn't have any form of continued distance education. Commissioned by The Genius of Play and conducted by OnePoll, the survey looked at what parents have done to keep their child learning this summer, and what their thoughts are for school starting back up in the fall.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/most-parents-worried-kids-educational-143300562.html>

Coronavirus: Fewest weekly deaths in England and Wales since lockdown began, latest figures show

England and Wales have recorded the lowest weekly number of deaths from coronavirus since lockdown was imposed towards the end of March, the latest figures show. There were 152 fatalities from Covid-19 in the week up to 7 August, according to the Office for National Statistics. It marks the lowest number of deaths from the disease since the week ending 20 March saw 103 fatalities — just before Boris Johnson brought in strict lockdown measures. The new figures also show that the UK's true death toll — taking in up-to-date statistics from Scotland and Northern Ireland — has now surpassed 57,000 people, based on death certificates mentioning Covid-19.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-deaths-england-wales-stats-lockdown-latest-today-a9675396.html>

Scientific Viewpoint

Wearing a mask helps stop Covid-19 spreading, study confirms

Wearing a face covering lowers the risk of spreading Covid-19 to others through speaking and coughing, new research suggests. Speaking and coughing without face protection exposes people nearby to droplets carrying the virus that could otherwise be stopped by wearing a mask, according

to the study. Researchers found someone standing two metres from a coughing person with no mask is exposed to 10,000 times more droplets than someone half a metre from someone coughing and wearing a covering. Lead researcher Dr Ignazio Maria Viola, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Engineering, said: 'We knew face masks of various materials are effective to a different extent in filtering small droplets.'

<https://metro.co.uk/2020/08/18/wearing-mask-helps-stop-covid-19-spreading-study-confirms-13142205/>

The Covid-19 Pandemic Is Now Being Driven By These Age Groups

The Covid-19 pandemic is now being driven by people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said. Speaking at a virtual briefing, WHO's Western Pacific regional director, Takeshi Kasai, said: "The epidemic is changing. People in their 20s, 30s and 40s are increasingly driving the spread. Many are unaware they are infected." As more cases rise among people in their 20s to 40s, "this increases the risk of spillovers to the more vulnerable," said Kasai. This includes elderly relatives and those with underlying health conditions.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/covid-19-pandemic-is-now-being-driven-by-these-age-groups-says-who_uk_5f3b9107c5b6e054c3fe8dfb

Perthshire Covid-19 cases will put scientific case for reopening schools under extra scrutiny

A headteachers group leader says Covid-19 cases in two Perthshire schools must be closely monitored to ensure the scientific justification for reopening schools was correct. Greg Dempster, general secretary of the Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland, said any transmission within schools should lead to reconsideration of the basis for reopening full-time. Two pupils, one at Oakbank Primary School, in Perth, and another at Newhill Primary School, Blairgowrie, have tested positive for coronavirus and are isolating at home with their families. Perth and Kinross Council and NHS Tayside have said there is currently no evidence of Covid-19 transmission within either of the Perthshire schools, which remain open.

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/schools/1517776/perthshire-schools-covid19-science/>

COVID-19 linked to increase in type 1 diabetes in children

A new study suggests there could be a link between COVID-19 and the development of type 1 diabetes in children. Thirty children in hospitals across north-west London presented with new-onset type 1 diabetes during the peak of the pandemic, approximately double the number of cases typically seen in this period in previous years, with clusters of cases in two of these hospitals. Twenty-one children were tested for COVID-19 or had antibody tests to see whether they had previously been exposed to the virus. A total of five children with newly diagnosed diabetes had evidence of past or current coronavirus infection.

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/201473/covid-19-linked-increase-type-diabetes-children>

COVID-19 - England's lockdown vs. Sweden's herd immunity

With the declaration that COVID-19 was a pandemic disease, countries all over the world began to appraise possible approaches to mitigate its severity. One is imposing a national lockdown, while another is allowing herd immunity to build. A recent study published on the preprint server medRxiv* in August 2020 shows that lockdown is an effective way to reduce the extent and speed of infections in a country.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200817/COVID-19-Englands-lockdown-vs-Swedens-herd-immunity.aspx>

Female-led countries handled coronavirus better, study suggests

Countries led by women had "systematically and significantly better" Covid-19 outcomes, research appears to show, locking down earlier and suffering half as many deaths on average as those led by men. The relative early success of leaders such as Germany's Angela Merkel, New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, Denmark's Mette Frederiksen, Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen and Finland's Sanna Marin has so far

attracted many headlines but little academic attention. The analysis of 194 countries, published by the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the World Economic Forum, suggests the difference is real and “may be explained by the proactive and coordinated policy responses” adopted by female leaders.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/female-led-countries-handled-coronavirus-better-study-jacinda-ardern-angela-merkel>

Coronavirus: How many Covid-19 deaths is India missing?

India has registered more than 50,000 Covid-19 deaths, overtaking the UK to become the fourth-worst-affected country for fatalities. But the number of deaths per million people stands at 34 - far lower than what has been reported in Europe or North America. The case fatality rate or CFR, which measures deaths among Covid-19 patients, is just around 2%. Even in badly-hit state like Maharashtra the number of deaths is doubling only in about 40 days. "The death rates have kept low all along, even as cases rose," K Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India think tank, told me. Many epidemiologists attribute this relatively low fatality rate to a young population - the elderly are typically more vulnerable. It is not clear whether other factors, such as immunity deriving from previous infections from other coronaviruses, are also responsible. Also, they point to a pattern of low mortality in South Asian countries that share a similar demographic of a younger population: reported Covid-19 deaths per million are 22 in Bangladesh and 28 in Pakistan.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-53773070>

Resurgence of covid-19 in Japan

Japan has seen a resurgence of covid-19, and the effective reproduction number has been above 1 for two months. The daily confirmed cases reached nearly 2000 in early August.¹ Since the start of the pandemic the country has focused on controlling clusters of more than five covid-19 cases and preventing environmental transmission in the “3Cs”: closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact settings.² Initially, early detection of clusters and investigation of linkages between clusters helped reduce the spread of infection. But it couldn’t prevent the surge in incidence that began around mid-March. The declaration of a state of emergency in April helped control the pandemic’s trajectory,³ although the measures lacked legal authority and depended on citizens’ self-restraint. The state of emergency was lifted in late May. Failings in the government’s early handling of the crisis have exacerbated the pandemic’s overall effect and resulted in 8.22 covid-19 deaths per million people: the third highest rate in the Western Pacific region after Philippines and Australia.¹

<https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3221>

COVID-19 danger may rise in dry weather, 'provocative' study shows

During Sydney's COVID-19 surge in March and April, something curious happened. On days when the air was dry, more people seemed to catch the virus. When the city's air was more humid, fewer people caught it. That's no coincidence, the authors of a new study say. Dry air increases the coronavirus' ability to spread, they argue.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/covid-19-danger-may-rise-in-dry-weather-provocative-study-shows-20200817-p55mjd.html>

Australia could be 'split in two' if Victoria and New South Wales follow the suppression strategy

Australia could be a country "split in two" if both Victoria and New South Wales commit to suppressing its coronavirus infections during the pandemic, while the rest of the nation thrives on elimination. Tony Blakely, a Professorial Fellow in Epidemiology at the University of Melbourne, told 9news.com.au the country could be divided, considering state leaders have articulated borders would remain closed to both New South Wales and Victoria until community transmission is wiped out completely. The Queensland government has been particularly vocal about its keeping borders

tightly closed to the two states until community transmission is eliminated.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-could-be-split-in-two-victoria-new-south-wales-follow-suppression-strategy/4d35ea2d-e816-4fa1-a8b9-b666ded2a0ff>

New hyper-infectious coronavirus strain may be 'a good thing', says disease expert

A strain of the novel coronavirus spreading across large parts of the globe may be ten times more infectious but less deadly, a top disease expert has said. President-elect of the International Society of Infectious Diseases, Paul Tambyah, has said evidence suggests the proliferation of the D614G mutation in some parts of the world has coincided with a drop in death rates. He said this could mean the new strain, increasingly found in Europe, North America and parts of Asia, is less lethal.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/new-coronavirus-strain-disease-expert-a4527631.html>

Sweden's Covid-19 strategist under fire over herd immunity emails

Sweden's light-touch approach to Covid-19 has come under renewed criticism after emails show the country's chief epidemiologist appearing to ask whether a higher death rate among older people might be acceptable if it led to faster herd immunity. Speculation about the views of Sweden's leading public health officials was further fanned after it also emerged that Anders Tegnell, the architect of the country's no-lockdown strategy, had deleted some of his emails. Tegnell has repeatedly insisted the government's objective was not to achieve rapid herd immunity but rather to slow the spread of the coronavirus enough for health services to be able to cope. However, email exchanges obtained by Swedish journalists under freedom of information laws show Tegnell discussing herd immunity as an objective in mid-March, days after the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/17/swedens-covid-19-strategist-under-fire-over-herd-immunity-emails>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Coronavirus: 72 workers test positive for COVID-19 at dessert factory in Nottinghamshire

Seventy-two people have tested positive for coronavirus at a dessert factory in Nottinghamshire. The outbreak was reported at Bakkavor in Newark, which describes itself as "the leading provider of fresh prepared food in the UK". The positive cases came after 701 workers were tested for the virus. All 1,600 employees will now receive coronavirus tests at a facility set up on site by the NHS. Some 33 of those who have tested positive have since returned to work "fully fit" following a period of isolation.

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-72-workers-test-positive-for-covid-19-at-dessert-factory-in-nottinghamshire-12051331>

Coronavirus Northern Ireland: Robin Swann says fresh Covid-19 lockdown cannot be ruled out

Robin Swann has warned a return to lockdown cannot be ruled out in Northern Ireland. The health minister said stepped-up testing and contact tracing was identifying more Covid-19 cases.

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/coronavirus-northern-ireland-robin-swann-18786365>

Covid-19 outbreak in Telford leads to local lockdown warning

Telford & Wrekin Council said at least 24 cases had been reported in the seven days up to Sunday. Twelve people tested positive last Wednesday alone, the latest Government figures show, however this remains lower than the 20 positive tests recorded on one day during the peak of the crisis. When the seven days to Friday are looked at, 26 cases were recorded in the borough giving a rate of infection nearly seven times higher than the previous week. Figures show the rate for the seven days to August 14 followed by the equivalent figure for the previous seven days to August 7. The number of brackets is the number of new cases confirmed in each area. Data for the most recent three days (August 15-17) has been excluded as it is incomplete and likely to be revised.

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/coronavirus-covid19/2020/08/18/increase-in-cases-leads-to-local-lockdown-warning/>

Coronavirus: Pupils test positive in Perthshire and Paisley

Four more pupils at separate schools have tested positive for Covid-19. Two of the cases are in Perth and Kinross, one in Renfrewshire and one in North Lanarkshire. One pupil from Newhill Primary in Blairgowrie and another from Oakbank Primary in Perth are now self-isolating at home. The third attends Todholm Primary in Paisley. A fourth pupil, who attends St Ambrose High School in Coatbridge, has also tested positive. Three other pupils from St Ambrose High had already tested positive, along with one from St Andrew's High in Coatbridge and one from Caldervale High in Airdrie. There are a further three linked cases, who are not staff or pupils, and 14 cases in north-east Glasgow. On Monday, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lanarkshire confirmed that the cases in their areas were linked to house parties.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-53817688>

Worker at New Zealand quarantine hotel tests positive for Covid-19

A new case of Covid-19 separate from the main cluster has been confirmed in New Zealand, with the infected person identified as a maintenance worker in a quarantine hotel in Auckland. On Tuesday, 13 new cases were confirmed, with 12 relating to the Auckland cluster, which now numbers 69 in total. One new case not related to the Auckland cluster has been discovered, with a hotel worker at the Rydges hotel testing positive on 16 August. The hotel worker attended two church services before he was diagnosed and his contacts are being traced, authorities said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/worker-at-new-zealand-quarantine-hotel-tests-positive-for-covid-19>

Coronavirus UK updates as Birmingham faces local lockdown and 72 cases confirmed at factory

A further 1,089 people have tested positive for coronavirus in the past 24 hours. The Department of Health confirmed the figures on Tuesday evening, when it also said there had been a further 12 deaths in care homes, hospitals and the wider community. It brings the number of people in the UK who have died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19 to 41,381. Five deaths were recorded in English hospitals, bringing the hospital death toll in the country to 29,465. Locally, no deaths were confirmed on Tuesday by NHS England - the body which updates the figures each day. Elsewhere, no deaths occurred in the rest of Yorkshire, as well as the Midlands, North East or South West regions.

<https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/coronavirus-uk-birmingham-local-lockdown-4434169>

Germany's confirmed coronavirus cases rise by 1,390 to 225,404: RKI

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Germany increased by 1,390 to 225,404, data from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases showed on Tuesday. The reported death toll rose by four to 9,236, the tally showed.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-cases/germanys-confirmed-coronavirus-cases-rise-by-1390-to-225404-rki-idUSKCN25E087>

Spain's daily virus cases at 1,833, below last week's record highs

Daily infection statistics tend to dip on Mondays due to fewer diagnoses taking place on Sunday. Cumulative cases, which include results from antibody tests on patients who may have already recovered, rose to 359,082, with 32,389 detected in the past seven days, the ministry said. Since lifting its strict lockdown at the end of June, Spain has struggled to contain a spiralling infection rate, despite mandatory mask-wearing enforced across the country and other restrictions.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-spain/spains-daily-virus-cases-at-1833-below-last-weeks-record-highs-idUKKCN25D1Y7>

Beaten Back, the Coronavirus Regains Strength in France

As the two women sat in deck chairs enjoying the last rays of sunshine near the Canal de l'Ourcq in Paris on Sunday evening, nearby loudspeakers jolted them with a reminder that they were in a new mask-mandatory zone. "You've got your mask?" Safiya Zenag, unmasked, asked her friend, who replied: "No, I didn't bring it. I hate wearing it." Faced with a recent resurgence of coronavirus cases, officials have made mask wearing mandatory in widening areas of Paris and other cities across the country, pleading with the French not to let down their guard and jeopardize the hard-won gains made against the virus during a two-month lockdown this spring.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/17/world/europe/france-coronavirus.html>

South Korea traces church members, confines troops to base as virus spreads

South Korea tightened social distancing rules on Tuesday as it reported a three-digit increase in novel coronavirus cases for a fifth day and authorities scrambled to trace hundreds of members of a church congregation. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) reported 246 new cases as of midnight on Monday, bringing its total infections to 15,761, with 306 deaths. South Korea has been one of the world's coronavirus mitigation success stories but it has suffered repeated spikes in cases. Two days after re-imposing stricter social distancing in Seoul, the government expanded the curbs to include the port city of Incheon, while ordering the closure of nightclubs, karaoke bars, buffets and cyber cafes.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-southkorea/south-korea-traces-church-members-confines-troops-to-base-as-virus-spreads-idUKKCN25E0WA>

Church Flareups in South Korea Raise Fears of Old Virus Threat

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<https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/church-flareups-in-south-korea-raise-fears-of-old-virus-threat-1.1480949>

Coronavirus: Victoria records fewest new infections in a month

The Australian state of Victoria has recorded its lowest rise in Covid-19 infections for a month, raising hopes it is gaining control of an outbreak. The state capital, Melbourne, has been in lockdown for over a month, but even stricter measures including a night-time curfew were imposed on 3 August. The state still has 7,274 active cases and remains Australia's worst concern. But despite reporting its deadliest day on Monday, Victoria has seen new infections decline in recent days. Tuesday's increase of 222 was the lowest daily total since 18 July. There were 17 more deaths, taking Australia's tally to 438 since the pandemic began. "I would hope that we're in the hundreds [of new cases] - not in the 200s - next week," said Victoria's Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-53806500>

New Lockdown

Victoria coronavirus: Will stage 4 restrictions be eased after 6 weeks?

Now that Melbourne's stage 4 lockdown has been in place for two weeks, experts have modelled where the state will be at the end of six weeks and when restrictions can be lifted. Economist and modeller Professor Quentin Grafton of Australian National University told news.com.au that stage 4 was working but it was unlikely coronavirus case numbers would get down to zero by September 13. "If the goal is no community transmission, our modelling is telling us that six weeks is not enough,"

Prof Grafton said. Even with these restrictions, Prof Grafton expects there will be a “long tail” of cases. “The number of cases will still be positive for a considerable number of weeks.”

<https://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/modelling-reveals-whether-victoria-will-be-able-to-ease-stage-4-restrictions-after-six-weeks/news-story/a439993368730b4ea5a75f7eacad7ad2>

Lockdown Becomes an Australian Nightmare

Australia’s coronavirus response was, until recently, the envy of the world. Like its economy, which had gone nearly 30 years without a recession, Australia seemed to have cracked the Covid code. Community transmission had been all but eliminated, deaths kept low—a little over 100—and life in the population centers of Sydney and Melbourne was getting back to normal. At the same time, economists and business leaders had their fingers crossed for a V-shaped recovery, with hopes that the federal government would wind up its expensive stimulus and support programs before the end of the year. No longer. Australia is discovering what much of the world has already learned: Like holding a beach ball underwater, you can keep your infection rate down only for so long before it pops up again. And there’s only so much you can do to stop a virus from spreading without resort to petty totalitarianism.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/lockdown-becomes-an-australian-nightmare-11597705402>