

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 14th Apr 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **Transportation Mask Mandate to Be Extended 15 Days**

Passengers will be required to wear masks on airplanes and other forms of transportation through May 3 as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looks to evaluate whether rising Covid-19 case numbers will lead to more hospitalizations, the CDC said. The Transportation Security Administration's directive requiring masks was set to expire after April 18 but is being extended another 15 days. The recent rise in newly reported Covid-19 cases in parts of the country, fueled by the Omicron BA.2 variant, has complicated efforts to topple one of the most visible and persistent remnants of pandemic restrictions. The extension will give additional time for the CDC to learn more about BA.2, the latest Covid-19 variant, and make an informed decision, the CDC said. Since early April, there have been increases in the seven-day moving average of cases in the U.S. and the extension will help the CDC assess the potential impact of the uptick on severe disease, including hospitalizations and deaths, and healthcare-system capacity, the CDC said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/transportation-mask-mandate-to-be-extended-15-days-11649863476>

#### **Diversifying supply chains from China 'probably good for everyone' -World Bank chief**

Countries around the world are working to diversify their supply chains and reduce their dependence on China, which is "probably good for everyone," World Bank President David Malpass said on Tuesday. Malpass said cross-border trade would remain important to the global economy, and China - already the world's second largest economy and likely to become the largest - had a big role to play as both a consumer and producer of goods. But, speaking at an event in Warsaw, he said China also needed to be part of a value system shared by other countries in the global trading system, and added, "I don't know that that will happen."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/diversifying-supply-chains-china-probably-good-everyone-world-bank-chief-2022-04-12/>

#### **Mexico plans vaccinations for more children, presses for COVAX doses**

Mexico will vaccinate more children against COVID-19, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Wednesday, urging global health authorities to deliver the doses it had ordered for the purpose. Mexico last year began inoculating some at-risk children, and children with disabilities, but has so far held back from rolling out a broader vaccination program for minors. Lopez Obrador said he was awaiting doses under the COVAX program, run by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI).

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-plans-vaccinations-more-children-presses-covax-doses-2022-04-13/>

#### **US renews COVID-19 public health emergency**

The United States on Wednesday renewed the COVID-19 public health emergency, allowing millions of Americans to keep getting free tests, vaccines and treatments for at least three more months. The public health emergency was initially declared in January 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic began. It has been renewed each quarter since and was due to expire on April 16. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in a statement said it was extending the public health emergency and that it will give states 60 days notice prior to termination or expiration. This could be the last time HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra extends it, policy experts have said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-renews-covid-19-public-health-emergency-2022-04>

### **A million empty spaces: Chronicling COVID's cruel US toll**

On the deadliest day of a horrific week in April 2020, COVID took the lives of 816 people in New York City alone. Lost in the blizzard of pandemic data that's been swirling ever since is the fact that 43-year-old Fernando Morales was one of them. Two years and nearly 1 million deaths later, his brother, Adam Almonte, fingers the bass guitar Morales left behind and visualizes him playing tunes, a treasured blue bucket hat pulled low over his eyes. Walking through a park overlooking the Hudson River, he recalls long-ago days tossing a baseball with Morales and sharing tuna sandwiches. He replays old messages just to hear Morales' voice. "When he passed away it was like I lost a brother, a parent and a friend all at the same time," says Almonte, 16 years younger than Morales, who shared his love of books, video games and wrestling, and worked for the city processing teachers' pensions. "I used to call him just any time I was going through something difficult and I needed reassurance, knowing he would be there... That's an irreplaceable type of love."

<https://apnews.com/ea745d462d47a65029a8c507c94e679e>

### **Herd immunity now seems impossible. Welcome to the age of Covid reinfection**

The rising number of documented Covid reinfections, sometimes occurring relatively quickly after the initial infection, as well as the high number of infections with the Omicron variant among the fully vaccinated, means that herd immunity is likely impossible - even if seroprevalence hits 100%. Relying on herd immunity to manage Covid-19 rather than on the strategies of east Asian countries to suppress it until a vaccine was available was a gamble that Britain took early in March and unfortunately lost. Especially given the presence of variants, Sars-CoV-2 will just keep circulating and reinfecting people.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/12/herd-immunity-covid-reinfection-virus-world>

### **Greece to lift most remaining coronavirus measures**

Greece's health minister announced Wednesday that most remaining coronavirus measures will be lifted over the next couple of months until the end of August, including the use of vaccine certificates for access to certain services and the mandatory use of masks indoors. Health Minister Thanos Plevris said the need for vaccine certificates or negative COVID-19 tests will be lifted from May 1 to Aug. 31, and would be re-evaluated on Sept. 1. The use of masks indoors will no longer be mandatory as of June 1

<https://apnews.com/34379f432aa7881a2140a6889b357021>

### **Coronavirus: Pupil Covid absence rate falls to lowest level**

In Northern Ireland, the number of school pupils absent due to Covid-19 has fallen to its lowest level of the 2021/22 school year. That is according to attendance data provided by schools and published by the Department of Education (DE). In the last full week before most schools broke up for Easter only 1 in every 200 pupils (0.5%) was off sick with Covid-19. However, pupil absences for other reasons are higher than they were pre-pandemic.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-61094664>

### **Dutch COVID-19 rate sees significant drop - EURACTIV.com**

The average number of daily COVID-19 infections in the Netherlands has fallen below 10,000 for the first time since November, health authorities revealed in a new report. According to the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, 66,788 people tested positive since 4 April - a 48% drop compared to the previous week when 129,188 people tested positive. Meanwhile, the Dutch have slowly relaxed COVID-19 rules like lifting the mandatory mask and teleworking requirements.

[https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/dutch-covid-19-rate-sees-significant-drop/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/dutch-covid-19-rate-sees-significant-drop/)

### **COVID-19: Emotions released as New Zealand eases border restrictions for first time in**

## **two years**

Border restrictions for New Zealand have eased, with residents, visa holders and Australians now able to enter quarantine-free after two years. Other travellers will be allowed easy access from next month.

<https://news.sky.com/video/covid-19-emotions-released-as-new-zealand-eases-border-restrictions-for-first-time-in-two-years-12589174>

## **IMF board approves new trust to help members deal with climate change, pandemics**

The International Monetary Fund's executive board on Wednesday approved creation of a new facility to help low-income and most middle-income countries deal with longer-term challenges such as climate change and pandemics. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva announced approval of the new Resilience and Sustainability Trust in a statement after the board meeting, and said it would take effect from May 1, with a goal of raising at least \$45 billion. She said the trust would amplify the impact of last year's \$650 billion allocation of IMF Special Drawing Rights by allowing richer members to channel their emergency reserves to allow vulnerable countries to address longer-term challenges that threatened their economic stability.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/exclusive-imf-hopes-mobilize-45-bln-new-trust-aid-broader-range-countries-2022-04-13/>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **China Flirts With Shorter Quarantines for Overseas Arrivals Amid Shanghai Covid Outbreak**

China is moving tentatively forward with a plan to test shortened quarantines for international arrivals as it seeks to gradually open up and ease the economic damage wrought by strict Covid-19 control policies, even as the country's financial capital struggles to contain a major outbreak. International travelers arriving in eight pilot cities will be subject to 10 days of quarantine in a designated facility, followed by seven days of self monitoring at home, according to a copy of a document issued by China's cabinet, the State Council, that has circulated widely on Chinese social media and was verified by people who have seen the original.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-flirts-with-shorter-quarantines-for-overseas-arrivals-amid-shanghai-covid-outbreak-11649858993>

### **Delta Air Lines drops surcharge for unvaccinated employees**

Delta Air Lines has dropped a \$200 per month surcharge that it had been levying against unvaccinated employees who were on the company's health plan. "We have dropped as of this month the additional insurance surcharge given the fact that we really do believe that the pandemic has moved to a seasonal virus," CEO Ed Bastian said on a call Wednesday with analysts and reporters. "Any employees that haven't been vaccinated will not be paying extra insurance costs going forward." U.S. airlines tried different approaches to get employees vaccinated against COVID-19, including a mandate by United Airlines, which ended up dismissing about 200 employees. Delta was the only one to impose an insurance surcharge, and it credited the move with helping get more than 90% of its U.S.-based workers vaccinated.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-ed-bastian-f8aec5e1512625f2baf0399cd8bcc094>

### **Fourth dose of a COVID-19 vaccine available in the NT, as testing rules ease for those recovering from the virus**

In Australia, a fourth dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is now available to eligible Territorians, Northern Territory Health Minister Natasha Fyles has announced. The dose is recommended as an extra booster shot for vulnerable people who are at greatest risk of severe illness from the coronavirus.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-13/nt-fourth-covid-booster-vaccine-available/100987098>

### **How accurate are COVID-19 rapid antigen tests, and when is the best time to use them?**

Rapid antigen tests, better known as RATs, have become an important tool in Australia's arsenal against COVID-19. While PCR tests are still available, many of us have turned to rapid tests out of convenience or as part of a requirement to return to work or school. RATs can provide results within minutes, but they also have their limitations: they're less accurate, cost money (unlike PCRs, which are free), and can provide false negative or false positive results.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/health/2022-04-13/covid-rapid-antigen-test-most-common-questions/100983842>

### **The CDC's new Covid-19 guidelines are facing their first test**

In late February, the CDC made big changes to its recommendations for monitoring and responding to Covid-19 surges. Now, as US cases are once more on the rise, these recommendations face their first test. But how will we know if they are working? The hard truth, several public health experts tell Vox, is that determining whether they are effective will be difficult. Even in the best-case scenario, where institutions follow the guidelines and the latest wave recedes, it would be hard to prove that the CDC's framework deserves the credit.

<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/23020191/cdc-covid-19-guidelines-omicron-ba2>

### **China trying out reduced quarantine for some groups in eight cities - media**

China is trying out reduced quarantine times for overseas arrivals and close contacts of positive cases in eight cities, in a potential easing of some of the world's most stringent pandemic entry controls, financial media outlet Caixin reported. Shanghai and Guangzhou are among the cities picked by the State Council for a trial that will see quarantine times reduced to 10 days from 14 days currently, plus seven days of health monitoring with regular testing as before, Caixin said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-trying-out-reduced-quarantine-some-groups-eight-cities-media-2022-04-13/>

### **No relaxation of COVID measures for China, says President Xi**

China must not relax COVID control and prevention measures, President Xi Jinping said during a visit to the southern island of Hainan on Wednesday, state radio reported. His comments came as China's commercial capital, Shanghai, reported more than 25,000 new cases. It is under huge pressure to contain China's biggest COVID outbreak since the coronavirus was first discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/no-relaxation-covid-measures-china-says-president-xi-2022-04-13/>

### **S.Korea to expand rollout of second COVID booster shot to people over 60**

South Korea's health ministry said on Wednesday it will administer a second COVID-19 vaccine booster shot for people over 60 as the country continues to battle the highly contagious Omicron variant. "The government plans to expand the fourth round of vaccination to those aged 60 and older," Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol told a meeting, adding the infection rate in the age group has continued to rise to stand above 20%.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-give-second-covid-booster-shot-people-over-60-yonhap-2022-04-13/>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Lockdown Financial Aid in China Leaves Households Behind**

China's government is channeling its Covid-related financial aid toward businesses rather than households, an approach that's increasingly being challenged as consumers struggle to cope under stringent lockdowns. Officials say the support for firms aims to preserve jobs, but many households required to stay at home for weeks on end are battling to pay rent and other living costs, according to social media posts and charity workers. A total of 45 Chinese cities are now imposing partial or total lockdowns, according to Nomura Holdings Inc., restricting the movement of some 370 million

people.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-13/lockdown-financial-aid-in-china-leaves-households-behind>

### **UK's Johnson did not break COVID laws 'with malice', minister says**

A senior British minister said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Boris Johnson did not set out to break COVID laws with malice and is mortified after he was fined by police for attending a gathering during lockdown, as calls mounted for Johnson to quit. Johnson, his wife Carrie and finance minister Rishi Sunak were fined on Tuesday for breaching laws the government imposed to curb the coronavirus, drawing a wave of condemnation, including from the families of those who died alone during the pandemic. Senior ministers have rallied round Johnson while a number of previous critics in his Conservative Party have said now was not the time for a change in leadership given the war in Ukraine

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-johnson-did-not-break-covid-laws-with-malice-minister-says-2022-04-13/>

### **Humbled British PM apologises after fine for lockdown birthday bash**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised but defied calls to resign on Tuesday after being fined for breaking coronavirus lockdown rules by attending a gathering in his office to celebrate his birthday. Johnson said people had the right to expect better after he, his wife, and his finance minister Rishi Sunak were fined for breaching laws his government brought in to curb COVID-19. "It didn't occur to me that, as I say, that I was in breach of the rules. I now humbly accept that I was," Johnson said. "I think the best thing I can do now is, having settled the fine, is focus on the job and that's what I'm going to do."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-issues-more-than-50-fines-downing-st-lockdown-parties-2022-04-12/>

## **Continued Lockdown**

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### **COVID-19: Shanghai firefighters use drones to deliver medicine to people in lockdown**

Amid a lockdown in China's most populous city, firefighters have used drones to deliver medicines to people in contactless fashion. Around 25,000 new cases were reported in the city on Monday.

<https://news.sky.com/video/covid-19-shanghai-firefighters-use-drones-to-deliver-medicine-to-people-in-lockdown-12589016>

### **Analysis: China's widening COVID curbs threaten global supply chain paralysis**

China's race to stop the spread of COVID-19 is clogging highways and ports, stranding workers and shutting countless factories - disruptions that are rippling through global supply chains for goods ranging from electric vehicles to iPhones. While some factory owners try to tough it out through "closed loop" management that keeps workers isolated inside, some said that is becoming harder to sustain given the extent of local COVID-19 curbs aimed at heading off the Omicron variant, complicating efforts to procure materials or ship products.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-widening-covid-curbs-threaten-global-supply-chain-paralysis-2022-04-13/>

### **More Taiwan firms suspend production in China as COVID spreads**

More than 30 Taiwan companies, many making electronics parts, said on Wednesday that government COVID-19 control measures in eastern China had led them to suspend production until at least next week, as disruption from the measures spreads. China has put Shanghai under a tight lockdown since late March and neighbouring Kunshan has also tightened curbs to control the country's biggest COVID-19 outbreak since the coronavirus was discovered in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan. Global companies, from mobile phone to chip makers, are highly dependent on China and Southeast Asia for production and have been diversifying their supply chains after the pandemic caused havoc.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/more-taiwan-firms-say-east-china-covid-curbs-stop-production-2022-04-13/>

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## **Shanghai vows punishment for COVID lockdown violators as cases hit 25000**

China's commercial capital, Shanghai, warned on Wednesday that anyone who violates COVID-19 lockdown rules will be dealt with strictly, while also rallying citizens to defend their city as its tally of new cases rebounded to more than 25,000. The city police department spelled out the restrictions that most of the 25 million residents are facing and called on them to "fight the epidemic with one heart ... and work together for an early victory". "Those who violate the provisions of this notice will be dealt with in strict accordance with the law by public security organs ... If it constitutes a crime, they will be investigated according to law," the department said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-warns-covid-lockdown-violators-will-be-punished-cases-hit-25000-2022-04-13/>

## **China Is Said to Let Some Cities Like Shanghai, Guangzhou Shorten Quarantines**

China is allowing Shanghai, Guangzhou and six other cities to shorten quarantines for overseas travelers and those who've had close contact with infected individuals as authorities test potential tweaks to the country's rigorous Covid measures, according to people familiar with the matter. The cities are reducing the period to 10 days from 14 days as part of a trial that began on Monday this week and will run for a month, the people said, asking not to be identified as they weren't authorized to discuss the issue publicly. Apartment complexes, retail outlets, office buildings and other locations locked down because of infections will also be allowed to open after 10 consecutive days without a positive test result, shortened from the 14 days previously required, they said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-13/china-is-said-to-let-some-cities-shorten-quarantines-in-trial>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Pfizer's Bourla: COVID vaccines for new variants possible for Fall**

Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla said on Wednesday that the company could possibly develop a new vaccine that protects against the Omicron variant as well as older forms of COVID-19 by autumn. "It's easy to do something only against Omicron. What is scientifically and technically more challenging ... is to be effective against everything known so far, so you don't have two different vaccines for different variants," Bourla said, speaking at a press conference held by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizers-bourla-covid-vaccines-new-variants-possible-fall-2022-04-13/>

### **Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine Nuvaxovid gets conditional approval in Switzerland**

Novavax said Swissmedic granted conditional marketing authorization to its COVID-19 vaccine Nuvaxovid for individuals 18 years of age and older. The company said

<https://seekingalpha.com/news/3822969-novavaxs-covid-19-vaccine-nuvaxovid-gets-conditional-approval-in-switzerland>

### **Study finds a consistent temporal association between mask use and COVID-19 vaccination status**

The CRP study was carried out from April 2020 to June 2021 and is a prospective, multi-site cohort syndromic COVID-19 surveillance study of participants from ten healthcare settings in the mid-Atlantic and south-eastern USA. Participants were contacted via email or text and provided with surveys regarding their exposure to COVID-19, any COVID-19-related symptoms, and mask use. "Yes," "No," or "No interactions" were used to report the participant's mask use. The study inclusion criteria consisted of: 18 years or older, enrolled by December 2020, and daily surveys needed to be completed  $\geq 5$  times a month. In this study, for a participant to be considered vaccinated, they needed to have received at least one dose of vaccine by August 31st, 2021.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220413/Study-finds-a-consistent-temporal-association-between-mask-use-and-COVID-19-vaccination-status.aspx>



## **CDC study highlights effectiveness of COVID-19 booster vaccination against reinfection and hospitalization**

SARS-CoV-2, the causative pathogen of COVID-19 pandemic, is a deadly member of the human beta-coronavirus family. The virus has so far caused more than 497 million infections and 6.1 million deaths worldwide. Among various variants of SARS-CoV-2, the most recently emerged omicron variant has been found to have high immune evasion ability, leading to a global rise in breakthrough infections. There is real-world evidence indicating that previous SARS-CoV-2 infection could provide 90% protection against reinfection and related hospitalization. However, because of the immune evasion potency of the omicron variant, a considerable reduction in infection-mediated protection has been observed globally during the omicron-dominated wave. In the current study, the scientists have estimated the effectiveness of mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines in providing protection against reinfection-related hospitalization among previously infected adult individuals.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220413/CDC-study-highlights-effectiveness-of-COVID-19-booster-vaccination-against-reinfection-and-hospitalization.aspx>

## **Researchers developing Covid vaccine for immunocompromised people**

A couple months before the pandemic started, Joseph Ford started experiencing a rash of pinpoint polka dots around his lips, ankles, and lower legs. They were itchy, inflamed, painful, and, for him, the first signs of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. "Petechiae," he explained. Just as he was starting to deal with that, Covid-19 changed the world. "Go home and stay there," Ford, a 77-year-old retired librarian in Tumwater, Wash., recalled a physician telling him as Covid hollowed out society. "You won't survive a Covid infection." That advice has largely remained unchanged over the last two years for the millions who, like Ford, are immunocompromised and haven't produced adequate — or any — antibodies from the Covid-19 vaccines. But researchers at the University Hospital Tübingen are designing a vaccine to elicit a deeper T cell response than the currently approved vaccines by targeting several key points on viral proteins — epitopes — that are good at stirring up immune T cells.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/12/new-covid-vaccine-being-developed-immunocompromised-people/>

## **Nanoparticles could enable a more sensitive and durable rapid COVID-19 test**

Rapid antigen tests can quickly and conveniently tell a person that they are positive for COVID-19. However, because antibody-based tests aren't very sensitive, they can fail to detect early infections with low viral loads. Now, researchers reporting in ACS Sensors have developed a rapid test that uses molecularly imprinted polymer nanoparticles, rather than antibodies, to detect SARS-CoV-2. The new test is more sensitive and works under more extreme conditions than antibody-based tests. The gold standard test for COVID-19 diagnosis remains the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Although this test is highly sensitive and specific, it generally takes 1-2 days to get a result, is expensive and requires special lab equipment and trained personnel.

<https://phys.org/news/2022-04-nanoparticles-enable-sensitive-durable-rapid.html>

## **Global COVID-19 decline 'should be interpreted with caution': WHO**

The number of new COVID-19 cases and deaths reported to the World Health Organization fell for a third consecutive week, a trend likely helped by the dismantling of testing and surveillance programs. In its latest weekly report on the pandemic, issued late Tuesday, the UN health agency said the more than seven million new cases reported represented a 24 per cent decline from a week earlier. The weekly worldwide number of COVID-19 deaths, was down 18 per cent at over 22,000.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8757032/global-covid-19-decline-interpret-with-caution-who/>

## **Convalescent plasma use reduces hospitalisation in unvaccinated COVID-19 patients**

Convalescent plasma use in people unvaccinated against COVID-19 significantly reduced the need for hospitalisation due to disease progression, according to a US study. Convalescent plasma (CP)

use in people unvaccinated against COVID-19 within 9 days of symptom onset, led to a significant reduction in the proportion of individuals requiring hospital admission due to disease progression. This was the conclusion of a randomised, double-blind, controlled trial by a multidisciplinary group of researchers from New York, US.

<https://hospitalhealthcare.com/covid-19/convalescent-plasma-use-reduces-hospitalisation-in-unvaccinated-covid-19-patients/>

### **Estimate: Less than half the world has had COVID-19**

From March 2020 to the emergence of the Omicron variant in late 2021, about 3.8 billion COVID-19 infections and reinfections occurred, with nearly 44% of the world's population infected at least once but with wide regional variations, estimates a statistical analysis of 190 countries and territories published late last week in The Lancet. Led by Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation researchers, the COVID-19 Cumulative Infection Collaborators created and refined statistical models of global and location-specific daily and cumulative COVID-19 infections using data from Johns Hopkins University, national databases, and seroprevalence surveys, adjusting for lags in reporting, undercounting of deaths, waning antibody sensitivity, vaccinations, and reinfection by SARS-CoV-2 variants.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/04/estimate-less-half-world-has-had-covid-19>

### **Vaccines have halved Italy's COVID-19 death toll, study shows**

Vaccines against COVID-19 have roughly halved the death toll from the disease in Italy, preventing some 150,000 fatalities and 8 million cases last year, the National Health Institute (ISS) estimated on Wednesday. The ISS study, which ran from the start of 2021 until the end of January this year, concluded the inoculation campaign also prevented more than 500,000 hospitalisations and over 55,000 admissions to intensive care. Italy has registered 161,032 deaths linked to COVID-19 since its outbreak emerged in February 2020, the second-highest toll in Europe after Britain and the eighth highest in the world.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/vaccines-have-halved-italys-covid-19-death-toll-study-shows-2022-04-13/>

### **COVID-19, overdoses pushed US to highest death total ever**

2021 was the deadliest year in U.S. history, and new data and research are offering more insights into how it got that bad. The main reason for the increase in deaths? COVID-19, said Robert Anderson, who oversees the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's work on death statistics. The agency this month quietly updated its provisional death tally. It showed there were 3.465 million deaths last year, or about 80,000 more than 2020's record-setting total. Early last year, some experts were optimistic that 2021 would not be as bad as the first year of the pandemic — partly because effective COVID-19 vaccines had finally become available. "We were wrong, unfortunately," said Noreen Goldman, a Princeton University researcher.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-robert-anderson-ff2f01e401abce778bea8ac2e9c6e53e>

### **Shanghai releases more from virus observation amid lockdown**

Shanghai released 6,000 more people from the central facilities where they were under medical observation to guard against the coronavirus, the government said Wednesday, though the lockdown of most of China's largest city was continuing in its third week. About 6.6 million people in the city of 25 million were allowed to leave their homes Tuesday, but some were restricted to their own neighborhoods. Some housing compounds also appeared to still be keeping residents locked inside, and no further lifting of restrictions was apparent Wednesday. Officials warn that Shanghai still doesn't have its latest surge in cases of the omicron variant under control, despite its "zero-tolerance" approach that has seen some residents confined to their homes for three weeks or longer.



<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-shanghai-china-734a2cb546b51ec5c0df31f7ae3a197e>

### **FDA slaps another hold on Ocugen, Bharat's COVID vaccine after WHO flags manufacturing problems**

In April of last year—soon after receiving a \$200 million government grant from India to beef up its manufacturing capacity—Bharat Biotech proclaimed an ambitious goal to produce 700 million COVID-19 vaccines annually. Reaching that figure won't be easy in the near future considering the regulatory setbacks Bharat and its U.S. commercial partner Ocugen have faced. The most recent came this week when the FDA put a clinical hold on an immuno-bridging study by Ocugen designed to show that Bharat's vaccine could protect people in the U.S. as effectively as it has done in trials in India.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/fda-slaps-another-clinical-hold-ocugen-and-bharats-covid-19-vaccine>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **Covid-19 cases trend up again in the US, driven by the growth of BA.2**

According to the latest estimates from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BA.2 caused 86% of new Covid-19 cases nationwide last week. In some ways, this feels like a familiar place. Cases are going up again. At least one major city is reinstating its mask mandate. Broadway shows have canceled some performances. But there continue to be reasons for optimism. Despite BA.2's near-complete takeover from two other circulating Omicron subvariants, BA.1 and BA 1.1, US hospitalizations are at record low levels, and they continue to drop. Deaths also continue to fall.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/12/health/cases-rise-ba-2/index.html>

### **Nearly 86% of U.S. COVID caused by BA.2 Omicron subvariant -CDC**

The BA.2 Omicron subvariant of the coronavirus is now responsible for 86% of U.S. COVID-19 cases and more than 90% of infections in the Northeast, according to data on Tuesday from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). COVID-19 infections have been back on the rise during the last few weeks, particularly in Northeast states such as New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, although overall cases have dropped sharply nationally since hitting record levels in January, according to data from the agency. A resurgence in COVID-19 cases in parts of Asia and Europe has raised concerns that another wave could follow in the United States, as has been the case with previous surges during the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/omicron-sub-variant-ba2-makes-up-859-covid-variants-us-cdc-2022-04-12/>

### **Taiwan says it's at only early stage of COVID outbreak, cases will rise**

Taiwan is in only the early stages of a COVID-19 outbreak and domestic cases will keep rising for the time being, its health minister said on Wednesday, as the island recorded its highest number of daily COVID infections since the pandemic began. Unlike much of the rest of the world, Taiwan has kept the pandemic well under control with strict and early measures, including implementing an efficient contact-tracing system and largely closing borders. But local cases have been steadily rising since the start of this year, though the numbers are still relatively small at 4,932 discovered since January 1. Only 16 people have been classified as even moderately ill and just two have died. Taiwan's population is 23 million.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-says-its-only-early-stage-covid-outbreak-cases-will-rise-2022-04-13/>

### **Covid Cancellations Hit Broadway as BA.2 Variant Spreads**

Covid is wreaking havoc on stage, again. Broadway's "Plaza Suite" has extended its run to allow for ticket rescheduling after stars Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick both tested positive. It was put on pause through April 13. "Americano" will resume April 18 and has set a new opening night for May 1. Performances of "At The Wedding" will resume April 18, with "Paradise Square"

returning April 19. “A Strange Loop” pushed its opening to April 14. And “Heartland” canceled all remaining performances after Covid spread throughout its company.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-13/covid-cancellations-hit-broadway-as-ba-2-variant-spreads>