

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

26th Jul 2022

Lockdown Exit

Slow uptake of Pfizer's Covid drug hints at end to sales boom

Sales of Pfizer's antiviral drug Paxlovid have leapfrogged a rival pill developed by Merck and now dominate the Covid-19 treatments market, but slower than expected patient uptake could dent sales over the next six months and beyond. Airfinity, a health data analytics group, said recent data showed the whirlwind pace of new supply deals Pfizer signed had begun to slow because of the lacklustre rollout of a treatment billed as a key tool to help quell the pandemic. By the end of 2022 there could be a surplus of up to 70mn courses of Paxlovid on the global market following an increase in Pfizer's production and weak demand for a treatment that US president Joe Biden is taking to fight his Covid infection.

<https://www.ft.com/content/0eb0b444-c516-4abf-85a2-8cc9326cf84e>

White House to launch effort to develop next generation of Covid vaccines

The Biden administration is preparing a sweeping initiative to develop a next generation of Covid-19 immunizations that would thwart future coronavirus variants and dramatically reduce rates of coronavirus infection or transmission, building on current shots whose impact has been mainly to prevent serious illness and death, the White House told STAT. To kick off the effort, the White House is gathering key federal officials, top scientists, and pharmaceutical executives including representatives of Pfizer and Moderna for a Tuesday "summit" to discuss the new technologies and lay out a road map for developing them.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/07/25/white-house-to-launch-effort-to-develop-next-generation-of-covid-vaccines/>

EU states should act now before winter COVID waves strike, official says

EU member states should start preparing now for a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in autumn and winter, the bloc's health chief said on Monday, saying there had been a "worrying increase" in outbreaks. European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides also warned there was no room for complacency, saying the pandemic was not over. "Unfortunately the pandemic has shown a worrying increase in several countries," she told Cyprus state radio.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-states-should-act-now-covid-19-waves-winter-official-2022-07-25/>

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-states-should-act-now-covid-19-waves-winter-official-2022-07-25/>

Defence force to expand aged care support as COVID-19 wave hits sector

The federal government is expanding Defence force support for Australia's coronavirus-stricken aged care sector. More than 200 extra military medical personnel will be deployed to aged care homes in coming weeks, Defence Minister Richard Marles has announced. The move came after aged care providers and trade unions requested Defence force support for the sector be extended beyond the August 12 end date.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-australia-update-more-adf-personnel-to-help-aged-care-sector/3f4cd>

[737-89cd-4259-8d1d-ff6e822c1c8e](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/xi-s-covid-rules-and-tech-crackdown-push-gen-z-in-china-to-bailan)

Xi's Covid Rules and Tech Crackdown Push Gen Z in China to 'Bailan'

The most educated generation in China's history was supposed to blaze a trail towards a more innovative and technologically advanced economy. Instead, about 15 million young people are estimated to be jobless, and many are lowering their ambitions. A perfect storm of factors has propelled unemployment among 16- to 24-year-old urbanites to a record 19.3%, more than twice the comparable rate in the US. The government's hardline coronavirus strategy has led to layoffs, while its regulatory crackdown on real estate and education companies has hit the private sector.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/xi-s-covid-rules-and-tech-crackdown-push-gen-z-in-china-to-bailan>

Biden's Covid-19 Symptoms Continue to Get Better, White House Says

President Biden's symptoms are improving after he tested positive for Covid-19 last week, one of his advisers and his doctor said. "He's doing just fine," White House Covid-19 coordinator Ashish Jha said Sunday during an interview with CBS's "Face the Nation." Dr. Jha encouraged Americans to get vaccinated and boosted, and to seek treatment if they contract Covid-19. Mr. Biden is taking Pfizer Inc.'s antiviral drug Paxlovid, which has been approved by federal authorities as a Covid-19 treatment. "This is a president who is double-vaccinated, double-boosted, getting treatments that are widely available to Americans and has at this moment a mild respiratory illness. This is really good news," Dr. Jha told ABC's "This Week."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-covid-19-symptoms-continue-to-get-better-white-house-says-11658678928>

H.K. to Cut Hotel Quarantine With Health Code, Report Says

Hong Kong plans to cut hotel quarantine for arrivals with the introduction of a two-color health code system, local media reported on Monday. The government is considering moving to five days of hotel quarantine, after which arrivals will be issued with a so-called yellow health code for two days that would prohibit them from entering high-risk areas where masks can be removed. Another option under consideration is four days of hotel isolation followed by three days of yellow code restrictions, according to Sing Tao, which cited a person it didn't identify. Hong Kong currently requires seven-day quarantine for arrivals. Separately, the South China Morning Post said authorities could even shorten the hotel quarantine to three days as they put the finishing touches to the China-style health code.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-24/hong-kong-to-cut-hotel-quarantine-with-health-code-report-says>

China's Choice: Covid Zero or Xi's Three Red Lines

You can't have your cake and eat it too. It's an expression that warns people not to want things that are inherently incompatible. China would do well to heed this wisdom. In recent years, the government launched quite a few ambitious top policies that would fundamentally alter its economy. At the top of mind was its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the world is living with the virus, China still has no tolerance for outbreaks.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-07-24/china-s-choice-covid-zero-or-xi-s-three-red-lines>

Biden's COVID symptoms have improved considerably, mainly has sore throat -doctor

U.S. President Joe Biden's condition since contracting COVID-19 has improved considerably and his greatest symptom now is a sore throat, his physician said on Sunday. Biden's cough and body aches have diminished since he tested positive for the coronavirus on Thursday and he is not experiencing any shortness of breath, the physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, said in a memo released by the White House.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/bidens-health-is-improving-no-close-contacts-tested-positive-covid-2022-07-24/>

Coronavirus: Japan struggles with record-setting seventh wave

Just a few short weeks ago, coronavirus infections in Japan were hovering around the 10,000-cases-a-day level, and there was optimism across the nation that the worst of the health crisis was over and that the summer holidays would be more carefree than the last two years. As it has done in the past, however, the virus has mutated and caused a spike in infections. On Saturday, authorities recorded a record 200,975 new cases. Health experts say the seventh wave to wash over Japan is of the highly transmissible BA.5 omicron subvariant of the virus, with 17 of the nation's 47 prefectures reporting record-high case loads. On Monday, officials confirmed that there have been a total of 11.39 million confirmed cases in Japan, a nation of 125.8 million, and 31,902 fatalities. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called for "maximum caution" among the public, but his government has stated that there are no plans at present to reintroduce the states of emergency that punctuated the first two years of the outbreak in Japan.

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-japan-struggles-with-record-setting-seventh-wave/a-62584197>

Exit Strategies

China's Shenzhen orders big firms such as Foxconn into closed loop to curb COVID

The Chinese city of Shenzhen told 100 major companies including iPhone maker Foxconn to set up "closed-loop" systems as it battles COVID-19, according to a document attributed to the local government circulating online on Monday. While Reuters could not independently verify the document, a notice at a Shenzhen office of oil giant CNOOC Ltd seen by Reuters said that the building would be closed for seven days until July 31, with staff to work from home and continue with daily COVID testing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-puts-iphone-maker-cnooc-into-shenzhen-closed-loop-battle-covid-bloomberg-2022-07-25/>

'Exhaustion and burnout': states look to boost volunteer numbers as demand increases

Unlike many others at the organisation, the pair are continuing their volunteer work well after lockdowns have ended. "It's given me a purpose and the best thing is I met my nextdoor neighbours," Bergman says. Hazels agrees that their friendship has been a "lovely" outcome of her volunteering experience. "We laugh, and we have fun, and we're all doing a good thing," she says. They were drawn to volunteering during Melbourne's early Covid restrictions, as it was a permitted activity that allowed them to escape lockdowns.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/25/exhaustion-and-burnout-states-look-to-boost-volunteer-numbers-as-demand-increases>

China tries to boost vaccine rate with show of confidence from leaders

While other world leaders were photographed being vaccinated to boost take-up rates, Beijing had previously stayed silent on the topic. Zeng Yixin from the National Health Commission says party and state leaders have 'a high level of trust in the vaccines produced by our country.'

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3186345/china-confirms-leaders-have-been-given-covid-shot-show>

Covid in China: Xi Jinping and other leaders given domestic vaccine

President Xi Jinping and other top politicians have been given domestically produced Covid vaccines, China has said. The news was released as part of a campaign to increase vaccination rates, especially of boosters. The deputy head of China's National Health Commission, Zeng Yixin, said it showed the leadership's confidence in the Chinese vaccines. Health information about these figures is not usually shared with the public. Mr Zeng said the country's leaders had "all taken the home-grown Covid-19 vaccination jabs".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-62279377>

North Korea pushes traditional medicine to fight COVID-19

As a medical student in North Korea, Lee Gwang-jin said he treated his fevers and other minor ailments with traditional herbal medicine. But bad illness could mean trouble because hospitals in his rural hometown lacked the ambulances, beds, even the electricity at times needed to treat critical or emergency patients. So Lee was skeptical when he heard recent North Korean state media reports that claimed such so-called Koryo traditional medicine is playing a key role in the nation's fight against COVID-19, which has killed millions around the world. "North Korea is using Koryo medicine a lot (for COVID-19) ... but it's not a sure remedy," said Lee, who studied Koryo medicine before he fled North Korea in 2018 for a new life in South Korea. "Someone who is destined to survive will survive (with such medicine), but North Korea can't help others who are dying."

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-south-korea-north-herbal-medicine-4d852893a81b60c4bf759e52a5d27615>

China Covid Cases Drop as Macau, Shanghai Ramp Up Mass Testing

China's Covid-19 cases fell to the lowest in a week, even as officials in the financial hub of Shanghai and the gaming enclave of Macau ramped up mass testing. China reported 680 cases for Sunday, down from 869 on Saturday and the lowest daily tally since July 17. Still, authorities continue to roll out testing blitzes to catch flareups and stamp out outbreaks. In Macau, all residents must perform daily rapid Covid tests on themselves and report the results to the government for the next week, with mass laboratory tests slated for the coming weekend.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/china-covid-cases-drop-as-macau-shanghai-ramp-up-mass-testing>

Partisan Exits

Newmarch House COVID-19 inquest told residents went without food, oxygen during outbreak

During the outbreak, 37 of Newmarch House's 97 residents contracted COVID. The facility is owned and run by Anglicare Community Services. One witness said his mother's breathing apparatus was not operating when he went to visit

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-25/newmarch-house-inquest-covid19-outbreak/101267658>

The Covid vaccine no Aussies wanted

Deemed the "alternative" Covid vaccine, there were high hopes for Novavax in Australia when the more traditional formula got the tick of approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in January. Due to its similar composition to hepatitis B, tetanus and diphtheria vaccines, a large amount of interest was shown for Novavax, or Nuvaxovid, by those who were reluctant to take either AstraZeneca, Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. Additionally experts, like TGA boss Adjunct Professor John Skerritt, believed the increased interest would see vaccination rates rise from 95 per cent fully vaccinated to at least 98 per cent. "I would have had several hundred emails from individuals and groups who have said for whatever reason we would like to have [this] particular vaccine ... this just gives them further choice," Professor Skerritt said upon Novavax's approval in January.

<https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/australia/not-even-vaccinehesitant-aussies-waiting-for-novavax-really-wanted-the-jab/news-story/7ecb3d3a4ca52d7f6077464875abeaa6>

Scientific Viewpoint

TGA provisionally approves COVID-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid, for use in 12-17 year olds

Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has provisionally approved the Bioclect - on behalf of US biotech Novavax (Nasdaq: NVAX) - COVID-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid, for use in individuals aged 12-17 years. The decision follows provisional approvals on 19 January 2022 for the use of Nuvaxovid in adults, on June 9, 2022, the Nuvaxovid booster dose for use in adults. As with adults, the vaccine should be administered in adolescents intramuscularly...

<https://www.thepharmaletter.com/article/tga-provisionally-approves-covid-19-vaccine-nuvaxovid-for-use-in-12-17-year-olds>

Are We Getting Closer to a Potential Universal Coronavirus Monoclonal Therapeutic?

A research team reports discovering a neutralizing monoclonal antibody that it says has the potential to become a universal coronavirus therapy against SARS-CoV-2 and all its variants of concern, including Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon and Omicron. In multiple animal models, the mAb shows effectiveness against the SARS-CoV, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome that emerged in China in 2002, and MERS-CoV, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome that appeared in Saudi Arabia in 2012, according to the scientists, who had that it also shows effectiveness against several common cold coronaviruses.

<https://www.genengnews.com/topics/translational-medicine/are-we-getting-closer-to-a-potential-universal-coronaviruses-mono-clonal-therapeutic/>

The dominant BA.5 variant of Covid-19 signals we're still not in the clear

Tracking BA.5's rise is complicated somewhat because of an increase in at-home rapid testing to confirm infection, rather than testing in a clinical setting, which would make its way to health authorities and paint a fuller picture of the data. While the number of cases is nowhere near the level of infections due to omicron last winter, the week-on-week total of hospital admissions overall has trended up steadily over the past month, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.vox.com/2022/7/24/23275962/ba-5-covid-variant-strain-public-health-response>

New RT-PCR platform gives results faster than other COVID-19 tests on the market

Researchers at Columbia Engineering and Rover Diagnostics announced today that they have built an RT-PCR platform that gives results in 23 minutes that match the longer laboratory-based tests--faster than other PCR tests on the market. It can be adapted to test for a broad range of infectious diseases including not just COVID-19 but also flu, strep, and other viruses that require fast diagnosis. Its targeted sensitivity is higher than other types of tests such as isothermal, antigen, and CRISPR. And, at just two pounds, the Rover PCR is easy to carry around and can be used by anyone.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220725/New-RT-PCR-platform-gives-results-faster-than-other-COVID-19-tests-on-the-market.aspx>

Think You've Never Had Covid-19? Think Again.

Charley Ding spent weeks early in the pandemic intubating patients sick with Covid-19. The 42-year-old anesthesiologist in South Barrington, Ill., said he has since watched most of the doctors and nurses he works with get infected at some point. But he has never gotten Covid-19, he said. "It's probably a combination of being careful, maybe being blessed with a good immune system," he said. "But also just luck." Dr. Ding is a member of a shrinking club of people who are pretty sure they have never been infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Geneticists and immunologists are studying factors that might protect people from infection, and learning why some are predisposed to more severe Covid-19 disease.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/think-youve-never-had-covid-19-think-again-11658741403>

China approves Genuine Biotech's HIV drug for COVID patients

China on Monday gave conditional approval to domestic firm Genuine Biotech's Azvudine pill to treat certain adult patients with COVID-19, adding another oral treatment option against the coronavirus. The availability of effective COVID vaccines and treatments is crucial in laying the groundwork for China's potential pivoting from its "dynamic COVID zero" policy, which aims to eliminate every outbreak - however small - and relies on mass testing and strict quarantining.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-allow-use-genuine-biotechs-hiv-drug-covid-patients-2022-07-25/>

COVID reinfections appear to be surging in the latest Omicron wave. Here's what we know

When Lyndall Heather caught COVID-19 for a third time this year, she initially didn't believe she had

it. Just six weeks on from her second COVID infection, the Darwin nurse was well within the immune period that precluded her from testing. "I just thought it's pretty unlikely, it's probably just the cold," she said. But after becoming seriously unwell, she went for a PCR test and found out she had contracted a separate COVID-19 infection. "Even my manager found it confusing. I guess things are constantly changing," Ms Heather said. Hampered by long COVID symptoms like fatigue and brain fog, Ms Heather said her latest reinfection has left her anxious for the future.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-25/covid-omicron-reinfections-pandemic-spread/101258670>

Covid-19: Building immunity against virus will take years - expert

It could take years before our immune systems build up defences against the ever-changing virus that causes Covid-19 - but an immunologist is optimistic we'll soon have a much smarter booster to fight it.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-omicron-outbreak-building-immunity-against-virus-will-take-years-expert/FEFCNKD5WJJ242KOZB3NLZU6LA/>

Commentary: No cause for alarm over 'Centaurus', the new Omicron subvariant BA.2.75

Should we be worried about the new Omicron subvariant BA.2.75? There is no clear evidence "Centaurus" evades the immune system significantly or spreads more quickly for now, but what we do know suggests it would likely fizzle out like Alpha and Delta, says this virologist.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/centaurus-omicron-subvariant-new-ba275-2832146>

Scientists identify how the coronavirus spike protein causes heart damage

The new research has found that the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus spike protein is capable of causing heart muscle injury through the inflammatory process, setting it apart from previously known coronaviruses. The good news is that the preliminary research suggests the damage caused by the process, which is part of the heart muscle cells' "own natural immune machinery" can be reduced by vaccination. Research published in 2020 discovered abnormal changes to the way the heart was pumping in 55% of hospitalised patients, with around one in seven showing evidence of severe dysfunction.

<https://news.sky.com/story/scientists-identify-how-the-coronavirus-spike-protein-causes-heart-damage-12658815>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid 19 Omicron: School attendance rates plummet below 50 per cent

School attendance rates for term 1 plummeted below 50 per cent - the lowest in at least a decade, as the Omicron outbreak ripped through communities. Record low levels of school attendance hit Māori and Pasifika hardest with fewer than a third of those populations attending school regularly (attending more than 90 per cent of the time). The latest Ministry of Education data showed overall 46.1 per cent of all students were attending school regularly. This was down from 72.8 per cent in term 1 2019, pre-Covid, 50.5 per cent in 2020 and 66.8 per cent in 2021. In term 4 last year it was 65 per cent. The Ministry noted the Covid-19 Omicron outbreak resulted in "high levels of absences for both students and staff".

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-omicron-school-attendance-rates-plummet-below-50-per-cent/IKDM6GBTMBLKXXAW2WA6X4DSPY/>

Covid-19: 6910 new community cases, 836 hospitalisations and further 16 deaths

The Ministry of Health has reported 6910 new community cases of Covid-19 and 836 current hospitalisations, including 27 in intensive care or high dependency units. A further 16 people with the virus have died. All these deaths occurred in the past three days. The seven-day rolling average of community case numbers on Monday is 8498. There has been a recent downturn in numbers suggesting the second wave has peaked.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/129369180/covid19-6910-new-community-cases-836-hospitalisations-and-furt>

[her-16-deaths](#)

Australia's COVID-19 cases and death rates currently among world's highest per capita

Australia ranked third in cases per million people in the past seven days. Experts are pleading with the public to wear masks, get PCR tests if symptomatic and get boosters. Health workers say they are bearing the the strain of the ongoing pandemic

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-25/covid-19-stats-australia-death-rate-high/101266098>

India's daily COVID-19 caseload slips to 16866

After days of reporting over 20,000 new cases a day, India's daily caseload on Monday slipped to 16,866, officials said. According to federal health ministry data released on Monday morning, 16,866 new cases of COVID-19 were reported during the past 24 hours, taking the total tally to 43,905,621 in the country. The cases reported on Monday mark a decrease in comparison to the daily caseload of Sunday (20,279). With the reporting of fresh cases, India's active caseload currently stands at 150,877.

<https://english.news.cn/20220725/b6a41661652b49d18ff2f16168c97711/c.html>

China's Shenzhen reports 8 symptomatic, 13 asymptomatic COVID cases for July 24

China's southern technology hub of Shenzhen reported 21 new locally transmitted COVID-19 infections on Sunday, up from 19 a day earlier, official data showed on Monday. Of Sunday's local infections, eight were confirmed to be symptomatic, while 13 were asymptomatic, the Shenzhen Health Commission said. Of the new Shenzhen cases, all except five were found in quarantined areas.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-shenzhen-reports-8-symptomatic-13-asymptomatic-covid-cases-july-24-2022-07-25/>

New Zealand's prime minister says there are early signs that COVID cases falling

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday that there were early signs that new COVID-19 cases were falling, even as hospitalisations jumped to their highest level since March. New Zealand recorded 6,910 new COVID cases on Monday, well below average levels over the past week, according to data from the health ministry. However, the number of people in hospital with COVID jumped to 836, the most since March 29 when 842 COVID patients were in hospital.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nz-prime-minister-says-early-signs-that-covid-19-cases-falling-2022-07-25/>

COVID-19 cases decline 9% worldwide in week but Asia up 26% with Japan 200,000 daily

Despite a worldwide 9% decline in COVID-19 cases in the past week, the virus is spiking in Asia with a 26% gain, including surpassing 200,000 cases for the first time in Japan. Deaths were down 4% and remain at among the lowest levels since the pandemic was declared in March 2020. On Sunday, Japan reported 176,554 infections for a total of 11,389,392 in 11th place with 200,975 on Saturday. Deaths were 25 for a total of 31,915 in 31st.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/24/world-coronavirus-19-cases-decline-9-world-asia-up26/6001658669572/

Texas lieutenant gov tests positive a second time for COVID

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick tested positive for COVID-19 for the second time in the last seven months, his campaign said Sunday. Patrick, 72, tested positive on Saturday and was experiencing mild symptoms, according to a campaign statement. Patrick was isolating at his house and planned to work from home this week. His campaign said the two-term Republican is fully vaccinated and received a booster last year. Patrick had previously tested positive on Dec. 27 and experienced mild symptoms.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-texas-dan-patrick-1590b0f44a798ba6d7790a2342006bdc>

China reports 800 new COVID cases for July 24 vs 982 day earlier

Mainland China reported 800 new coronavirus cases for July 24, of which 150 were symptomatic and 650 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Monday. That compared with 982 new cases a day earlier - 129 symptomatic and 853 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There were zero new deaths, keeping the nation's fatalities at 5,226. As of Sunday, mainland China had confirmed 228,798 cases with symptoms.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-800-new-covid-cases-july-24-vs-982-day-earlier-2022-07-25/>

Record number of COVID-hit Australians in hospital as Omicron surges

The number of Australians admitted to hospitals with COVID-19 hit a record of about 5,450 on Monday, official data showed, as the spread of highly contagious new Omicron sub-variants strains the healthcare system nationwide. The figure has grown since late June, as the BA.4 and BA.5 strains became dominant since they can evade immune protection, whether from vaccination or prior infection, while some experts say the latter can be as infectious as measles.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/record-number-covid-hit-australians-hospital-omicron-surges-2022-07-25/>