COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

1st Oct 2020

News Highlights

Cases rise rapidly among U.S. children: Disney cuts thousands of jobs

Children of all ages now make up 10% of all U.S. Covid-19 cases, a significant rise from 2% in April, and authorities are linking the rise in cases to schools reopening after a brutal summer of coronavirus lockdowns and deaths. Meanwhile, Disney announced the termination of 28,000 jobs, with lockdowns forcing the closure of the resort in California, and the park in Florida only operating at limited capacity

Netanyahu says new lockdown will last a while, as Israel battles fresh cases

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the second national lockdown imposed in Israel recently, would likely remain in place for at least a month, to try and contain the thousands of cases of coronavirus being reported every day. Under the new restrictions, Israelis have to remain within 1,000 metres of their homes and can only step out for authorised work or to buy essential supplies or services

'Super spreaders' and children key to virus proliferation, study says

A study published in the journal Science indicates that children may be more effective spreaders of Covid-19 than previously believed. The study of more than half-million people in India is the largest contact tracing study to date and seems to suggest that a disproportionate number of coronavirus cases are transmitted by a few super-spreading individuals.

'Circuit-breaker' lockdowns possible in liverpool as parts of Wales face restrictions again

Parts of the UK are back to facing localised restrictions to fight a growing number of Covid-19 cases last month. The Mayor of Liverpool announced the city may face restrictions in the coming weeks on alcohol sales as well as the temporary shutting of restaurants and pubs. In Wales, over 500,000 people are set to be affected, as the health minister announced new restriction in several cities, with people prohibited from entering or leaving their areas without sufficient cause and a ban on mixing with people from other households.

Lockdown Exit

How we need to change global supply chains after COVID-19

COVID-19 blindsided us. Doctors, nurses and other frontline medical workers were forced to wear garbage bags for lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). Grocery store shelves were left barren around the world while surplus elsewhere led to 3.7 million gallons of milk and 750,000 eggs being dumped and destroyed per day, according to the Dairy Farmers of America. Seemingly overnight, the pandemic plunged nearly every industry into crisis. Goods production stalled. Supply chains were crippled. The virus was fast-spreading and unforeseen; there was only so much even the best logistics experts in the world could do. As a global society, we must learn from this moment. It's urgent that we do, as many top health experts predict that this virus could likely reemerge in varying waves across different geographies for the foreseeable future. As HP's Chief Commercial Officer, I recognize that the perfect, fully pandemic-proof supply chain will never exist. Every

business, including those in the tech industry, have had to contend with the disruption wrought by this pandemic, but I do believe that we can make our current models better.
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/covid-19-crisis-change-global-supply-chains/

COVID-19: How to make indoor spaces safer
Ventilation is the introduction of fresh air into an indoor space while the stale air is pushed outside. Whether at home or in public buildings, such as schools and offices, ventilation can be improved by simply opening windows and doors whenever possible. Luca Fontana, a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) specialist consultant at the WHO, told Al Jazeera ventilation is “one part of the big package of infection prevention and control measures” along with physical distancing, hand hygiene and face masks.
https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/9/30/how-to-make-indoor-spaces-safer-from-covid-19-spread

COVID-19 cases rising among US children as schools reopen after lockdown
After preying heavily on the elderly in the spring, the coronavirus is increasingly infecting American children and teens in a trend authorities say appears fueled by school reopenings and the resumption of sports, playdates and other activities. Children of all ages now make up 10% of all US cases, up from 2% in April, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported Tuesday. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday that the incidence of COVID-19 in school-age children began rising in early September as many youngsters returned to their classrooms.
https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2020/sep/30/covid-19-cases-rising-among-us-children-as-schools-reopen-after-lockdown-2203990.html

Post lockdown Mediterranean cruise vessel docks in Greece with coronavirus cases
The first cruise ship to sail to Greece since the coronavirus lockdown docked at the port of Piraeus early on Tuesday after a dozen crew members were reported positive for the virus, state news agency ANA said. The Maltese-flagged Mein Schiff 6, operated by German travel giant TUI, is carrying 922 passengers and 666 crew . Nobody will be allowed to disembark as testers from Greece's public health agency embarked for inspection. The Greek coastguard said on Monday that 12 crew members had tested positive, although TUI Cruises said that they were asymptomatic.
https://en.mercopress.com/2020/09/30/post-lockdown-mediterranean-cruise-vessel-docks-in-greece-with-coronavirus-cases

Exit Strategies

Police urged to use Covid-19 app on personal phones amid guideline confusion
Police officers have been encouraged to use the coronavirus contact tracing app on their personal smartphones while working if they wish to, amid confusion about guidelines concerning the technology. The National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) had initially asked officers to hold off downloading the app on both personal and work devices pending a technical assessment. A spokesman for the body denied any suggestion of “security issues” or a policy reversal, saying such checks are standard procedure for any new software used on work-issued smartphones.
https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/police-covid19-app-use-personal-phones-a4559846.html

As US states sound alarm on Covid-19 trends, some communities loosen restrictions
Wisconsin is reporting its highest number of Covid-19 hospitalizations on record, just days after the White House coronavirus task force warned of a "rapid worsening" of the pandemic in the state last week. With 646 Covid-19-related hospitalizations Wednesday, Wisconsin reported just 18% of hospital beds are available, according to the state's Covid-19 website. Almost a third -- 32% -- of those hospitalized are in the intensive care unit. The White House task force called on the state to increase social distancing "to the maximal degree possible," less than a week before President Donald Trump's scheduled campaign rallies in hot-spot metro areas La Crosse and Green Bay.

https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/30/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html

Japan eases restriction as it allows travel to few countries, including Australia

Japan has planned to lift restrictions on overseas travel in October. According to reports by a local news organisation Nikkei Asian Review, the government will be giving priority to 10 countries which include Australia, New Zealand and Vietnam. All COVID-19 related restrictions on domestic travel were lifted in Japan in the month of June, in a bid to revive the hard-hit economy.

https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/japan-eases-restriction-as-it-allows-travel-to-few-countries.html

SBI Foundation launches the 'India Health Alliance' to fight against Covid-19 pandemic

The prime focus of 'India Health Alliance' would be on combating the COVID-19 healthcare pandemic in India. SBI Foundation will be launching two new initiatives in the areas of Community Screening & Testing and Tele-Care

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/sbi-foundation-launches-the-india-health-alliance-to-fight-against-covid-19-pandemic-11601453440309.html

Partisan Exits

UK PM Johnson scolded for 'contempt' of parliament over COVID-19 rules

Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged the British people on Wednesday to obey rules imposed to tackle a rapidly accelerating second wave of the coronavirus outbreak, cautioning that otherwise a tougher lockdown could follow. New cases of COVID-19 are rising by more than 7,000 per day in the United Kingdom though Johnson is facing growing opposition to lockdown measures which have wrought some of the worst economic damage in at least a century. After a reprimand from the speaker of the House of Commons, Johnson defused a rebellion in parliament over the way such onerous rules were imposed by promising angry lawmakers more say over any new national measures.

https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain/pm-johnson-scolded-for-contempt-of-parliament-over-covid-19-rules-idUKKBN26L113

Elon Musk doubles down on Covid-19 skepticism and says he won't take future vaccine

Elon Musk is once again publicly downplaying the risks of Covid-19. In a wide-ranging interview with the journalist Kara Swisher, the Tesla and SpaceX CEO said he would not take a Covid-19 vaccine when one becomes available, and declined to say whether he feels a duty to pay employees who want to stay home to avoid contracting the virus. "I'm not at risk for Covid, nor are my kids," said Musk during Monday's episode of the New York Times podcast "Sway." Musk has long cultivated a public persona of an eccentric entrepreneur who knows better than the experts and isn't afraid to offer controversial opinions. On the podcast, Musk argued that instead of sweeping stay-at-home orders to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, "anyone who is at risk should be quarantined until the storm passes." When Swisher confronted Musk with the possibility that people would still die in the process, he replied bluntly: "Everybody dies."

https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/29/business/elon-musk-nyt-podcast-covid-vaccine/index.html

Why People Have Had Enough of Lockdowns

The history of epidemics is rife with examples of society rebelling against tough public-health edicts, such as the breach of plague quarantine in 18th-century Marseille or protests against face masks during the 1918 influenza pandemic. The grim consequence is a fresh wave of deadly infections. Covid-19's million deaths may pale in comparison to the estimated 50 million lives lost in 1918, but the cycle risks unfolding again. France, the U.K. and Spain face a triple threat: A jump in cases, a population exhausted by lockdown-induced recession, and rising resistance to tougher measures.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-people-have-had-enough-of-lockdowns/2020/09/30/8f721924-02ef-11eb-b92e-029676f9ebec_story.html

Covid anxiety and intolerance rise together in Australia but the only way out is together

"It must be the Indians," I hear and every fibre of me bristles with indignation. "It's not," I retort to no one in particular. I am watching a live feed from a Covid hotspot. "Most of us are doing the right thing," the reporter's subject says, standing outside a modest house in a modest suburb. Behind his mask, his eyes beseech, "Please believe me." But the choice of subject is problematic, a young Aghan Australian boy thrust into the limelight to offer both plea and reassurance to a spooked public. I see kids like him in my clinic: when your parents don't speak English, you skip school to help them. He may be young but he's well-versed in the dangers of victimisation. He has no choice but to defend his whole community. Just then, an acquaintance calls me. "If it wasn't for those Africans, we'd be fine," she grumbles. This time, I gently challenge her assertion and she concedes that what she's really annoyed about is her husband's drinking.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/30/covid-anxiety-and-intolerance-rise-together-in-australia-but-the-only-way-out-is-together

Continued Lockdown

Panama's trans community failed by gendered lockdown measures – report

A London School of Economics study has found the response "failed to recognise diverse gender identities and may reproduce inequalities and injustice for non-binary individuals with unknown long-term effects". The controversial measures were meant to halve the numbers of people on the streets at any one time but the rules left trans people vulnerable to victimisation.

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/sep/30/panamas-trans-community-failed-by-gendered-lockdown-measures-report

Netanyahu: Coronavirus lockdown to last at least a month

Israel's current coronavirus lockdown will last at least a month, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu clarified Tuesday during a Facebook briefing. During that time, he said, the government will prepare a proper exit strategy. "I want to be honest - it will not be less than a month. It may take much longer," the prime minister said. He then verbally presented a number of his goals for the next few weeks, similar to those that he had released in a statement after Yom Kippur: preparing the health system, ensuring the public wears masks, implementing rapid tests and, of course, reducing the country's rate of infection.

https://www.jpost.com/health-science/coronavirus-lockdown-to-last-more-than-10-days-643808

Israel's second lockdown could last a while, Netanyahu says.

Israel's second national lockdown is likely to last at least a month and perhaps much longer, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday, as the country's soaring infection rate of around 8,000 confirmed new cases a day remained among the highest in the world. "In my opinion, it won't be less than a month, and it could take much more time," Mr. Netanyahu said during a Facebook Live video session. The lockdown came into effect this month, on the eve of the Jewish New Year holiday, and was tightened on Friday after Mr. Netanyahu warned that without immediate measures, Israel would "reach the edge of the abyss." Israelis must remain within 1,000 meters of their homes unless they are going to authorized places of work or seeking essential supplies or services, and outdoor gatherings are limited to 20 people.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/30/world/israels-second-lockdown-could-last-a-while-netanyahu-says.html

Tamil Nadu Govt Extends Lockdown Till October 31, Withdraws Decision to Reopen Schools

The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday extended the ongoing lockdown till October 31 with more relaxations and put on hold its earlier order permitting students from class X to XII to voluntarily seek their teachers' guidance from October 1 by going to schools. The government's decision to defer plans on allowing students to go to schools on voluntary basis to clear doubts from their

teachers followed opposition from parents who had declined to send their wards to the educational institutions.
https://www.news18.com/news/india/coronavirus-live-updates-uttar-pradesh-covid19-vaccine-symptoms-delhi-india-cases-world-deaths-oxford-prevention-2917617.html

Coronavirus lockdown costs South Africa millions of jobs
South Africa's economy lost 2.2 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020 during the country's coronavirus lockdown, the authorities say. It is the biggest fall in job numbers since the employment survey began in 2008.
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54343598

Coronavirus US: Disney cuts 28,000 jobs as lockdown hits theme parks
The announcement was made in a letter to employees Tuesday from Josh D'Amaro, Disney's head of parks, who described the move as a 'difficult' decision The layoffs have been made to workers within Disney's parks, experiences and products segment - accounting for 25 percent of Disney's US resort workforce Around 67 seven percent of the 28,000 layoffs were part-time workers, but they ranged from salaried employees to nonunion hourly workers - While the company has been able to operate its Florida park at limited capacity, its resort in California has remained shuttered since the spring -
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8787099/Disney-layoff-28-000-employees-coronavirus-continues-decimate-theme-parks.html

Doctors plead with Victorian Premier to ease lockdown over 'disturbing' mental health concerns
A group of doctors has written to Victoria's Premier, describing "disturbing" mental health concerns among school children and pleading to have the state's lockdown eased. The letter, signed by 10 Victorian GPs, details a number of serious mental health concerns arising as a result of the state's harsh stage four lockdown rules. "Due to the continuing harsh lockdown, the children, young adults and new mothers I mainly treat are in anguish, despair and have no hope," Dr Stacey Harris said in the letter.
https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-victorian-doctors-plea-to-daniel-andrews-lift-lockdown-mental-health-crisis/079858b8-51ef-4331-b7f8-a12934c31488

The only local lockdown that worked? How Luton cut the number of Covid cases and escaped further restrictions
In July, when lockdown measures were being gradually eased in the rest of the country, Luton was one of a handful of areas to have the relaxation stalled. With cases rising at a concerning rate, the town, along with Blackburn with Darwen, was listed as an “area of intervention” and the planned reopening of leisure facilities was temporarily cancelled. By the end of the month, cases in Luton were controlled enough for the area to be brought back in line with the rest of the country. Blackburn, on the other hand, was put into local lockdown – where it has remained.
https://inews.co.uk/news/analysis/luton-local-lockdown-worked-covid-cases-further-restrictions-explained-668955

Scientific Viewpoint

Largest COVID-19 study highlights role of super-spreaders
In the bleak ranking of worst COVID-19 outbreaks, the United States, with 7.2 million infections, is likely to be eclipsed only by India, which has 1 million fewer cases but is catching up fast. Yet parts of India have led the world in one aspect of the pandemic response: contact tracing — the labor-intensive, time-sensitive, painstaking work of identifying people who were exposed to a known infected person. Extensive contact tracing in two southern Indian states offers the strongest evidence yet that a few super-spreading individuals are responsible for a disproportionate share of new coronavirus infections, according to a study published Wednesday in the journal Science. It also

suggests that children are more efficient transmitters of the virus than widely believed.
https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-09-30/largest-covid-19-transmission-study-highlights-super-spreaders

Ten million people have downloaded the NHS Covid-19 app

People in England and Wales have responded hugely to calls for them to download the NHS Covid-19 app, with over 10 million people downloading it so far, 6 million of whom did so on its first day - September 24, 2020. The app plays a significant part in the NHS Test and Trace service in England and the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect programme, identifying contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus. By midday on September 27, there had been over 10 million downloads across compatible Google and Apple devices in England and Wales.
https://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/articles/ten-million-downloads-nhs-covid-19-app

Clinical study set to trial inhaled Covid-19 vaccines

A new clinical study, funded by UKRI and NIHR, has been launched to explore the effects of administering Covid-19 vaccines as inhaled airborne droplets rather than by injection into muscle – similar to how inhaled asthma medications are delivered. Researchers are set to begin small trials to assess inhalation of two of the UK's coronavirus vaccines in development, by Imperial College London and Oxford University. These trials will assess the safety and effectiveness of delivering the vaccines directly to the respiratory tract of human volunteers, inhaled through the mouth. It is hoped that by directly targeting the cells lining the airways, which are typical points of infection for respiratory viruses, it may be able to induce a more effective immune response. This could potentially lead to accelerating the development of effective vaccines against Covid-19 by exploring additional methods and targets.
https://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/articles/clinical-study-inhaled-covid-19-vaccines

Association of prior psychiatric diagnosis with mortality among hospitalized patients with COVID-19

What The Study Did: Researchers evaluated the association between having any prior psychiatric diagnosis and COVID-19- related mortality of hospitalized patients with COVID-19. Authors: Luming Li, M.D., of the Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, is the corresponding author.
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-09/jn-aop092820.php

Largest COVID-19 contact tracing study to date finds children key to spread, evidence of superspreaders

A study of more than a half-million people in India who were exposed to the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 suggests that the virus' continued spread is driven by only a small percentage of those who become infected.
https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/09/30/largest-covid-19-contact-tracing-study-date-finds-children-key-spread-evidence

Operation Warp Speed Has Over $6 Billion In Secret Covid-19 Vaccine Contracts Evading Scrutiny

Billions of dollars' worth of coronavirus vaccine contracts have avoided usual mechanisms of transparency and regulatory oversight with Operation Warp Speed - the Trump administration's project to develop a Covid-19 vaccine - which is funneling money through a nongovernmental intermediary, a move that is likely to reignite worries over the project's opaque nature.
https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2020/09/30/operation-warp-speed-has-over-6-billion-in-secret-covid-19-vaccine-contracts-evading-scrutiny/

Study finds hydroxychloroquine does not prevent people catching Covid-19

US scientists found medics taking the drug no less likely to catch coronavirus Hospital staff had equal risk whether taking hydroxychloroquine or a fake pill There was also no difference in illness severity in group of eight who got sick US President Donald Trump said in May he was taking the drug to protect himself Australian researchers say they are 'undeterred' and will keep studying hydroxychloroquine as a hopeful preventive
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8788865/Study-finds-hydroxychloroquine-does-not-prevent-people-catching-Covid-19.html

Confusion 'is a major symptom of Covid-19 in frail older people'
Frail people more likely to become breathless, delirious and tired with Covid-19 Vital to spot most common symptoms because they are the most at-risk group Virus may be able to cross blood-brain barrier and infect the organ, they said
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8789105/Confusion-major-symptom-Covid-19-frail-older-people.html

Coronavirus: Plasma treatments for COVID-19 quadruple – but the NHS still needs more donations
The number of people receiving plasma as a treatment for COVID-19 has quadrupled in the last month. Around 220 hospitalised patients were treated in September as part of clinical trials that began in May. People who have had coronavirus produce antibodies that are present in their plasma - if transfused to a COVID-19 patient who is struggling to develop their own immune response, there is evidence that it could help them recover.
https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-plasma-treatments-for-covid-19-quadruple-but-the-nhs-still-needs-more-donations-12085566

Defining the scourge of COVID-19 hyperinflammatory syndrome
It is abundantly clear that a subset of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 develop hyperinflammatory complications of severe COVID-19 infection or cytokine storm syndrome,1, 2 which is frequently fatal. What is less clear is how to define the cytokine storm syndrome in the context of severe COVID-19 infection. In The Lancet Rheumatology, Webb and colleagues3 propose a set of clinical criteria for COVID-19-associated hyperinflammatory syndrome (cHIS). Development of such criteria are critically important for clinical trial enrolment and for aiding clinicians in recognising patients who will benefit from therapy targeting the cytokine storm syndrome associated with COVID-19.
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanrhe/article/PIIS2665-9913(20)30335-0/fulltext

Lockdown could worsen hearing woes for U.S. seniors
Isolation due to the pandemic and failure to get hearing aids checked has fueled anxiety, depression and more hearing loss for many seniors. "This has been a very difficult time as senior facilities and individuals try to balance poor health outcomes related to COVID-19 versus poor health outcomes related to social isolation," said Catherine Palmer, president of the American Academy of Audiology.
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-lockdown-worsen-woes-seniors.html

Lockdown impact on COVID-19 epidemics in regions across metropolitan France
Lockdowns have been used by most European countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In France, a national lockdown was implemented on March 17, 2020. Some have questioned the need for a nationwide implementation given that most hospital admissions were concentrated in two of 13 regions; others have even questioned the impact of the lockdown on severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) spread, arguing that the natural epidemic peak was about to be reached. Here we discuss the impact of lockdown on COVID-19 epidemics in regions across metropolitan France.
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32034-1/fulltext

More than 60 million Indians may have caught coronavirus: Study

More than 60 million people in India – 10 times the official figure – could have contracted the novel coronavirus, the country's lead pandemic agency said on Tuesday, citing a nationwide study measuring antibodies. According to official data, India, home to 1.3 billion people, is the world's second most infected nation, with more than 6.1 million cases, just behind the United States. Nearly 100,000 Indians have died due to COVID-19 – the disease caused by the virus.

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/30/more-than-60-million-indians-may-have-caught-coronavirus-study

Why some states handled lockdown better than others

Australians are among the best in the world when it comes to behaviour during pandemic lockdowns, researchers have found, and some parts of Australia are better than others. The research, led by the Queensland University of Technology, analysed Google Mobility data as well as nation-level personality data across 36 countries, taken before and after the World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic on March 11.

https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/why-some-states-handled-lockdown-better-than-others-20200929-p560e3.html

Coronavirus: Coordinated global lockdown could cut COVID-19 cases by 90 percent - study

Stopping future waves of COVID-19 might require coordinated lockdowns across the globe, rather than letting each country do its own thing, epidemiologists say. The pandemic started in China, but quickly made its way across the world - first devastating Europe before the epicentre moved to New York and the US, followed by a surge in South America. Presently India is recording the majority of new cases. New Zealand is believed to have eliminated community transmission of the virus earlier this year after implementing one of the world's toughest lockdowns, enjoying a brief return to near-total freedom between June and August. But with the pandemic still raging elsewhere it came back, just a week after Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said a resurgence was "inevitable".

https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/world/2020/09/coronavirus-coordinated-global-lockdown-could-cut-covid-19-cases-by-90-percent-study.html

Nigeria Develops Own Kit to Test for Covid-19

In order to improve its testing capacity for COVID-19, the Nigerian government has developed a molecular test kit named the SARS-COV-2 Isothermal Molecular Assay (SIMA). The minister of state for health, Olorunnimbe Mamora, made this known at the bi-weekly Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 briefing on Tuesday. Mr Mamora said the test kit developed by the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) can produce results in less than 40 minutes. This is faster as compared to the Reverse Transcription- Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) which is currently the main source of testing in the country. This method of testing takes several hours to produce results.

https://allafrica.com/stories/202009300015.html

Inherited Neanderthal genes may put COVID-19 patients at risk

Scientists have identified a potential new risk factor for severe cases of COVID-19: a cluster of genes that originated in Neanderthals. These genes have been linked to a higher risk of hospitalization and respiratory failure in patients who are infected with the coronavirus, scientists reported Wednesday in the journal Nature. Researchers Hugo Zeberg of the Karolinska Institute in Sweden and Svante Paabo of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany determined that the genes belong to a group, or haplotype, that likely came from Neanderthals. The haplotype is found in about 16% of the population in Europe and half the population in South Asia, while in Africa and East Asia it is nonexistent.

https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2020-09-30/genes-inherited-from-neanderthals-may-put-covid-19-patients-at-risk

NIH to assess and expand COVID-19 testing for underserved communities

The National Institutes of Health has awarded nearly $234 million to improve COVID-19 testing for underserved and vulnerable populations. A part of the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) initiative, the RADx Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) program will support 32 institutions across the United States and will focus on populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic. These groups include African Americans, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, Latinos/Latinas, Native Hawaiians, older adults, pregnant women and those who are homeless or incarcerated. “It is critical that all Americans have access to rapid, accurate diagnostics for COVID-19, especially underserved and vulnerable populations who are bearing the brunt of this disease,” said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D. “The RADx-UP program will help us better understand and alleviate the barriers to testing for those most vulnerable and reduce the burden of this disease.”

https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-assess-expand-covid-19-testing-underserved-communities

Investigational COVID-19 vaccine well-tolerated, generates immune response in older adults.

A Phase 1 trial of an investigational mRNA vaccine to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection has shown that the vaccine is well-tolerated and generates a strong immune response in older adults. A report published today in the New England Journal of Medicine describes the findings from the study, which was supported by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

https://infosurhoy.com/news-summary/investigational-covid-19-vaccine-well-tolerated-generates-immune-response-in-older-adults/

More than 60 MILLION people in India may have already caught Covid-19, study finds

More than 60 million people in India could have contracted the novel coronavirus, the country's lead pandemic agency said Tuesday, citing a nationwide study measuring antibodies. According to official data India, home to 1.3 billion people, is the world's second most infected nation, with more than 6.1 million cases, just behind the United States. But the real figure could be 10 times the official figure, according to the latest serological survey - a study testing blood for certain antibodies to estimate the proportion of a population that has fought off the virus.

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8786311/amp/More-60-MILLION-people-India-caught-Covid-19-study-finds.html

Computer model shows how COVID-19 could lead to runaway inflammation

A study from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and Cedars-Sinai addresses a mystery first raised in March: Why do some people with COVID-19 develop severe inflammation? The research shows how the molecular structure and sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein--part of the virus that causes COVID-19--could be behind the inflammatory syndrome cropping up in infected patients.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-09/uop-cms092820.php

On the road with Operation Warp Speed, the U.S. COVID-19 vaccine effort

A hospital at the University of Cincinnati (UC) sits on a street named after Albert Sabin, who famously developed a vaccine against polio that has helped rid most of the world of this once widely feared disease. A unit at the hospital now has a similarly ambitious goal as it participates in the U.S. effort to find a vaccine against COVID-19. Last week, on 25 September, the leaders of Operation Warp Speed—the Trump administration program that has committed $10 billion to this vision—flew in from Washington, D.C., for a tour. After learning that the hospital had in about 3 weeks enrolled 130 participants in the multisite phase III efficacy trial of one experimental vaccine, the first question Warp Speed’s scientific director, Moncef Slaoui, asked was, “Do you have a good representation of diverse populations?”

https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/road-operation-warp-speed-us-covid-19-vaccine-effort

How stigmatizing disease—from COVID-19 to HIV—creates a vicious cycle of sickness

As India is becoming the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety about the disease has at times descended into violence against the sick, and even health care workers. The problem isn't limited to India—people in countries from Nepal to Mexico to Italy have stigmatized individuals connected to COVID-19, making it harder for them to go about their daily lives and get much-needed care. And such ostracism isn't new: Societies have spurned people with leprosy for ages, as far back as ancient Hindu texts, which proscribed marriage into families that had a member with the disease. In a new story in Science, journalist Vaishnavi Chandrashekhar discusses the history of disease stigma—from leprosy, to plague, to HIV/AIDS—and how its vitriol and isolation can create a vicious cycle of disease.

https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/how-stigmatizing-disease-covid-19-hiv-creates-vicious-cycle-sickness

Covid-19: Universities roll out pooled testing of students in bid to keep campuses open

Some UK universities are introducing covid-19 screening programmes using pooled testing to help prevent outbreaks and allow campuses to stay open. The University of Cambridge and the University of Nottingham are both using pooled testing, which involves mixing several samples together and then testing the pooled sample. If the result comes back positive the people in the group then need to be tested individually. This approach increases the number of people who can be tested using the same amount of resources—saving time, supplies, and money. However, some experts have raised concerns over whether the costs, benefits, and harms of such programmes have been evaluated, and they have called for advice from the UK National Screening Committee. In July, Stanford Health Care in the US began using a pooling method for covid-19 (in groups of four to eight), which had previously been used to screen blood donations for the presence of HIV or hepatitis. The group has said that the method is not being used for all samples, as it works best in populations where most samples are expected to be negative. Pooled testing has also been used in countries including Uruguay and Rwanda, to allow screening of teachers and healthcare workers and to overcome infrastructure and financial issues

https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3789

Coronavirus Resurgence

Coronavirus: NI records another new high of cases

Northern Ireland is at a "crossroads" in dealing with the rise in Covid-19 cases and more action to curb it must be taken, Robin Swann has warned. The health minister was speaking as Northern Ireland recorded another high of new positive cases on Wednesday. A further 424 cases were announced - 139 of which were in the Derry and Strabane council area. One new Covid-19 related death was reported, bringing the Department of Health's total to 579. In the Republic of Ireland, 429 new cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed and one more person has died, bringing the overall death toll there to 1,804. Speaking at Stormont's executive press briefing on Wednesday, Mr Swann said he was "more concerned about what lies ahead" than at any stage since he became minister in January.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-54347973

Liverpool is being 'closely monitored' amid fears it could go into lockdown

PM's spokesman said he's 'constantly reviewing' Merseyside's Covid restrictions Comes after city's mayor Joe Anderson called for lockdown to 'restore normality' But Metro Mayor distanced himself from the idea and said he'd not discussed it

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8790055/Liverpool-closely-monitored-amid-fears-lockdown.html

MPs Will Vote On Any New National Lockdown, Matt Hancock Announces

MPs will be able to vote on any national coronavirus lockdown measures before they come into force, Matt Hancock has announced in a concession to backbench Tory rebels. The health secretary said that for “significant national measures” that affect all of England or the whole UK, MPs will be able to vote on them in advance “wherever possible”.
https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-lockdown-restrictions-tory-rebels_uk_5f749678c5b6d698bb26cfc7

Covid: Boris Johnson defends 'strong local' measures to beat virus
Prime Minister Boris Johnson has defended the use of localised measures to combat Covid-19 across the UK. Mr Johnson told MPs "strong local action" was needed in response to "a serious and growing" virus resurgence. Labour's Sir Keir Starmer asked how people could be expected to understand and follow rules when the PM himself had failed to make them clear. Mr Johnson said he had "cleared up" a mistaken comment he made on rules for the North East "as fast as I could". It comes as the latest UK coronavirus figures show there have been a further 7,108 cases of coronavirus and another 71 deaths.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54352338

Merseyside leaders 'favour circuit breaker lockdown'
Merseyside leaders would favour a "circuit breaker" lockdown if companies are provided with financial support, Knowsley's council leader has said. Graham Morgan said a two-week mini lockdown "might disrupt the spread of the virus" to help regain control. Merseyside has recorded a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, according to the latest Public Health England data. Mr Morgan said council leaders agreed in principle to the "circuit breaker" to halt the spread of the virus. It follows a meeting with the government's chief medical officer Chris Whitty on Monday to discuss the next steps.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-54342708

Will there be a second national lockdown in the UK?
Boris Johnson is set to deliver an update to the public today, and some are wondering if there could be another big announcement on the way. The latest press conference comes after the number of coronavirus cases yesterday reached its highest level since the start of the pandemic, with the worldwide Covid-19 death toll now surpassing 1 million. The Government has been busy implementing tighter restrictions, both locally and nationally, and at least 16.6 million people are currently in local lockdowns – about one in four Brits. But is it time to plunge the entire UK into a nationwide lockdown again? Here’s what we know.
https://metro.co.uk/2020/09/30/will-second-national-lockdown-coronavirus-uk-13345089/

Angela Merkel limits public gatherings to 50 people in covid hotspots but says a national shutdown will be avoided 'at all costs' to preserve Germany's economy
Merkel told state leaders 'more difficult times lie ahead in autumn and winter' Compared to other European countries Germany has a low infection rate But the Chancellor said cases could soar to 19,200 per day if trends continue Germany had 2,000 cases Tuesday, compared to 8,000 in France, 7,000 in UK
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8788775/Merkel-limits-public-gatherings-50-covid-hotspots-says-national-shutdown-avoided.html

In Madrid, Covid-19 Resurgence Divides Rich and Poor
Every weekday morning, Jorge Sánchez leaves home in Puente de Vallecas, one of the poorest and most densely populated areas of Madrid, and drives 10 miles to his job as a gardener tending a public park in an affluent district of the city. Puente de Vallecas was one of 45 Madrid districts locked down last week as the authorities struggle to cope with a second wave of coronavirus infections sweeping the capital region, but Mr. Sánchez is still allowed to commute to the leafy neighborhood

where he works.
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/30/world/europe/covid-lockdown-madrid-spain.html

Germany looks to tackle coronavirus rise with 3 simple strategies
Chancellor Angela Merkel has vowed to avoid another full national lockdown. Coronavirus infections are rising in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe. Although, so far it has not seen a surge in cases like France, Spain and the U.K.
https://www.cnbc.com/2020/09/30/germany-looks-to-tackle-coronavirus-rise-with-3-simple-strategies.html

Coronavirus infection rate rising but scope for more, Indian survey shows
Coronavirus infection rates among adults in India have risen sharply, a survey showed on Tuesday, although a large percentage of the population has not yet been exposed, suggesting there is scope for cases to rise much further. In the serological survey conducted in August and September, blood samples were tested for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. If a person tests positive for the antibodies, it means they were infected with the virus at some point. Blood samples collected from more than 29,000 adults between Aug. 17 and Sept. 22 showed that the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies increased to 7.1% compared to 0.73% in a previous survey between May 11 and June 4, the director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Balram Bhargava, told a press briefing.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india/large-percentage-of-indias-population-not-exposed-to-coronavirus-government-official-says-idUKKBN26K23I

No lockdown but more curbs: Kerala CM
In an all-party meeting convened by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday in the wake of increasing numbers of Covid-19 cases in the state. It was decided that a total shutdown was not needed but more restrictions should be brought in to the state
https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/no-lockdown-but-more-curbs-kerala-cm/articleshow/78396639.cms

Merkel: Germany can avoid second coronavirus lockdown
German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday that she wanted to do everything in her power to avoid another national lockdown as coronavirus infection numbers rise again in Europe's largest economy, expressing confidence the goal was achievable. "We all want to avoid a second national shutdown and we can do that," Merkel said, adding that people knew much more about how to protect themselves and the health system than they did back in March, when a national lockdown was implemented. Merkel and the leaders of Germany's 16 states have agreed to restrict the size of gatherings and to fine anyone who flouts tracking rules in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus over autumn and winter.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-germany-merkel/merkel-germany-can-avoid-second-coronavirus-lockdown-idUKKBN26L1G7

Belgium's coronavirus death toll crosses 10,000
Belgium's official death toll from coronavirus infections crossed the 10,000 mark on Wednesday, according to data from the Sciensano health institute. Belgium, home to the headquarters of the European Union and NATO, successfully slowed the spread of COVID-19 with a lockdown that was imposed in the spring, but it still had one of the world's highest fatality figures per capita from the virus. Sciensano said the official number of dead stood at 10,001. The country of 11 million people recorded, on average, 1,550 new infections per day over the past week, up from about 80 a day in early July.
https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-belgium/belgiums-coronavirus-death-toll-crosses-10000-idUSL4N2GR2ND

Germany's Merkel vows to avoid full national lockdown in pandemic

Germany wants to avoid a full national lockdown at all costs by quickly tracking infection chains and shutting down local outbreaks, Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Tuesday. “We want to act regionally, specifically and purposefully, rather than shutting down the whole country again - this must be prevented at all costs,” Merkel told a news conference following a video-conference with the premiers of the federal states.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany/germanys-merkel-vows-to-avoid-full-national-lockdown-in-pandemic-idUSKBN26K2SW

UK reports record daily figure of 7,143 COVID-19 cases
Britain reported 7,143 new cases of coronavirus on Tuesday, the highest single figure to date, and 71 deaths, the biggest toll since July. Lockdown measures are being imposed across the country as the government tries to limit the spread of the virus. The 71 deaths within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 test is the highest level since 97 fatalities were recorded on July 1.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-cases/uk-reports-record-daily-figure-of-7143-covid-19-cases-idUKKBN26K2RI

New Lockdown

Madrid coronavirus: Spain orders lockdown amid rise in cases
The Spanish government has ordered a lockdown in the capital Madrid and surrounding areas badly affected by coronavirus after a rise in cases. Under the new restrictions, residents will not be allowed to leave the area unless they have to make an essential journey. However, Madrid's regional government says the lockdown is not legally valid. Greater Madrid accounts for more than a third of the 133,604 cases diagnosed in Spain over the past two weeks. On Wednesday, a majority of Spain's regional governments, who are in charge of healthcare, voted in favour of imposing restrictions in areas with more than 100,000 residents if they met three benchmarks - 500 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, 35% Covid patient occupancy in intensive care units and positive results in 10% of tests. Madrid, which has a rate of 780 infections per 100,000, already meets the criteria. However, it is not yet clear when the restrictions will be introduced.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54364015

UK PM Johnson to speak on COVID-19 as anger mounts towards curbs
Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged the British people on Wednesday to obey rules imposed to tackle a rapidly accelerating second wave of the coronavirus outbreak, cautioning that otherwise a tougher lockdown could follow.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain/uk-pm-johnson-to-speak-on-covid-19-as-anger-mounts-towards-curbs-idUSKBN26L12Y

Covid: Boris Johnson defends local lockdown strategy
Prime Minister Boris Johnson has defended the use of localised measures to combat Covid-19 across the UK. Mr Johnson told MPs "strong local action" was needed in response to "a serious and growing" virus resurgence. Labour's Sir Keir Starmer asked how people could be expected to understand and follow rules when the PM himself had failed to make them clear. Mr Johnson said he had "cleared up" a mistaken comment he made on rules for the North East "as fast as I could". It comes as the latest UK coronavirus figures show there have been a further 7,108 cases of coronavirus and another 71 deaths.
https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54352338

First 'circuit break' lockdown set to be imposed by government in UK city as coronavirus cases soar
The first local ‘circuit break’ lockdown could be just hours away, according to reports. Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled a raft of new measures across the country last week, with a statement from

No 10 Downing Street and is set to hold a press conference today. Mr Johnson unveiled pub curfews and curbs on households gathering and meeting as part of the nationwide restrictions. But localised lockdown rules are also in place across the country as the rate of Covid-19 cases continues to soar and soar this week. In Birmingham, households are banned from gathering indoors and in gardens, with similar measures in Sandwell and Wolverhampton.
https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/black-country/first-circuit-break-lockdown-set-19021089

Covid-19: Government 'must explain new lockdown rules better'
New local lockdown restrictions need to be "communicated better" by the government, a police and crime commissioner (PCC) has said. Households in the north-east of England are now banned from mixing indoors, including in pubs. But councils were not given advance warning of the announcement, according to Northumbria's PCC Kim McGuinness. And she said the prime minister had added to confusion by not being able to accurately explain the new rules. "Locally the communications methods weren't stood up to be able to back up what was happening through government," Ms McGuiness told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-54351836

Spain's Ibiza under partial lockdown after contagion spreads
The Balearic Islands' regional authorities decided on Wednesday to impose new restrictions on the tourism hotspot city of Ibiza after the coronavirus contagion spread quickly there over the past weeks. The restrictions on residents' activities will last 15 days. The measures include a ban on parties of more than five people, the shutdown of playgrounds and the closure of bars and restaurants at 10 pm, regional authorities said in a statement. They also recommended that people stay home for all but indispensable activities, without making that a mandatory confinement.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-ibiza-idUSKBN26L2LY

Spain set for months more travel restrictions in new coronavirus crackdown
Travel restrictions to Spain are unlikely to be eased for several months with little prospect of UK holidaymakers swarming back to the country. The country was taken off the 'safe travel' list in July in a move that devastated British tourists planning trips to the sun. Since then, Spain and its islands have effectively been out of bounds - even though there are still flights operated by Ryanair and easyJet between Spanish airports and the UK. The Spanish parliament is now set to approve tough new measures that will enable any towns and cities to be forced into lockdown when 500 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 are recorded or more than 30 per cent of PCR swab tests are positive.
https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/spain-set-months-more-travel-4560970

Liverpool is 'days away' from circuit-breaker two-week local lockdown says city's mayor
Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson says 'only matter of time' before city lockdown Two-week circuit-breaker will 'restore some normality' before Christmas, he says Mayor also backed calls for an alcohol sales ban in shops and off-licences at 9pm It comes after areas of the north-east were with with tighter coronavirus rules
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8787567/Liverpool-days-away-circuit-breaker-two-week-local-lockdown-says-citys-mayor.html

Another 500,000 people plunged into lockdown as Wales gets new local restrictions
More than half a million residents in North Wales will be put into local lockdown following a surge in coronavirus cases, the health minister has announced. New restrictions will be introduced in Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy and Wrexham from 6pm on Thursday. People will no longer be permitted to enter or leave these areas without a reasonable excuse, such as travel for work or education. They will also be banned from mixing indoors with other households but can meet outdoors for the time being. The recent spike in transmission has largely been blamed on people socialising indoors.

https://metro.co.uk/2020/09/30/another-500000-people-plunged-into-lockdown-as-wales-gets-new-local-restrictions-13348072/

PM Johnson sows confusion as UK tightens COVID curbs

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson corrected himself on Tuesday after appearing uncertain about basic social distancing rules that will apply in a large swathe of England. The government announced on Monday a tightening of restrictions on socialising in northeast England from Wednesday, in response to high and increasing COVID-19 infection rates in the region - the latest in a series of local measures. In the affected areas, which include large urban centres such as Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and Durham, people will face fines if they are caught meeting people from other households indoors, including in homes, pubs and restaurants. After a junior minister said on morning radio that she did not know what the new rules were, Johnson was asked hours later whether people from different households would be able to meet outdoors in pub gardens in the northeast.

https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-confusion/pm-johnson-sows-confusion-as-uk-tightens-covid-curbs-idUSKBN26K28B