

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

24th Oct 2022

Lockdown Exit

No way out in sight for China's zero-COVID strategy

For almost three years, China has been implementing one of the strictest pandemic control policies in the world, shutting down borders, imposing lockdowns across the country and conducting mass-scale COVID-19 tests to try and contain the spread of coronavirus. Millions of Chinese residents have been wondering whether authorities may begin to ease these stringent measures, but the latest signal from the Chinese leader has dashed that hope. On Sunday, Chinese President Xi Jinping lauded the success of the zero-COVID strategy, arguing that the policy has saved lives while saying China has launched an "all-out people's war to stop the spread of the virus." His message comes amid reinforced calls from Chinese state media for Beijing to persist with its COVID-19 policies. Experts largely agree that China seems to have no plan to end the zero-COVID strategy anytime soon, nor is it prepared to pivot away from the strategy. "China lacks effective vaccines and treatment options, has a dangerously low vaccination rate for older populations, and a highly stressed health care system," said Xi Chen, an associate professor of health policy and economics at the Yale School of Public Health.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiU2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmR3LmNvbS9lbi9uby13YXktb3V0LWluLXNpZ2h0LWZvci1jaGluYXMtemVyby1jb3ZpZC1zdHJhdGVneS9hLTYzNDg5Nzk00gEA?oc=5

In 'post-Covid' Singapore, doctors warn against complacency as XBB cases surge

Many doctors in city state are worried about complacency, saying some residents are too laid-back, including some young people. Cases are rising fuelled by XBB Omicron variant so 'exercise extra precautions. You do your part; society does its part.'

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/health-environment/article/3196815/post-covid-singapore-doctors-warn-against-complacency-xbb-cases-surge>

Cases of BQ.1, BQ.1.1 COVID variants double in U.S. as Europe warns of rise

U.S. health regulators on Friday estimated that BQ.1 and closely related BQ.1.1 accounted for 16.6% of coronavirus variants in the country, nearly doubling from last week, while Europe expects them to become the dominant variants in a month. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said the variants are likely to drive up cases in the coming weeks to months in the European region. The two variants are descendants of Omicron's BA.5 subvariant, which is the dominant form of the coronavirus in the United States. Regulators in Europe and the U.S. have recently authorized vaccine boosters that target it.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-variants-bq1-bq-11-make-up-over-16-us-cases-2022-10-21/>

China is Debating a Reduction to Covid Quarantine For Inbound Travelers

Chinese officials are debating whether to reduce the amount of time people coming into the country must spend in mandatory quarantine, according to people familiar with the discussions, as the country's Covid Zero policy leaves it increasingly isolated from the rest of the world. Bureaucrats are looking at cutting the quarantine period to two days in a hotel and then five days at home, said the people, asking not to be identified as the discussions are private. Currently, China requires 10 days of isolation on entry into the country, with seven days confined to a hotel room, and then another three days at home, where people are still monitored and subject to regular testing.

China's COVID lockdowns spell relief for Europe's energy security worries

China's President Xi Jinping has some good news for Europe — his country's draconian zero-COVID policies aren't likely to be dropped. That's a relief for European buyers of liquefied natural gas, as China's economic slowdown has freed up LNG cargos crucial to replacing the Russian gas that used to supply about 40 percent of European demand. “Regardless of what you think about the Chinese zero-COVID policy, simply looking at it only from the perspective of European gas supplies, it would be very helpful if China continued this policy,” said Dennis Hesselning, head of gas at the EU's energy regulator agency ACER.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/china-covid-lockdown-spell-relief-europe-energy-security/>

U.S. CDC director tests positive for COVID-19, experiencing mild symptoms

The director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rochelle Walensky, tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday night and is experiencing mild symptoms, the CDC said in a statement on Saturday. A spokesperson said Walensky was not at the White House late this week and did not meet with any senior U.S. officials before testing positive.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-cdc-director-tests-positive-covid-19-experiencing-mild-symptoms-2022-10-22/>

Spain Drops COVID-19 Vaccine, Test Requirement For Entry — What To Know

Spain dropped all COVID-19-related entry rules on Friday, becoming one of the last European countries to do so. Going forward, Spain will no longer require travellers from outside the European Union to show proof of vaccination, a negative test, or proof of recovery to enter, according to the government. That puts Spain in line with nearly every other country in Europe that has dropped pandemic-era travel restrictions.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMieWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnRyYXZlbnGFuZGxlaXN1cmVpbmRpYS5pbj9pbmNpZ2h0L3doYXQteW91LW5lZWQtdG8ta25vdy9zcGFpb1kcm9wcy1jb3ZpZC0xOS12YWNjaW5lXLRlc3QtdHJhdmVsLXJlc3RyaWN0aW9ucy_SAX1odHRwczovL3d3dy50cmF2ZWxhbmRsZWlzdXJlaW5kaWEuaW4vaW5zaWdodC93aGF0LXlvdS1uZWVklXRvLWtub3cvc3BhaW4tZHZHjvcHMtY292aWQtdMTktmFjY2luZS10ZXN0LXRyYXZlbnC1yZXN0cmJldGlbnMvYW1wLw?oc=5

New Omicron Subvariant Seen Driving Covid Cases in Europe

A new omicron subvariant is poised to become dominant in Europe and will probably drive another increase in Covid-19 cases, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said. The BQ.1 subvariant, and its sublineage BQ.1.1, will probably dominate in Europe by mid-November to the beginning of December and help send cases up in “coming weeks to months,” the agency said on Friday. The subvariants are also gaining ground in the US, where they are responsible for an estimated 16.6% of cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMic2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmJsb29tYmVyZy5jb20vbmV3cy9hcnRpY2xlcy8yMDlyLW5lXLRlc3QtdHJhdmVsLXJlc3RyaWN0aW9ucy_SAX1odHRwczovL3d3dy50cmF2ZWxhbmRsZWlzdXJlaW5kaWEuaW4vaW5zaWdodC93aGF0LXlvdS1uZWVklXRvLWtub3cvc3BhaW4tZHZHjvcHMtY292aWQtdMTktmFjY2luZS10ZXN0LXRyYXZlbnC1yZXN0cmJldGlbnMvYW1wLw?oc=5

Rapid Covid Tests Can't Keep Abbott Healthy Forever

Covid-19 has been a double-edged sword of sorts for Abbott Laboratories, the maker of the popular rapid antigen test BinaxNow. On the one hand, demand for that product has barely let up, allowing the health-supplies company to raise its 2022 adjusted earnings forecast while posting third-quarter revenue of \$10.4 billion that far exceeded Wall Street expectations. Its sales of BinaxNow declined somewhat from the same period last year when the Delta variant was raging, but they still came at an impressive \$1.64 billion, trouncing Wall Street expectations of about \$500 million.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiW2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndza15jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXN1cmVpbnQtdGVzdHMtY292aWQtdMTktmFjY2luZS10ZXN0LXRyYXZlbnC1yZXN0cmJldGlbnMvYW1wLw?oc=5

Swiss to destroy 9 million expired Moderna COVID-19 jabs

Switzerland will destroy 9 million doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine that have reached their expiry

date, with another 5.1 million vaccine jabs set to meet the same fate by February, the government said on Wednesday. The wastage reflects the Swiss strategy of ordering more vaccines than it needed to ensure its population of around 8.7 million would get sufficient supplies even in the event of supply bottlenecks or quality issues.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMifWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnJldXRlc3RyY3ktOS1taWxsaW9uLWV4cGlyZWQtbW9kZXJ1YS1jb3ZpZC0xOS1qYWJzLTlwMjltMTAtMTkv0gEA?oc=5

New Covid Variants Are Driving Fresh Waves of Cases Around the World

The rhythm of pre-pandemic life is back around much of the world. Munich's Oktoberfest tents are full, tourists are returning in Tokyo and New York, masks have come off in the subways. The previous two autumn seasons ended with new Covid-19 variants spurring fresh waves of cases and social restrictions. This year is different: the super-contagious but less severe omicron has shown unusual staying power -- even as it spawned hundreds of sublineages. The world has learned that the coronavirus is fickle, and as cases start to creep up again, so does concern about unpredictable developments. But if omicron's dominance holds, it could point to a drift reminiscent of the flu's annual changes and pave the way for Covid to settle into a more predictable pattern.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-13/omicron-s-staying-power-is-key-to-mild-winter-as-cases-rise>

China reports 1026 new COVID cases for Oct 15 vs 1364 a day earlier

China reported 1,026 new COVID-19 infections for Oct. 15, of which 244 were symptomatic and 782 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Sunday. That compared with 1,364 new cases a day earlier - 361 symptomatic and 1,003 asymptomatic, which China counts separately. There were no new deaths, the same as the previous day, keeping fatalities at 5,226. As of Saturday mainland China had confirmed 255,773 cases with symptoms.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-1026-new-covid-cases-oct-15-vs-1364-day-earlier-2022-10-16/>

Partisan Exits

'Fractured' pandemic response failed the most vulnerable, independent report finds

An independent review of Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has found ill-conceived policies, politically driven health orders and excessive use of lockdowns failed to protect the old, disregarded the young and abandoned some of the nation's most disadvantaged communities. The review, led by former top public servant Peter Shergold, urges federal and state governments to learn from mistakes and overhaul planning, to broaden the advice provided to national cabinet and restore trust in how decisions are made.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/fractured-pandemic-response-failed-the-most-vulnerable-independent-report-finds-20221018-p5bqso.html>

Former top doctor claims 'fear persisted far too long' in pandemic response

Former deputy chief medical officer Dr Nick Coatsworth believes Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was dominated by fear for "far too long" after health experts knew who the virus affected and how to protect from it. The comments follow the release of an independent review into governments' response to the pandemic which found they veered into overreach by overusing lockdowns and failed large swathes of the community with inadequate economic support packages. Dr Coatsworth was part of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee which comprises all state and territory Chief Health Officers and is chaired by the Australian Chief Medical Officer and was central to the pandemic response. He said the discussions and spectrum of views presented in the AHPPC were effective but admitted when states CHOs began applying their own recommendations to state governments the response was dictated by fear rather than evidence.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMi0wFodHRwczovL3d3dy5za3luZXdzLmNvbS5hdS9hdXN0cmFsaWEtbnV3cy9jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy9kci1uaWNrLWNvYXRzd29ydGtgc2F5cy1mZWZyLXB3RlZC1mYXItG9vLWxvbmctYXMTc

Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted unanimously to recommend Covid-19 shots from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc.'s shot for children six months to 18-years-old. Making Covid inoculations part of the Vaccines for Children program would ensure that kids who are uninsured or underinsured can still get access to shots when the federal government stops paying for vaccines population wide.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-19/low-income-kids-should-get-free-covid-shots-cdc-panel-says?srnd=premium-uk>

China Traders See Tech Focus, More Covid Gloom After Xi's Speech

President Xi Jinping's two-hour address to the party congress on Sunday left traders poring over the nuance of each phrase as China's leader ranged from Taiwan to semiconductors, pollution, housing and the coronavirus. Those expecting a shift away from the Covid Zero policy that has weighed on the economy were disappointed, but there were strong comments in specific areas, such as technology, the environment and national security, that could indicate support in some market sectors. Overall though, Xi did little to lift the gloom that has encompassed China's markets in the lead-up to the five-yearly leadership meeting.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-16/china-traders-see-tech-focus-more-covid-gloom-after-xi-s-speech>

Scientific Viewpoint

Doctors say Covid symptom has 'disappeared' from most common list as UK infection rates rise again

According to the Zoe Health Study, the key symptoms to look for now may have changed. While previous data suggested that a fever was a common sign of Covid, it has now dropped out of the top 20 symptoms to look out for, says Professor Tim Spector. "It really is a complete waste of everyone's time to be screening workplaces and care homes... for fever at the moment," he added. However, he did stress that if you have any of the following symptoms, you should get tested and record your result in the ZOE app.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiY2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lm1hbmNoZXN0ZXJldmVuaW5nbmV3cy5jby51ay9uZXdzL3VrLW5ld3MvZG9jdG9ycy1zYXktY292aWQtc3lhcHRvbS1kaXNhchBBIYXJlZC0yNTMyNm5NNIBAA?oc=5

WHO official warns COVID-19 pandemic "not yet over"

"The pandemic is not yet over," a World Health Organization (WHO) official warned on Friday, saying the continued emergence of subvariants "poses a risk of resurgence and overwhelming health systems." Babatunde Olowokure, director of Health Security and Emergencies for WHO in the Western Pacific, said Singapore and New Zealand are experiencing surges of COVID-19 cases, while the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, and Vietnam have shown a sustained decline in cases, hospitalization, and deaths since August.

<https://english.news.cn/20221022/bff8b2e40e3b473484f6bab2f027d7b3/c.html>

Covid-19 Vaccines Should Be Among Regular Immunizations, CDC Advisers Say

Vaccine experts advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supported adding Covid-19 vaccines to the agency's lists of recommended regular immunizations. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, voted unanimously on Thursday in support of including Covid-19 shots on the lists of measles, tetanus and other inoculations that adults and children 6 months and older should get in the U.S. Now, it is up to the CDC to sign off.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMidGh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvY292aWQtc3lhcHRvbS1kaXNhchBBIYXJlZC0yNTMyNm5NNIBAA?oc=5

U.S. CDC advisers approve adding COVID shots to vaccine schedules

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advisory committee on vaccines on Thursday approved adding COVID-19 vaccines to the agency's recommended immunization schedules for both children and adults. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted unanimously to add the vaccines to the schedules, which contain recommendations to physicians on which shots their patients should receive and when. Several committee members stressed that they were not setting a requirement for anyone to receive the shots. The CDC has recommended that Americans over 6 months of age should receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiaWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnJldXRlcuMuY29tL3dvcmxkL3VzL3VzLWNkYy1hZHZpc2Vycy1hcHByb3ZILWFkZGluZy1jb3ZpZC1zaG90cy12YWNjaW5ILXNjaGVkdWxlc0yMDIyLTEwLTIwL9IBAA?oc=5

Omicron subvariants reflect a 'viral evolution on steroids'

An omicron subvariant is once again demonstrating immune-dodging abilities, posing a threat to both vaccinated and previously infected individuals. A report published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that the subvariant, called BA.4.6, could drive reinfections. As of Friday, BA.4.6 accounted for just over 12% of new Covid cases in the U.S. BA.5, meanwhile, has been detected in nearly 68% of new cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/omicron-subvariants-ba46-can-evade-immunity-may-lead-reinfections-rcna52950?cid=sm_npd_nn_tw_ma

FDA Authorizes Novavax Covid-19 Shot as Booster for Adults

The Food and Drug Administration granted emergency authorization to Novavax Inc.'s Covid-19 shot as a booster for adults. The shot targets the original strain of the virus, whereas the updated booster shots from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. and its partner BioNTech SE, authorized in August by the FDA, target both the original strain and newer Omicron strains. The Novavax shot also uses a protein platform, whereas the other two companies' boosters use messenger RNA, a newer technology. The Novavax booster was authorized on Wednesday for adults who received a primary series of vaccines at least six months prior and who don't want or can't access or might have medical reasons to avoid the dual-target booster shots from Pfizer or Moderna.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiY2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvZmRhLWF1dGhvcml6ZXMtbn92YXZheC1jb3ZpZC0xOS1zaG90LWFzLWJvb3N0ZXItZm9yLWFkdWx0cy0xMTY2NjE5Njg1NdlIBAA?oc=5

Novavax Covid Booster Wins US Emergency Authorization

Novavax Inc.'s Covid-19 booster for people 18 and older was authorized by US regulators, offering another option to those seeking protection ahead of a potential wave of cases this winter. The booster dose can be administered six months after completion of primary vaccination with an authorized or approved Covid-19 vaccine. Novavax's booster shot is also available in adults for whom an messenger RNA bivalent shot is not accessible or clinically appropriate.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-19/novavax-s-covid-19-booster-shot-wins-us-emergency-authorization>

U.S. FDA authorizes Novavax's COVID vaccine as booster for adults

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday authorized Novavax Inc's (NVAX.O) COVID-19 vaccine as a booster for adults, helping the company's shares reverse course and rise more than 3%. The authorization applies for people unable to get updated Omicron-tailored boosters, or those who would choose not to receive any other booster dose. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will now have to recommend use of the vaccine as a booster.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-authorizes-novavax-covid-vaccine-booster-adults-2022-10-19/>

U.S. FDA Grants Emergency Use Authorization for Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine, Adjuvanted as a Booster for Adults

The Food and Drug Administration granted emergency authorization to Novavax Inc.'s Covid-19 shot as a booster for adults. The shot targets the original strain of the virus, whereas the updated booster shots from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. and its partner BioNTech SE, authorized in August by the FDA, target both the original strain and newer Omicron strains. The Novavax shot also uses a protein platform, whereas the other two companies' boosters use messenger RNA, a newer technology. The Novavax booster was authorized on Wednesday for adults who received a primary series of vaccines at least six months prior and who don't want or can't access or might have medical reasons to avoid the dual-target booster shots from Pfizer or Moderna.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/fda-authorizes-novavax-covid-19-shot-as-booster-for-adults-11666196855?mod=lead_fature_below_a_pos1

Addiction drug shows promise lifting long COVID brain fog, fatigue

Lauren Nichols, a 34-year-old logistics expert for the U.S. Department of Transportation in Boston, has been suffering from impaired thinking and focus, fatigue, seizures, headache and pain since her COVID-19 infection in the spring of 2020. Last June, her doctor suggested low doses of naltrexone, a generic drug typically used to treat alcohol and opioid addiction. After more than two years of living in "a thick, foggy cloud," she said, "I can actually think clearly."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/addiction-drug-shows-promise-lifting-long-covid-brain-fog-fatigue-2022-10-18/>

Pfizer (PFE) Says Omicron Booster Vaccine Lifts Antibodies Against New Variants

Pfizer Inc. and its German vaccine partner said their booster tailored to the latest omicron variants raised more antibodies against the dominant strains of Covid-19 when compared with the original shot designed to fight the form of the virus. Blood from 80 volunteers collected seven days after the booster shot showed an increase in neutralizing antibodies against the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants in a study, Pfizer and BioNTech SE said in a statement Thursday. The vaccines were authorized without data showing their performance in humans. Pfizer and BioNTech plan to release additional data in coming weeks measuring immune responses one month following administration of the new bivalent booster.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-13/pfizer-says-omicron-booster-lifts-antibodies-against-new-variant>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Moderna to Supply 100 Million Covid Vaccines to Poor Countries

Moderna Inc. will provide as many as 100 million doses of Covid-19 shots that specifically target variants for vaccine alliance Gavi to distribute in lower-income countries in 2023. Under the agreement, Moderna will supply these mRNA variant-targeting shots for Gavi at the lowest of its tiered prices. The shots will then be distributed to poor countries through the Covax facility, backed by the World Health Organization to ensure vaccine equity around the world, Gavi said Monday. Gavi will also cancel the delivery of remaining volumes of vaccines under a previous agreement as health providers shift to updated shots that work specifically against Covid's new variants.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMicWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lmjsb29tYmVyZy5jb20vbmV3cy9hcnRpY2xlcY8yMDlyLTFEwLTFE3L21vZGVybmEtdG8tc3VwcGx5LTFEwMC1taWxsaW9uLWNvdmlkLXZlY2NpbmVzLXRvLXBvb3ltY291bnRyaWVzOgEA?oc=5

Weekly COVID-related deaths up by nearly 40% in England and Wales

The number of COVID-related deaths in England and Wales increased by nearly 40% in a week and reached their highest number since August, figures show. The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows some 400 deaths registered in the seven days to 7 October mentioned coronavirus on the death certificate. The figure climbed 39% from 287 the week earlier, according to the figures. Of those 400 deaths, 63.5% (254 deaths) had COVID recorded as the

underlying cause of death, slightly higher than the week before when it was 63.1% (181 deaths).

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiVWh0dHBzOi8vb3cy5za3kuY29tL3N0b3J5L3dlZWtseS1jb3ZpZC1kZWF0aHMtdXAtYnktNDAtaW4tZW5nbGFuZC1hbmQtd2FsZXMtMTI3MjM1OTXSAlodHRwczovL25ld3Muc2t5LmNvbS9zdG9yeS9hbXAAd2Vla2x5LWNvdmlkLWRIYXRocy11cC1ieS00MC1pbi1lbmdsYW5kLWFuZC13YWxlcy0xMjcyMzU5NQ?oc=5

Long Covid Disables Millions Worldwide, Even as Rates Ease, Study Shows

Long Covid eases with time, according to a study that found about 1% of coronavirus patients had persistent symptoms for a year or more. In the first rigorous assessment of the magnitude of long Covid on a global scale, researchers found 6.2% of people who had Covid-19 in the pandemic's first two years experienced at least one of three main groups of symptoms three months later. Of those patients, 15% were still afflicted after a year, they found. Although the probability of having chronic health problems from Covid is relatively low, the vast number of cases -- at least 670 million worldwide -- leaves a substantial burden of disability, said Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, where the study was conducted.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-10/long-covid-eases-with-time-but-disables-millions-study-shows>