

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

4th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

Japan's Unemployment Rate Jumps as Covid Restrictions Hit Activity

Japan's unemployment rate edged up in January as a record wave of Covid-19 infections prompted renewed restrictions that are likely to continue slowing progress in the recovery of the labor market in February and March. The jobless rate rose to 2.8% as the number of people working fell by a seasonally adjusted 190,000 from December, the ministry of internal affairs reported Friday. Analysts had expected the unemployment rate to hold steady at 2.7%. A separate report offered a slightly more encouraging view of the labor market as job offers outnumbered applicants by a greater margin, a leading indicator of the employment trend. There were 120 jobs offered in January for every 100 applicants, compared with 116 positions a month earlier.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/japan-s-unemployment-edges-up-in-january-amid-record-covid-wave>

France to suspend Covid vaccine passport rules from March 14

France has announced that Covid passport rules will be lifted later this month. Prime Minister Jean Castex said regulations requiring people to show they had been vaccinated to access certain public venues will be relaxed from March 14, as infection numbers are dropping across the country. "The health situation is improving," Castex told TF1 television on Thursday. The relaxation will come into force about a month before the presidential election. The first round of the French election takes place on April 10. The expected run-off between candidates takes place a fortnight after that. The man who oversaw the pandemic, President Emmanuel Macron is the favourite to win again.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/france-covid-vaccine-passport-end-date-b2027710.html>

Covid News: C.D.C. Drops Contact Tracing Recommendation

Almost two years after the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called for 100,000 contact tracers to contain the coronavirus, the C.D.C. said this week that it no longer recommends universal case investigation and contact tracing. Instead it encourages health departments to focus those practices on high-risk settings. The turning point comes as the national outlook continues to improve rapidly, with new cases, hospitalizations and deaths all continuing to fall even as the path out of the pandemic remains complicated. It also reflects the reality that contact-tracing programs in about half of U.S. states have been eliminated.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/02/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine>

How Covid-19 Could Shift From Pandemic to Endemic Phase

What is an endemic and how will we know when Covid-19 becomes one? WSJ's Daniela Hernandez breaks down how public-health experts assess when a virus like Covid-19 enters an endemic stage.

<https://www.wsj.com/video/series/daniela-hernandez/how-covid-19-could-shift-from-pandemic-to-endemic-phase/82D13B18-39D6-4E13-AFDE-6295F1F20A36>

Turkey relaxes mask mandate amid drop in COVID-19 cases

Turkey relaxed its mask mandate on Wednesday and is also scrapping the use of codes assigned to citizens that allowed authorities to track those who have been in contact with infected people. Turkey relaxed its mask mandate on Wednesday, allowing people to ditch them in open-air spaces and in places with sufficient ventilation and where social distancing can be maintained. In a news conference following a meeting of the country's Covid-19 advisory council, Health Minister Fahrettin

Koca said people would be required to continue wearing masks in planes, buses, theatres, cinemas, hospitals and classrooms. In other steps, Turkey will no longer close down classes where two or more students have tested positive for the virus, the minister said.

<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/turkey-relaxes-mask-mandate-amid-drop-covid-19-cases>

Greece lifts mask-wearing outdoors as COVID infections recede

Greece will lift its requirement of mask-wearing outdoors from Saturday, its health minister said on Wednesday, as COVID-19 infections are trending lower. The advisory committee of infectious disease experts recommended the lifting and the government accepted the recommendation, Health Minister Thanos Plevris said. "But it is highly recommended to wear masks outdoors when there is a lot of crowding," he said. The move comes after the lifting of curbs that barred standing customers at bars and night entertainment establishments earlier this month and the resumption of school excursions.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-lifts-mask-wearing-outdoors-covid-infections-recede-2022-03-02/>

Moscow drops QR codes, other COVID-19 restrictions

Russian capital Moscow will no longer require locals to use QR codes to prove they are vaccinated or immune to COVID-19 and is dropping all restrictions at entertainment and sport venues, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said on Thursday. The situation in the city is gradually normalising with fewer infections and hospitalisations reported, Sobyenin wrote on his blog.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moscow-drops-qr-codes-other-covid-19-restrictions-2022-03-03/>

Sweden sees clear drop in COVID cases despite scrapped curbs

COVID-19 cases in Sweden are falling sharply, the country's health agency said on Thursday, even as nearly all pandemic-related restrictions were lifted less than a month ago. The government removed curbs on restaurant opening hours and attendance limits for indoor venues on Feb. 9, in a move that drew criticism from scientists at the time. The number of cases is difficult to assess in Sweden given reduced testing, but the proportion of positive cases and the number of patients requiring hospital care have both declined. "There are no indications that the opening increased spread so we assess that it was relevant and correct," Health Agency Director-General Karin Tegmark Wisell told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-sees-clear-drop-covid-cases-despite-scrapped-curbs-2022-03-03/>

Why formally ending the pandemic is going to be a huge headache for the entire health care system

President Biden made it clear this week he wants to transition toward a new phase of the Covid-19 pandemic — one where people are “moving forward safely, back to more normal routines,” as he said this week.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/03/03/formally-ending-the-pandemic-is-going-to-be-a-huge-headache-for-the-entire-health-care-system/>

Covid Deaths Among Hong Kong's Young Children Alarm Parents

Three children under the age of five have died in Hong Kong's spiraling Covid outbreak, a disproportionately large number that has local parents anxious, though pediatricians say it could just be a grim coincidence. While the numbers are too low to draw any conclusions, according to experts, the children -- aged 11 months, 3 and 4 years old -- make up nearly 0.3% of the 1,153 fatalities that have occurred in this wave of infections. None had known underlying health conditions. Their deaths are being investigated by the coroner, according to the Hospital Authority. The child deaths are higher than in countries such as Australia and Singapore, which originally adhered to the same zero-tolerance policy as Hong Kong but are now opening up

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/covid-deaths-among-hong-kong-s-young-children-alarm-parent>

Exit Strategies

White House unveils Covid strategy to usher in new normal as pandemic eases

The White House released a 96-page plan on Wednesday to shift the fight against Covid-19 and “help move America forward safely”, past a crisis footing to a new “normal”. Announcement of the plan follows promises made in Joe Biden’s State of the Union speech, which emphasized rapid rollout of a new “test to treat” model with free anti-viral pills after a positive test. This comes just a week after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention loosened mask guidance nationally, as more and more Democratic leaders have lifted pandemic-era restrictions and with the president urging workers to return to the office in-person.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/white-house-new-covid-strategy-test-to-treat>

Why are COVID vaccination rates still low in some countries?

Why are COVID-19 vaccination rates still low in some countries? Limited supplies remain a problem, but experts say other challenges now include unpredictable deliveries, weak health care systems and vaccine hesitancy. Most countries with low vaccination rates are in Africa. As of late February, 13 countries in Africa have fully vaccinated less than 5% of their populations, according to Phionah Atuhebwe, an officer for the World Health Organization's regional office for Africa. Many rich countries had planned to donate doses once their own populations were vaccinated, but the emergence of the delta and omicron variants spurred booster campaigns that further delayed those plans. Vaccine makers have largely declined to share their formulas or technology, further restricting production.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/covid-africa-world-health-organization-yemen-syria-b2027424.html>

Biden's Covid-19 Promises Aren't All Scientifically Possible Yet

Biden’s most notable comment on the virus was the promise to make testing widely available at pharmacies and allow those who test positive to get free access to antiviral pills. That makes sense because in clinical trials, Pfizer’s drug Paxlovid showed close to 90% efficacy at reducing hospitalizations when given to people who test positive for Covid-19 within five days of reporting symptoms. But giving away Paxlovid isn’t quite that simple, because the drug interferes with the absorption of other drugs. Many people who are vulnerable enough to be good candidates for Paxlovid are going to be on multiple other drugs and would need a doctor’s supervision to take the five-day course of pills safely.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-02/biden-s-covid-19-promises-aren-t-all-scientifically-possible-yet>

Too early for China to seek 'coexistence' with COVID - govt expert

It is still too early for China to consider easing its stringent coronavirus restrictions, with the highly infectious Omicron strain still capable of causing large numbers of deaths, said Liang Wannian, head of an expert group on COVID-19 prevention. Describing China's so-called 'dynamic clearance' strategy as a "magic weapon", Liang said in an interview with China's state broadcaster CCTV that "coexisting" with the virus was still not an option. He said Omicron was still significantly more deadly than influenza and capable of putting great strain on the country's medical resources.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/too-early-china-seek-coexistence-with-covid-govt-expert-2022-03-03/>

WHO sees little impact on COVID-19 vaccine supplies to Africa from Ukraine war

The World Health Organization does not expect any immediate impact on vaccine supply to Africa from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, senior officials on the continent said on Thursday. Russia's Sputnik vaccines are part of an effort by wealthier countries to plug the COVID-19 vaccine gap in Africa, but

so far they remain a minimal component of imports to the continent. Russia's invasion entered its second week on Thursday and there are concerns that the focus on the war could interrupt vaccine shipments to Africa.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/who-sees-little-impact-covid-19-vaccine-supplies-africa-over-war-ukraine-2022-03-03/>

France to lift COVID vaccine passport rules on March 14, just before presidential election

Rules requiring people to show a COVID-19 vaccine passport to access venues will be lifted in France on March 14 - about a month before the presidential election - said French Prime Minister Jean Castex, as the country gradually eases COVID health protocols amid signs the virus is receding in France. "The health situation is improving," Castex told TF1 television on Thursday. Face masks will also no longer be needed indoors from March 14, with the exception of public transport.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/covid-vaccine-passport-rules-be-lifted-france-march-14-bfm-tv-2022-03-03/>

Test to treat, variant vaccines part of new federal COVID-19 plan

Members of the Biden COVID-19 preparedness team addressed the nation unmasked and from the same room as they spoke about the country's move to a "new normal" stage of the pandemic, where COVID-19 is no longer a national emergency. Echoing statements made during President Joe Biden's State of the Union address, Jeff Zients, White House COVID response coordinator, said, "We have reached a new moment in the fight against COVID-19 because of the significant progress we made as a country, and we are moving forward safely."

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/test-treat-variant-vaccines-part-new-federal-covid-19-plan>

As Omicron recedes, White House shifts to a more targeted Covid strategy

The threat of the Omicron variant is receding and cities around the country are lifting their mask mandates, but the Biden administration isn't ready to declare an end to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the White House is out with a new plan focused on continued, commonsense public health measures like expanding access to coronavirus therapies and improving ventilation in indoor spaces. While the new strategy is largely a continuation of existing efforts, it represents a shift from policies aimed at preventing the spread of Covid and toward more targeted efforts to prevent society's most vulnerable from becoming severely ill. The overarching goal is to move to a world in which the government allows life to proceed as normal, while keeping a watchful eye for new outbreaks or viral variants.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/03/02/as-omicron-recedes-white-house-shifts-to-a-more-targeted-covid-strategy/>

Partisan Exits

The surgeon general calls on Big Tech to turn over Covid-19 misinformation data.

President Biden's surgeon general on Thursday formally requested that the major tech platforms submit information about the scale of Covid-19 misinformation on social networks, search engines, crowdsourced platforms, e-commerce platforms and instant messaging systems. A request for information from the surgeon general's office demanded that tech platforms send data and analysis on the prevalence of Covid-19 misinformation on their sites, starting with common examples of vaccine misinformation documented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The notice asks the companies to submit "exactly how many users saw or may have been exposed to instances of Covid-19 misinformation," as well as aggregate data on demographics that may have been disproportionately exposed to or affected by the misinformation.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/03/technology/surgeon-general-covid-misinformation.html>

U.S. healthcare agencies request data on COVID misinformation

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Office of the Surgeon General will request input on COVID-19 misinformation online as they seek to understand the role it played during the

pandemic and its impact on health decisions made by individuals. The agencies will put out a Request For Information (RFI) on Thursday to collect public comments and data within 60 days from stakeholders such as academic institutions, advocacy groups, government entities and community-based organizations.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-healthcare-agencies-request-data-covid-misinformation-2022-03-03/>

Continued Lockdown

Hong Kong transport operators, supermarket cut services as COVID surges

Hong Kong's subway operator, bus and ferry companies, and one of its biggest supermarket chains, are cutting back services due to a worsening COVID-19 outbreak that has seen daily infections explode this year. Authorities reported a new daily record of 56,827 new infections and 144 deaths in the Chinese-ruled city on Thursday, an exponential rise from around 100 in early February and a clean three-month streak of zero cases at the end of 2021. The surge in cases and mixed messaging from government officials have triggered an exodus of people from the global financial hub, where authorities are clinging to a "dynamic zero" policy that seeks to eradicate all outbreaks.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-transport-operators-supermarkets-cut-services-covid-cases-surge-2022-03-03/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Covid Hospitalizations in NYC Saw Biggest Racial Gap During Omicron

Black New Yorkers were hospitalized at two times the rate of White New Yorkers during the winter omicron surge. It's the widest disparity in hospitalizations seen in two years of the pandemic, according to the New York City Health Department. "This is a significant inequity — and a particularly alarming one — so far into the pandemic," said Michelle Morse, NYC Health's chief medical officer. And it came during a time when the dominant variant had a lower risk of hospitalization than its predecessor, delta. Despite the city's relative success in closing race-based vaccination gaps, long-standing inequities in the U.S. health care system have proven difficult to overcome. A new report from the department highlights how a swath of social and economic factors contribute to disparate Covid-19 outcomes based on race.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/covid-hospitalizations-in-nyc-saw-biggest-racial-gap-during-omicron>

Brazil Is Now Producing Its Own Covid-19 Vaccine Doses

On Valentine's Day, scientists in Brazil produced a special gift: the first Covid-19 vaccine doses produced fully within the country. These used active pharmaceutical ingredients from Brazil, drew on a technology-transfer agreement with AstraZeneca, and were produced in a new vaccine production facility run by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) and the Immunobiological Technology Institute (Instituto de Tecnologia em Imunobiológicos, or Bio-Manguinhos). The new lab expects to produce 120 million Covid-19 doses by the middle of 2022. This would allow for one dose each for over half of Brazil's population

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinero/2022/03/02/brazil-is-now-producing-its-own-covid-19-vaccine-doses/>

Additional doses of covid-19 vaccine recommended for immunocompromised patients

Additional doses of covid-19 vaccine are recommended for immunocompromised patients, especially for organ transplant recipients who are least able to make antibodies to fight off coronavirus, say experts in The BMJ today. The findings reinforce the importance of additional doses of covid-19 vaccine to protect people with a weakened immune system. It is already known that after vaccination, people with a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) are less able to make antibodies to fight off viruses, such as influenza, than people with a healthy immune system (immunocompetent). But less is known about the response to covid-19 vaccines, particularly mRNA vaccines.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220303/Additional-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-recommended-for-immunocompromised-patients.aspx>

COVID-19 vaccine prior to infection may reduce long COVID symptoms

A new study investigates whether receiving two doses of a coronavirus vaccine before a SARS-CoV-2 infection is associated with reduced long COVID symptoms after 12 weeks. COVID-19 vaccines given prior to infection appear effective in resisting long COVID following breakthrough infections or infection after two doses. These findings have relevance for United Kingdom public health initiatives aimed at reducing the prevalence of long Covid in the U.K. population, especially in disadvantaged communities where prevalence is higher.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/vaccinated-less-likely-to-develop-long-covid>

Survival after in-hospital cardiac arrest 35% lower in COVID-19 patients

Adult COVID-19 patients who had an in-hospital cardiac arrest (IHCA) were 35% less likely to receive potentially life-saving defibrillation without delay and survive to hospital release, according to a study today in JAMA Network Open. University of Iowa at Iowa City researchers led the study of 24,915 patients with IHCA from 286 US hospitals, of whom 5,916 (23.7%) had COVID-19, from March to December 2020. The research team analyzed data from the American Heart Association's Get With the Guidelines Registry (GWTG-R), which compiles information on patients who have IHCA at participating US hospitals. Among the 24,915 patients with IHCA, average age was 64.7 years, 39.5% were women, 24.8% were Black, 61.1% were White, 3.8% were of other races, and 10.3% were of unknown race.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/survival-after-hospital-cardiac-arrest-35-lower-covid-19-patients>

COVID-19: How ventilation, filtration, humidity prevent transmission

Researchers from the University of Oregon measured the amount of virus particles that 11 students with COVID-19 released during certain activities. The research team found higher ventilation, filtration, and humidity levels decreased the amount of virus particles in the air. Scientists believe their findings can assist building operators with creating safer indoor environments.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-ventilation-filtration-and-humidity-may-prevent-coronavirus-transmission>

Covid-19 news: WHO reports 25 per cent rise in depression and anxiety

A World Health Organization (WHO) briefing suggests that depression and anxiety have risen substantially during the coronavirus pandemic, with women and young people among the worst affected. Based on a review of existing evidence into covid-19's impact on mental health, the briefing largely attributes the rise to the unprecedented stress of social isolation, as well as grieving loved ones, financial worries and fear of infection. Most of the countries surveyed (90 per cent) have included mental health support in their covid-19 recovery plans, however, the WHO has stressed there are still gaps in care.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-who-reports-25-per-cent-rise-in-depression-and-anxiety/>

U.S. to share some coronavirus technologies with World Health Organization

The Biden administration will share U.S. government-devised coronavirus technologies with the World Health Organization, a policy shift intended to allow other countries to replicate some American scientific breakthroughs and better fight the pandemic abroad, federal officials said Thursday. Under the plan, some technologies now being developed by the National Institutes of Health will be licensed to the WHO's COVID-19 Technology Access Pool, senior NIH official Anthony S. Fauci told reporters. The technologies will also be sub-licensed to the United Nations-backed Medicines Patent Pool.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-to-share-some-coronavirus-technologies-with-world-health-organization/ar-AAUysME>

Pfizer to supply 10M courses of COVID drug Paxlovid to developing nations in 2022- Reuters

Pfizer (PFE) is expected to provide about 10M courses its COVID-19 therapy Paxlovid to low and middle-income nations in 2022, Reuters reported

<https://seekingalpha.com/news/3808852-pfizer-to-supply-10m-courses-of-covid-drug-paxlovid-to-developing-nations-in-2022-reuters>

Regeneron must face patent lawsuit over COVID-19 treatment

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc on Wednesday failed to persuade a federal judge in New York to throw out a lawsuit over its alleged misuse of a patented protein to test its breakthrough COVID-19 treatment. U.S. District Judge Philip Halpern said during an oral argument that he could not grant Regeneron's request at an early stage of the case to find it immune from Allele Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals Inc's infringement claims.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/regeneron-must-face-patent-lawsuit-over-covid-19-treatment-2022-03-02/>

WHO recommends Merck's COVID pill for high-risk patients

A World Health Organization (WHO) panel on Wednesday backed the use of Merck & Co Inc's COVID-19 antiviral pill for high-risk patients. The expert panel conditionally recommended the pill, molnupiravir, for patients with non-severe disease who are at high risk of hospitalisation, such as the immunocompromised, the unvaccinated, older people and those with chronic diseases. The recommendation was based on new data from six clinical trials involving 4,796 patients.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-recommends-mercks-covid-pill-high-risk-patients-2022-03-02/>

PAHO says women disproportionately affected by COVID-19 pandemic

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on Wednesday said that across the Americas the COVID-19 pandemic has placed the most vulnerable at greater risk and in a region rife with inequality women have been disproportionately affected.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/paho-says-women-disproportionately-affected-by-covid-19-pandemic-2022-03-02/>

Lilly, Incyte Arthritis Drug Baricitinib Cut Covid Deaths in Study

Eli Lilly & Co. and Incyte Corp.'s rheumatoid arthritis drug baricitinib reduced the risk of death from Covid-19 in a large U.K. study, bolstering evidence that the class of inflammation-fighting medicines can help infected patients. Adding baricitinib to standard treatments lowered the risk of death among hospitalized Covid patients by 13%, according to results from the U.K. trial, called Recovery, in 8,156 people with the disease. Most of the patients also received steroids, and about one-quarter also got a different type of arthritis drug, Roche Holding AG's Actemra.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/lilly-incyte-arthritis-drug-reduced-deaths-from-covid-in-study>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Scotland records almost 10,000 Covid-19 infections as 36 die with virus

Thirty-six Scots have died with coronavirus in the past 24 hours, figures have revealed, as another 9,491 cases were reported. There were 1,272 people in hospital on Wednesday with a recently confirmed case of Covid-19, Scottish Government statistics showed, with 16 in intensive care. Ten of these had been in intensive care for longer than 28 days. The latest figures showed 36 people had died within the past day with the virus, bringing the total number who have tested positive and then died since the start of the outbreak to 10,824. Statisticians said from March 1 the national case definition had been updated to include reinfections.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/scotland-scottish-government-covid-b2027774.html>

As Cases Skyrocket, New Zealand Finally Faces Its Covid Reckoning

For much of the past two years, Covid-19 was a phantom presence in New Zealand, a plague experienced mostly through news reports from faraway lands. Now, suddenly, it has become a highly personal threat. New Zealand is being walloped by a major outbreak of the Omicron variant, with the virus spreading at what may be the fastest rate in the world. On Thursday, the country reported 23,194 new cases, a once unthinkable number in a small island nation of about five million people where the record daily case count before the current wave was in the low hundreds. The explosion in cases has come as the government, under political pressure, loosened its strict regulations meant to prevent the spread of the virus, and as the highly transmissible Omicron reduced the effectiveness of the controls that remained.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/03/world/australia/new-zealand-covid-omicron.html>

South Korean PM tests positive for COVID as infections surge

South Korean Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum tested positive for the coronavirus on Thursday, his office said, as daily infections hit unprecedented levels this week, driven by the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. Kim has steered anti-virus efforts, holding regular meetings with officials and experts, and visiting medical and educational facilities to check quarantine work and promote vaccination.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korean-pm-tests-positive-covid-infections-surge-2022-03-03/>

Mexico reports 304 more COVID-19 deaths, 12342 new cases

Mexico reported 304 more fatalities from COVID-19 on Wednesday, bringing the total death toll since the pandemic began to 318,835, according to health ministry data. The country also reported 12,342 new confirmed cases of the virus, bringing the total to 5,534,086.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/mexico-reports-304-more-covid-19-deaths-12342-new-cases-2022-03-03/>

Hong Kong reports 56827 COVID-19 cases, new record daily high

Hong Kong reported a record daily high of 56,827 new COVID-19 infections on Thursday and 144 deaths, as a worsening outbreak overwhelms healthcare facilities and sees authorities scramble to contain cases in the Asian financial centre.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-56827-covid-19-cases-new-record-daily-high-2022-03-03/>

Global COVID cases, deaths drop, except in key hot spots

Overall, cases declined 16% last week compared to the week before, reflecting a 4-week downward trend. Meanwhile, deaths dropped by 10%. Of the more than 10 million cases reported to the WHO last week, the countries that reported the most were Germany, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, and Brazil. Of the roughly 60,000 new deaths that were reported, the United States had the most, with more than 13,000 fatalities. The Western Pacific region was the only part of the world in which cases are climbing. The region is home to several of the current hot spots, which include Hong Kong, New Zealand, and South Korea. All are experiencing later Omicron surges. Hong Kong's cases today reached a new daily record, with 55,353 cases. Health officials have said they don't expect COVID-19 to peak in Hong Kong until later this month. New Zealand today reported 24,106 cases, also a new daily record, as police removed an encampment of people protesting the country's COVID-19 measures.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/03/global-covid-cases-deaths-drop-except-key-hot-spots>