

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

20th Sep 2021

One Minute Overview

How Facebook Hobbled Mark Zuckerberg's Bid to Get America Vaccinated - [Company documents show antivaccine activists undermined the CEO's ambition to support the rollout by flooding the site and using Facebook's own tools to sow doubt about the Covid-19 vaccine](#)

The Delta Wave Is Tough on Kids, But Deadly for the Middle-Aged - A lot of kids have been getting Covid-19 in the U.S. this summer, thanks to the more-transmissible delta variant, the full return to in-person schooling and the unvaccinated status of virtually every American under 12. [Those under 18 accounted for 28.9% of reported Covid cases in the first week of September, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), more than their 22.2% share of the population and much more than their 15.5% share of cumulative cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

Covid-19 Australia: Victoria could end lockdown early if Pfizer wait time halved - Victoria has recorded 535 new Covid-19 cases and one death amid hopes the state could end lockdown as soon as Melbourne Cup day if the wait time between Pfizer doses is halved. [World Health Organisation epidemiologist Professor Adrian Esterman said it was time to revise the window period between receiving both doses of the vaccine. The waiting period could be cut down from six to three weeks and ultimately fast track the state to reach its 80 per cent vaccination target by November 2.](#) At its current pace, Victoria is expected to reach the milestone by November 19.

COVID-19: Italy makes vaccine passport compulsory - workers can be fined and suspended without pay - Italy is to become the first European country to make a vaccine passport system compulsory for all workers. [Proof of vaccination, a negative test or recent recovery from infection must be provided or staff will be suspended without pay and face a fine. However, they cannot be sacked.](#) The law set to apply to both public and private employees from 15 October after the Italian government approved the measures on Thursday.

Cuba begins vaccinating children as young as two against COVID-19 - On Thursday Cuba began a massive vaccination campaign for children between the ages of two and 10, becoming one of the first nations to do so. Health officials in the country say Cuba's homegrown vaccines have been found safe for young children. "Our country would not put [infants] even at a minimal risk if the vaccines were not proven safe and highly effective when put into children," [Aurolis Otano, director of the Vedado Polyclinic University, told The Associated Press news agency in a vaccination room.](#) Otano said the circulation of the Delta variant led to an increase in infections among the youngest, so Cuba's scientific community decided to "take the vaccine to clinical trial" and it was approved for children.

UK scientist warns over relaxation of Covid travel rules - One of the scientists behind the UK's testing network for quickly identifying Covid variants of concern has urged the government to continue surveillance of coronavirus cases brought in to the UK from abroad. [Alan McNally, a professor in microbial evolutionary genomics who worked on setting up the lighthouse laboratories, made the comments amid reports ministers are preparing to overhaul Covid travel restrictions, including a relaxing of test rules.](#) It has been reported that double-jabbed travellers will no longer need to take a more costly PCR test after returning from green countries, but take a cheaper lateral flow test instead, while pre-departure tests, taken 72 hours before a passenger flies home are also likely to be scrapped.

New Zealand, Australia travel bubble suspended for longer amid Delta outbreaks - [New Zealand suspended quarantine-free travel with Australia for a further 8 weeks on Friday, extending a halt in the so-called travel bubble between both countries](#), as they deal with fresh outbreaks of the Delta variant of the coronavirus.

COVID-19: Trial will see if children need second jab - with 12 to 16-year-olds getting different combinations in study - Youngsters aged 12-16 are to be offered a mix of coronavirus vaccines in a new trial to determine whether children need a second jab and if so which type would be most effective. [It comes after health leaders approved first doses of the Pfizer vaccine for over-12s on Monday. Researchers from the University of Oxford are carrying out the trial which will analyse how the participants respond to various combinations.](#) Those involved in the study will all receive a full dose of the Pfizer jab initially.

Bats in Laos Caves Harbor Closest Relatives to Covid-19 Virus - Bats dwelling in limestone caves in northern Laos were found to carry coronaviruses that share a key feature with SARS-CoV-2, moving scientists closer to pinpointing the cause of Covid-19. [Researchers at France's Pasteur Institute and the University of Laos looked for viruses similar to the one that causes Covid among hundreds of horseshoe bats.](#) They found three with closely matched receptor binding domains -- the part of the coronavirus's spike protein used to bind to human ACE-2, the enzyme it targets to cause an infection. The finding, reported in a paper released Friday that's under consideration for publication by a Nature journal, shows that viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2 exist in nature, including in several Rhinolophus, or horseshoe bat, species.

Vietnam approves Abdala vaccine as president visits Cuba - Vietnam has approved Cuba's Abdala vaccine for use against the new coronavirus, the government said, as the Southeast Asian country is battling its worst outbreak. [Abdala becomes the eighth COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Vietnam, which has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the region, with only 6.3% of its 98 million people having received at least two shots.](#) The announcement came hours after President Nguyen Xuan Phuc left Hanoi for an official visit to Havana.

Florida surpasses 50K COVID deaths after battling delta wave - Florida surpassed 50,000 coronavirus deaths since the pandemic began, health officials reported Thursday, with more than one fourth of those succumbing this summer as the state battled a fierce surge in infections fueled by the delta variant. [The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tallied 50,811 deaths after adding more than 1,500 COVID-19 deaths provided Thursday by the state's health department.](#) Those reported deaths occurred over various dates in recent weeks. Florida has the 11th worst per-capita death rate among the 50 states, the CDC says. New Jersey, Mississippi and New York have had the worst, but Florida has risen from the 17th spot in the past two weeks.

COVID-hit Chinese city tells residents to stay home as holiday starts - A city in southeast China hit by COVID-19 told residents on Saturday to stay home and closed various venues, as infections spread in the country's latest hotspot during a key holiday travel season. [The government of Xiamen, in a series of notices, told residents not to leave home unnecessarily, closed parks, scenic spots and sports venues,](#) and halted mass activities including tours, fairs and performances.

Lockdown Exit

Covid-19 Vaccinations Boost the Global Economy, but May Not Cure It Alone

The global recovery is slowing as Covid-19 resurges, spurring governments to try to raise vaccination rates in hopes of fueling stronger economic growth. The thinking is, first, that vaccinations will ease consumers' worries about infection, prompting them to spend more on travel, dining out, going to concerts and other activities that involve proximity to other people. Second,

reduced Covid-19 case counts would mean fewer government shutdowns of ports, factories and other operations critical to global supply chains.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-vaccinations-boost-the-global-economy-but-may-not-cure-it-alone-11632060000>

Melbourne Expects to Exit Its Sixth Lockdown in Late October

Melbourne will exit its sixth lockdown since the pandemic began once 70% of Australia's Victoria state is fully vaccinated, authorities said Sunday as they outlined plans to unwind virus measures next month. Limits on "reasons to leave your home and the curfew will no longer be in place" once that target is met around Oct. 26, Victoria's Premier Daniel Andrews told reporters. "Lockdown will be off." Pubs, clubs and entertainment venues in the nation's second-most populous city will be allowed to operate outdoors with up to 50 people who have received two shots. Schools are expected to start reopening on Oct. 5.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-19/melbourne-expects-to-end-its-sixth-lockdown-in-late-october>

The Delta Wave Is Tough on Kids, But Deadly for the Middle-Aged

A lot of kids have been getting Covid-19 in the U.S. this summer, thanks to the more-transmissible delta variant, the full return to in-person schooling and the unvaccinated status of virtually every American under 12. Those under 18 accounted for 28.9% of reported Covid cases in the first week of September, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than their 22.2% share of the population and much more than their 15.5% share of cumulative cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-09-19/the-delta-wave-is-tough-on-kids-but-deadly-for-the-middle-aged>

Led by the nose: Meet the UAE's COVID-19 sniffer dogs

Police in Dubai have built up a special unit of 38 sniffer dogs that can detect COVID-19 from human sweat samples with 92% accuracy, the supervisor of the training programme told Reuters. Dubai Police trained the cohort, which includes German Shepherds, Labradors, Cocker Spaniels and Border Collies, to recognise the scent of COVID-19 using samples of sweat from people with confirmed infections, collected by holding a swab in an armpit for a few minutes.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/led-by-nose-meet-uaes-covid-19-sniffer-dogs-2021-09-16/>

Supply fears lead EU vaccine industry to seek home comforts

European companies playing key supporting roles in COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing are working to move production and supply chains closer to their customers to guard against trade restrictions that have interrupted supplies during the pandemic. Germany's Merck, whose Life Science unit is one of the world's largest makers of bioreactor gear and supplies, told Reuters it is pushing to spread its production network geographically so that fewer shipments have to cross customs borders.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/supply-fears-lead-eu-vaccine-industry-seek-home-comforts-2021-09-17/>

Australia reports 1607 COVID-19 cases as states learn to live with virus

Australia reported 1,607 new coronavirus cases on Sunday as states and territories gradually shift from trying to eliminate outbreaks to living with the virus. Victoria, home to about a quarter of Australia's 25 million people, recorded 507 cases as its premier said a weeks-long lockdown will end once 70% of those 16 and older are fully vaccinated, whether or not there are new cases. Premier Daniel Andrews said the state might reach that vaccination threshold around Oct. 26. About 43% Victorians have been fully vaccinated and just over 46% people nationwide.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-reports-1607-covid-19-cases-states-learn-live-with-virus-2021-09-19/>

Abu Dhabi cancels COVID-19 entry testing for UAE travellers

Abu Dhabi will cancel COVID-19 testing requirements to enter the emirate for travellers from the UAE starting on Sunday, the United Arab Emirates' state news agency WAM said on Saturday. The UAE's capital had restricted entry into the emirate to those with a negative PCR test. Earlier this month, Abu Dhabi removed the need to quarantine for all vaccinated travellers arriving from international destinations.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/abu-dhabi-cancels-covid-19-entry-testing-uae-travellers-2021-09-18/>

Beijing 2022 Games to have rigorous COVID-19 measures-IOC

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics will have tight COVID-19 countermeasures in place to ensure the safety of all participants, the International Olympic Committee said on Friday.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/beijing-2022-games-have-rigorous-covid-19-measures-ioc-2021-09-17/>

Denmark returns to pre-pandemic life with a huge pop concert

While many in Europe fretted over the Delta variant, university student and care worker Sofie Mari Jensen joined tens of thousands of people at Copenhagen's Parken Stadium to watch the pop-rock band The Minds of 99. The event on September 11, a day after Denmark dropped all coronavirus restrictions, was Europe's first concert hosting more than 50,000 people since the pandemic began.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/17/denmark-returns-to-pre-pandemic-life-with-a-huge-pop-concert>

How Facebook Hobbled Mark Zuckerberg's Bid to Get America Vaccinated

Company documents show antivaccine activists undermined the CEO's ambition to support the rollout by flooding the site and using Facebook's own tools to sow doubt about the Covid-19 vaccine

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-mark-zuckerberg-vaccinated-11631880296>

Exit Strategies

Africa's Biggest City to Vaccinate 30% of Residents in a Year

Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub, plans to give Covid-19 shots to 30% of residents within a year, the state's governor said in an emailed statement. To be able to do so "the world must ensure that vaccines were available to all, especially poorer countries that had struggled with supply," Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who governs Africa's biggest city said. Lagos has only been able to vaccinate 1.2% of its estimated 24 million residents, which is far below the recommendation set by the World Health Organization, Sanwo-Olu said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-19/africa-s-biggest-city-to-vaccinate-30-of-residents-in-a-year>

White House debates vaccines for air travel

The Biden administration is facing an internal debate over whether to impose vaccine mandates for air travel, with President Biden's chief medical adviser, Anthony Fauci, saying he would support a mandate but the White House claiming a new policy isn't forthcoming. The potential of a mandate for domestic air travel would be fiercely opposed by Republicans and the travel industry and could add to the pushback Biden has received over his mandate on COVID-19 vaccines and testing for companies with at least 100 employees. The White House sees the mandate on such businesses as politically popular, but it has run into opposition from GOP governors who have threatened to sue.

<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/572791-white-house-debates-vaccines-for-air-travel>

A New Covid Testing Model Aims to Spare Students From Quarantine

More school districts are embracing "test-to-stay" protocols that allow uninfected close contacts to remain in the classroom.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/19/health/coronavirus-school-quarantine-testing.html>

Scottish Covid vaccine trialists 'treated like second-class citizens'

Scottish vaccine volunteers are being treated like "second-class citizens" while waiting for the

Novavax jab to be approved, an MSP has said, as they continue a months-long fight to have their vaccines recognised on the standard NHS Scotland database. The trialists are worried that the introduction of vaccine passports in Scotland next month could put them at a further disadvantage as they cannot access the standard electronic version, instead possessing only a piece of paper. Some have been abused online by anti-vaxxers while others have felt forced to lie to obtain an approved dose, despite having no information about side-effects of vaccine mixing.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/sep/19/scottish-covid-vaccine-trialists-treated-like-second-class-citizens>

U.S. administers about 384.9 mln doses of COVID-19 vaccines -CDC

The United States has administered 384,911,290 doses of COVID-19 vaccines as of Saturday morning and distributed 466,569,635 doses, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Those figures are up from 383,994,877 vaccine doses the CDC said had gone into arms by Sept. 17 out of 464,315,725 doses delivered.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/us-administers-about-3849-mln-doses-of-covid-19-vaccines-cdc/ar-AAOAEWn>

New Zealand sees small increase in daily COVID-19 cases over weekend

New Zealand reported 24 new locally acquired coronavirus cases on Sunday, up from 20 on Saturday, showing an upturn after several days of lower numbers, as the country's largest city Auckland awaits to hear if its lockdown restrictions will ease. All of the new cases have been reported in greater Auckland, a city of about 1.7 million people which has been in a full level 4 lockdown since mid-August.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-sees-small-increase-daily-covid-19-cases-over-weekend-2021-09-19/>

U.S. to buy hundreds of millions more doses of Pfizer vaccine to donate to the world

The Biden administration is buying hundreds of millions more doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine to donate to the world, according to two people familiar with the deal, as the United States looks to increase efforts to share vaccine with the global population. The administration is expected to purchase 500 million doses, but the terms are not finalized, said the people with knowledge of the deal, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the donation. The announcement of the purchase is slated for early next week and timed to coincide with the U.N. General Assembly meeting.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/09/17/biden-pfizer-vaccine-global/>

Vaccine boosters for more people are on the horizon. But the unvaccinated remain the biggest obstacle to curbing the pandemic

While more people are likely to be eligible for Covid-19 vaccine booster shots, the most glaring issue prolonging the pandemic is the large swath of unvaccinated people, who are filling up hospitals and dying from the persistent virus, officials and health experts said. Advisers to the US Food and Drug Administration greenlighted recommending emergency use authorization of a booster dose of Pfizer's vaccine six months after full vaccination for people 65 and older and those at high risk of severe illness from the virus. The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention is meeting next week with its vaccine advisers, and the agency determines the final approval for the shots. But with 54.4% of the US total population fully vaccinated, health experts reiterated that booster shots are not the answer to ending the pandemic.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/18/health/us-coronavirus-saturday/index.html>

Delta variant: Major Covid testing flaws and home quarantine loophole gave strain 'the keys to the house'

The UK's fight against the Delta variant as it swept into the country this spring was hampered by two major flaws repeatedly flagged as concerns by scientific advisers. Samples of swabs taken from travellers arriving in the country in March and April could not be examined by Public Health England

(PHE) because the body had no contractual link with the private firms carrying out the testing. And people living with those who had travelled from amber list countries and were required to quarantine at home – which included India until 23 April – were able to go to work and mix with others. The loophole meant home quarantine was “not effective”, experts said.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/delta-variant-covid-testing-flaw-home-quarantine-strain-cases-1206314>

Covid-19 Australia: Victoria could end lockdown early if Pfizer wait time halved

Victoria has recorded 535 new Covid-19 cases and one death amid hopes the state could end lockdown as soon as Melbourne Cup day if the wait time between Pfizer doses is halved. World Health Organisation epidemiologist Professor Adrian Esterman said it was time to revise the window period between receiving both doses of the vaccine. The waiting period could be cut down from six to three weeks and ultimately fast track the state to reach its 80 per cent vaccination target by November 2. At its current pace, Victoria is expected to reach the milestone by November 19.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10003099/Covid-19-Australia-Victoria-end-lockdown-early-Pfizer-wait-time-halved.html>

Coronavirus NI: Students getting vaccinated will help ease disruption to their lives, says health minister as 'jabbathon' continues

In Northern Ireland, students getting vaccinated against Covid-19 will help ease the disruption they have endured since the start of the pandemic, the Health Minister has said, Robin Swann was speaking as details of Jabbathon clinics aimed at rolling out Covid-19 vaccines to as many young adults as possible were announced yesterday. Mobile walk-in clinics will continue at 30 campuses across Northern Ireland’s universities and further education colleges next week.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-ni-students-getting-vaccinated-will-help-ease-disruption-to-their-lives-says-health-minister-as-jabbathon-continues-40859492.html>

Coronavirus: plans to end free rapid tests in England ‘reckless’

England’s coronavirus testing strategy has been criticised as “reckless” amid plans to end the free provision of rapid tests and relax the monitoring of cases from abroad. Families and businesses will have to pay for lateral flow tests from next year in an overhaul of Downing Street’s approach to the pandemic. More than 95m of the 30-minute tests have been used since they were made freely available in England from April. Reported to cost £5-£30 each, they have identified more than 620,000 cases, mostly in people without symptoms but who could still transmit the virus. Mayors, teaching unions and directors of public health said charging for lateral flow tests was a “backward step” that threatened to throw schools back into chaos, accelerate the spread of the virus and deepen health inequalities.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/17/coronavirus-plans-to-end-free-rapid-tests-in-england-reckless>

Nearly half of Spaniards think Covid-19 vaccination should be mandatory

“Everyone should be forced to get vaccinated even if they don’t want to.” Fully 47.7% of Spaniards checked this answer in a survey about Covid-19 immunization carried out in September by Spain’s Center for Sociological Studies. Another 25.4% said that “nobody should be forced to get vaccinated” while 21.8% said it depends on each case and 4.8% were undecided. These percentages rise considerably for certain professions: 81.5% of respondents said that healthcare personnel, senior home staff and workers who deal directly with the general public should all get mandatory shots. This percentage includes the 47.7% who support obligatory inoculation for everyone regardless of their occupation.

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-09-17/nearly-half-of-spaniards-think-covid-19-vaccination-should-be-mandatory.html>

Cuba begins vaccinating children as young as two against COVID-19

On Thursday Cuba began a massive vaccination campaign for children between the ages of two and

10, becoming one of the first nations to do so. Health officials in the country say Cuba's homegrown vaccines have been found safe for young children. "Our country would not put [infants] even at a minimal risk if the vaccines were not proven safe and highly effective when put into children," Aurolis Otano, director of the Vedado Polyclinic University, told The Associated Press news agency in a vaccination room. Otano said the circulation of the Delta variant led to an increase in infections among the youngest, so Cuba's scientific community decided to "take the vaccine to clinical trial" and it was approved for children.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/17/cuba-begins-vaccinating-children-as-young-as-two-against-covid-19>

Covid 19: Doctor calls red list travel shake up 'worrying'

Dr Amir Khan warned that any new variants of the Covid-19 virus could be 'missed' if fully vaccinated people returning from a green list country no longer have to take PCR tests. A huge shake up to how international travel will work during the ongoing pandemic is expected to be announced later today. According to reports, one of the measures thought to be revealed will see double-jabbed people required to take lateral flow tests rather than expensive PCR tests when arriving back in the UK.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/09/17/covid-19-doctor-calls-red-list-travel-shake-up-worrying-15273643/>

COVID-19: Italy makes vaccine passport compulsory - workers can be fined and suspended without pay

Italy is to become the first European country to make a vaccine passport system compulsory for all workers. Proof of vaccination, a negative test or recent recovery from infection must be provided or staff will be suspended without pay and face a fine. However, they cannot be sacked. The law set to apply to both public and private employees from 15 October after the Italian government approved the measures on Thursday.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-italy-makes-vaccine-passport-compulsory-workers-can-be-fined-and-suspended-without-pay-12410130>

FDA panel is first key test for Biden COVID-19 booster plan

Dealing the White House a setback, a government advisory panel overwhelmingly rejected a plan to give Pfizer COVID-19 booster shots across the board, and instead endorsed the extra vaccine dose only for those who are 65 or older or run a high risk of severe disease. The twin votes represented a heavy blow to the Biden administration's sweeping effort, announced a month ago, to shore up nearly all Americans' protection amid the spread of the highly contagious delta variant. The nonbinding recommendation — from an influential committee of outside experts who advise the FDA — is not the last word. The FDA will consider the group's advice and make its own decision, probably within days. And the CDC is set to weigh in next week.

<https://apnews.com/article/business-science-health-coronavirus-pandemic-1cd1cf6a5c5c02b63f8a7324807a59f1>

What will the Covid-19 booster roll out look like? Public health groups plan as they await details

Health agencies, providers, and other groups tasked with the herculean effort to vaccinate the public against Covid-19 are readying for the next phase of the endeavor: boosters. But they're also having to account for an array of unknowns about who will be eligible and when, with just days remaining before the White House originally said the shots would be available. "They're planning to plan, because there's so little information right now about what this is going to look like," said Lori Tremmel Freeman, the CEO of the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/09/17/covid19-vaccine-booster-rollout-september/>

Companies Grapple With Questions About Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate

Companies preparing to implement the Biden administration's Covid-19 vaccine mandate face logistical challenges and unanswered questions about how to comply, employment and

compensation lawyers say. Businesses are awaiting more details in a formal rule that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration plans to issue in coming weeks. One of the biggest unknowns is who will be responsible for covering the cost of testing for employees who choose to remain unvaccinated, lawyers said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/companies-grapple-with-questions-about-covid-19-vaccine-mandate-11631871003>

Partisan Exits

They Shunned Covid Vaccines but Embraced Antibody Treatment

Lanson Jones did not think that the coronavirus would come for him. An avid tennis player in Houston who had not caught so much as a cold during the pandemic, he had refused a vaccine because he worried that it would spoil his streak of good health. But contracting Covid shattered his faith in his body's defenses — so much so that Mr. Jones, nose clogged and appetite vanished, began hunting for anything to spare himself a nightmarish illness. The answer turned out to be monoclonal antibodies, a year-old, laboratory-created drug no less experimental than the vaccine. In a glass-walled enclosure at Houston Methodist Hospital this month, Mr. Jones, 65, became one of more than a million patients, including Donald J. Trump and Joe Rogan, to receive an antibody infusion as the virus has battered the United States.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/18/health/covid-antibody-regeneron.html>

A doctor called coronavirus vaccines 'fake.' Now he sits on an Idaho regional health board.

In Idaho, the covid-19 patients filling hospital wards and prompting statewide rationing of care are almost all unvaccinated. Yet Idaho's lieutenant governor recently suggested, falsely, that vaccinated people are more likely to die, and some officials in the heavily conservative state — where many preach "freedom" from government — consider even recommending the shots to be an overreach. As the delta variant fuels a new wave of coronavirus hospitalizations and deaths nationwide, some see Idaho as just the latest example of a pandemic response hobbled by politics and a year of intense backlash against public health restrictions.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/09/16/idaho-covid-gop-ryan-cole/>

Robin Swann facing legal action over bid to give Covid-19 vaccine to Northern Ireland children

Northern Ireland's Health Minister is facing a High Court battle over plans to vaccinate children between the ages of 12 and 15. A pre-action letter has been sent to the Department of Health asking Robin Swann to reconsider his decision to extend Northern Ireland's Covid vaccination programme to the age cohort. The legal action raises concerns about the decision coming after the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) refused to approve the universal vaccination of healthy children. The letter argues that, if the programme is rolled out to children in Northern Ireland, they should only receive the vaccination with parental consent.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus/robin-swann-facing-legal-action-over-bid-to-give-covid-19-vaccine-to-northern-ireland-children-40862716.html>

Australian police clash with anti-lockdown protesters, arrest nearly 270

Australia's police arrested 235 people in Melbourne and 32 in Sydney on Saturday at unsanctioned anti-lockdown rallies and several police officers were injured in clashes with protesters. Victoria police said six officers required hospitalisation. Several officers were knocked to the ground and trampled, the police said and television footage showed. About 700 people managed to gather in parts of Melbourne, as 2,000 officers made the city centre virtually a no-go zone, setting up checkpoints and barricades. Public transport and ride shares into the city were suspended.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-reports-1882-covid-19-cases-police-quell-protests-2021-09-17/>

Nicki Minaj's Covid-19 vaccine 'swollen testicles' claim is false, says Trinidad health minister

Trinidad and Tobago Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh criticized as "false" the claim by American rapper Nicki Minaj that a person on the Caribbean island suffered swollen testicles after receiving a Covid-19 vaccine. Minaj sparked an international furor when she alleged on Twitter that her cousin in Trinidad refuses to get a vaccine because his friend became impotent after being vaccinated. "His testicles became swollen. His friend was weeks away from getting married, now the girl called off the wedding," Minaj, who has 22.6 million Twitter followers, said. The comments triggered an international backlash, with senior US and British coronavirus officials condemning the claims.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/16/americas/nicki-minaj-vaccine-story-false-scli-intl>

UK scientist warns over relaxation of Covid travel rules

One of the scientists behind the UK's testing network for quickly identifying Covid variants of concern has urged the government to continue surveillance of coronavirus cases brought in to the UK from abroad. Alan McNally, a professor in microbial evolutionary genomics who worked on setting up the lighthouse laboratories, made the comments amid reports ministers are preparing to overhaul Covid travel restrictions, including a relaxing of test rules. It has been reported that double-jabbed travellers will no longer need to take a more costly PCR test after returning from green countries, but take a cheaper lateral flow test instead, while pre-departure tests, taken 72 hours before a passenger flies home are also likely to be scrapped.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/17/uk-scientist-warns-relaxation-covid-travel-rules-genome-surveillance>

Facebook targets German anti-lockdown movement

Facebook has cracked down on the anti-Covid restriction movement in Germany, removing dozens of accounts that contribute to "co-ordinated social harm". Almost 150 accounts and pages on Facebook and Instagram — linked to anti-lockdown demonstrators in the European nation — have been taken off the platform, under a new policy focused on groups that spread misinformation or incite violent. The Querdenken movement includes vaccine and mask opponents, conspiracy theorists and some far-right extremists, and has long protested German virus measures. One post from such an account included a debunked claim that the Covid-19 jab was responsible for creating virus variants, while another wished death upon police officers who broke up violent anti-lockdown protests in Berlin.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/online/social/facebook-targets-german-antilockdown-movement/news-story/053d683999a13d7b01da51dff6fd8e5a>

Continued Lockdown

New Zealand, Australia travel bubble suspended for longer amid Delta outbreaks

New Zealand suspended quarantine-free travel with Australia for a further 8 weeks on Friday, extending a halt in the so-called travel bubble between both countries, as they deal with fresh outbreaks of the Delta variant of the coronavirus.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-australia-travel-bubble-suspended-longer-amid-delta-outbreaks-2021-09-17/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Fauci Says More Data Likely to Support Broader U.S. Booster Plan

President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser said booster shots for more of the U.S. population remain a possibility soon, as additional data on the still-widening outbreak come in. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, spoke two days after an advisory panel to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration rejected a national rollout of boosters for all ages, approving them only for people 65 and older and those who are medically vulnerable. "The story is not over

because more and more data is coming in and will be coming in," Fauci said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-19/fauci-says-more-data-likely-to-support-broader-u-s-booster-plan>

COVID-19: Top scientist says ministers should have improved PCR testing system rather than 'abandoning it entirely'

A top scientist who advises the government says ministers should have improved the COVID testing system for international travel rather than "abandoning it entirely". Professor Stephen Reicher, a member of the Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours, which feeds into the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), said the removal of the need for a PCR COVID test will impact on the UK's ability to spot dangerous infections coming into the UK.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-top-scientist-says-ministers-should-have-improved-pcr-testing-system-rather-than-abandoning-it-entirely-12411962>

Fauci: FDA vote against Covid booster shots 'not the end of the story'

A decision not to recommend third-shot booster vaccinations for most Americans is "not the end of the story", White House chief medical adviser Dr Anthony Fauci insisted on Sunday, two days after a scientific panel appeared to turn the Biden administration's plan for combating coronavirus on its head. Fauci also said he did not believe a million coronavirus deaths in the US was an inevitability, despite the Delta variant-fuelled surge that last week brought the grim milestone of one in 500 Americans having fallen victim to the pandemic. The near-unanimous vote on Friday by scientific advisers to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to recommend against a routine third shot of the Pfizer vaccine was seen as a rebuke to Joe Biden, who announced the "third jab strategy" as a main plank of his six-pronged anti-Covid plan.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/19/anthony-fauci-covid-booster-shot-fda-vote>

Bats in Laos Caves Harbor Closest Relatives to Covid-19 Virus

Bats dwelling in limestone caves in northern Laos were found to carry coronaviruses that share a key feature with SARS-CoV-2, moving scientists closer to pinpointing the cause of Covid-19. Researchers at France's Pasteur Institute and the University of Laos looked for viruses similar to the one that causes Covid among hundreds of horseshoe bats. They found three with closely matched receptor binding domains -- the part of the coronavirus's spike protein used to bind to human ACE-2, the enzyme it targets to cause an infection. The finding, reported in a paper released Friday that's under consideration for publication by a Nature journal, shows that viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2 exist in nature, including in several Rhinolophus, or horseshoe bat, species.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-18/bats-in-laos-caves-harbor-closest-relatives-to-covid-19-virus>

Vietnam approves Abdala vaccine as president visits Cuba

Vietnam has approved Cuba's Abdala vaccine for use against the new coronavirus, the government said, as the Southeast Asian country is battling its worst outbreak. Abdala becomes the eighth COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Vietnam, which has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the region, with only 6.3% of its 98 million people having received at least two shots. The announcement came hours after President Nguyen Xuan Phuc left Hanoi for an official visit to Havana.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-approves-cubas-abdala-vaccine-use-against-covid-19-2021-09-18/>

Children should know about tiny risk from Covid vaccine, insist experts

Children need to understand the tiny potential risk of life-threatening heart problems before having a coronavirus vaccine, key government advisers are urging. Professor Adam Finn, a member of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, says that in normal times, the vaccine would not

have been recommended for widespread use in children until the long-term consequences of rare side effects had been fully investigated. Parents are justified in waiting until the risks are clearer before getting their teenagers vaccinated and the NHS needs to spell out the uncertainty over long-term effects better, he argues. He fears that if some children eventually suffer lifelong health risks without being told of known concerns, trust in other vaccination programmes and wider government health advice will suffer

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/children-should-know-about-tiny-risk-from-covid-vaccine-insist-experts-5c5nwffxt>

FDA advisers recommend COVID boosters for 65 and older after rejecting broad approval

Advisers to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration voted to recommend COVID-19 vaccine booster shots for Americans 65 and older and those at high risk of severe illness, after overwhelmingly rejecting a call for broader approval. The panel also recommended that the FDA include healthcare workers and others at high risk of occupational exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19, such as teachers. Despite the narrowed scope of the proposed authorization, the panel's recommendation would cover most Americans who got their shots in the earliest stages of the U.S. vaccination campaign.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-covid-19-booster-debate-moves-fda-vaccine-advisory-committee-2021-09-17/>

COVID-19: QCovid tool's new algorithm identifies those most at-risk from coronavirus after vaccination

A tool to calculate a person's risk from COVID-19 has been updated to include who could be susceptible to serious complications, even if they have been fully vaccinated. It found that the elderly, men and people from certain ethnic minorities were most likely to end up in hospital or die due to the coronavirus. Last year, the team behind the QCovid tool used data from more than 6 million people to design an algorithm which could predict COVID outcomes. Now, the analysis of 6.9 million people who received two shots of the vaccine allows for a prediction of who may be more susceptible even after their inoculations.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-qcovid-tools-new-algorithm-identifies-those-most-at-risk-from-coronavirus-after-vaccination-12410573>

COVID-19: Trial will see if children need second jab - with 12 to 16-year-olds getting different combinations in study

Youngsters aged 12-16 are to be offered a mix of coronavirus vaccines in a new trial to determine whether children need a second jab and if so which type would be most effective. It comes after health leaders approved first doses of the Pfizer vaccine for over-12s on Monday. Researchers from the University of Oxford are carrying out the trial which will analyse how the participants respond to various combinations. Those involved in the study will all receive a full dose of the Pfizer jab initially.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-trial-will-see-if-children-need-second-jab-with-12-to-16-year-olds-getting-different-combinations-in-study-12410306>

South Korea approves Celltrion's COVID-19 treatment for use

South Korea approved Celltrion's antibody COVID-19 treatment for infected adults in high-risk groups or those with severe symptoms. Phase III clinical trials showed that the treatment significantly reduced deterioration of COVID-19 symptoms to severe levels and shortened recovery, the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety said in a statement. The treatment lowered the rate of high-risk patients developing severe symptoms by 72% and shortened recovery by 4.12 days, the ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/south-korea-approves-celltrions-covid-19-treatment-us-2021-09-17/>

How COVID-19 hybrid immunity could be a potential pandemic game-changer

With the FDA gearing up to decide if all Americans need booster shots, some researchers are

pointing to preliminary data suggesting that mixing different vaccines could offer an even stronger immune boost. For now, data is too sparse to support a mix-and-match strategy, experts say. But scientists are learning more about just how strong the immune response can be for someone who has previously been infected with COVID-19 then gets the vaccine -- a phenomenon called "hybrid immunity." "The best thing we can hope for is that three vaccine doses will emulate the super immune response, found among those previously infected with the virus," said Dr. Paul Goepfert, an infectious disease physician and director of the Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic. "This [type of immunity] will protect against variants in the future."

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-19-hybrid-immunity-potential-pandemic-game-changer/story?id=79941607>

Investigating COVID-19's hidden death toll

The official COVID-19 mortality count in the United States has surpassed 660,000, but inaccuracies in cause of death reports hide the true impact of the pandemic. Researchers at Boston University and the University of Pennsylvania recently explored healthcare factors at the county level that explained why 20% of excess deaths in 2020 were due to COVID-19. Their study found that most of these excess deaths occurred in areas affected by racial and social injustices.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/inaccurate-reporting-conceals-covid-19s-impact-on-vulnerable-populations>

Covid-19: How Native Americans led the way in the US vaccination effort

Data from the US CDC show that Native American groups—American Indians and Alaska Natives—have consistently had the best vaccination records since covid-19 vaccination in the US began in early 2021. The CDC's daily tracker for 13 September showed that 47.5% of American Indians and Alaska Natives were fully vaccinated.¹ This compared with 41.8% of Asians, 37.8% of white Americans, and 29.9% of African Americans. The American Indian/Alaska Native group has maintained its lead since the beginning of vaccination in the first dose category as well. Community leaders ascribe this success to two things: first, the US government's decision to allow Native American communities to control vaccine distribution; and second, traditional ethnic values including respect for elders, "community first" philosophies, and a willingness to trust science—so long as it's presented by community members themselves.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2168>

Experts, COVID vaccine firms detail ways to scale up fair distribution

After a meeting with vaccine company executives, a multilateral group dedicated to improving global access to COVID-19 vaccines called on countries and manufacturers to urgently take several steps to ensure that 40% of the population in all countries is vaccinated by the end of the year. In other global developments, UNICEF urged countries to reopen schools as soon as possible to avoid further impacts on kids and economies.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/09/experts-covid-vaccine-firms-detail-ways-scale-fair-distribution>

Studies show good COVID booster effect, waning 2nd-dose protection

Several new studies on the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine describe good effectiveness against the Delta (B1617.2) variant after a booster dose and high but waning protection against infection and severe illness 6 months after the second dose. Other, much smaller, studies demonstrated the safety of third mRNA vaccine doses. And a new British study on waning two-dose effectiveness coincides with the recent decision by UK officials to recommend booster doses.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/09/studies-show-good-covid-booster-effect-waning-2nd-dose-protection>

Coronavirus Resurgence

How Europe's hospitals are faring in the face of another pandemic fall

Much of Europe has opened up to international visitors and scaled back Covid-19 restrictions since a wave of cases swept the continent in the spring. Those steps back toward pre-Covid life have been accompanied by a gradual rise in cases and hospitalizations in many nations, with the more transmissible Delta variant dominant in the region. However, vaccination rollouts have kept hospital admissions far below where they were in the first months of 2021. As a result, Europe presents a varied picture as governments brace for a potential rise in cases in the autumn and winter months.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/18/europe/europe-covid-hospitalizations-intl-cmd/index.html>

Singapore optimistic as severe COVID-19 cases remain low

Singapore, which has one of the world's highest COVID-19 vaccination rates, is seeing encouraging signs that the number of severe cases is not rising at the same pace as new infections, a senior health official said on Friday. The country reported 910 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, the most in 15 months, with average new daily infections rising from 146 two weeks ago to 682 in the past week. But the number of people in serious condition remains low, however, with 12 in intensive care units (ICU), from a total of 837 people hospitalised with COVID-19 in Singapore as of Thursday, the health ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-pm-gets-covid-19-booster-shot-urges-others-follow-2021-09-17/>

England's COVID-19 prevalence decreases to 1 in 80, ONS says

The prevalence of COVID-19 infections in England was around 1 in 80 people in the week ending Sept. 11, Britain's Office for National Statistics (ONS) said on Friday, a slight decrease from the previous week's estimate of 1 in 70.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/englands-covid-19-prevalence-decreases-1-80-ons-says-2021-09-17/>

Covid-19: Nisra records slight fall in virus-related deaths

There has been a very slight fall in the number of Covid-19 related deaths registered in Northern Ireland. The government statistics agency Nisra said in the week up to 10 September, the virus was mentioned on the death certificates of 61 people, a decrease of three on the previous week. It brings the total number of deaths registered by the agency to 3,307. The Department of Health's total for the same date, based on a positive test result being recorded, was 2,445.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-58596552>

Florida surpasses 50K COVID deaths after battling delta wave

Florida surpassed 50,000 coronavirus deaths since the pandemic began, health officials reported Thursday, with more than one fourth of those succumbing this summer as the state battled a fierce surge in infections fueled by the delta variant. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tallied 50,811 deaths after adding more than 1,500 COVID-19 deaths provided Thursday by the state's health department. Those reported deaths occurred over various dates in recent weeks. Florida has the 11th worst per-capita death rate among the 50 states, the CDC says. New Jersey, Mississippi and New York have had the worst, but Florida has risen from the 17th spot in the past two weeks.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-florida-pandemics-coronavirus-pandemic-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-e614f50ef331b2bb0990c3a0f0369bb3>

New Lockdown

COVID-hit Chinese city tells residents to stay home as holiday starts

A city in southeast China hit by COVID-19 told residents on Saturday to stay home and closed various venues, as infections spread in the country's latest hotspot during a key holiday travel season. The government of Xiamen, in a series of notices, told residents not to leave home unnecessarily, closed parks, scenic spots and sports venues, and halted mass activities including tours, fairs and performances.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/covid-hit-chinese-city-tells-residents-stay-home-holiday-starts-2021-09-18/>