

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

17th Aug 2022

Lockdown Exit

Marshall Islands, Once Nearly Covid-Free, Confronts an Outbreak

As a remote nation in the Pacific, the Marshall Islands had been almost completely spared from Covid-19, registering just a handful of cases throughout the pandemic, with no community transmission detected. But in just over a week, more than 4,000 people have tested positive in a population of about 60,000, including the country's secretary of health and human services, Jack Niedenthal. He has been providing updates on Facebook and said 75 percent of those tested in Majuro, the capital, had Covid, "an incredibly high positivity rate." In an interview on Tuesday, Mr. Niedenthal said there was some panic and concern, given that the islands, about halfway between Hawaii and the Philippines, had not recorded a single Covid case last year.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/asia/marshall-islands-covid-outbreak.html>

Carnival Cruise bookings soar after it eases COVID testing requirements

Carnival Cruise Line said booking activity nearly doubled pre-pandemic levels on Monday after it announced an ease in COVID-19 testing requirements for passengers, sending its shares more than 3% higher. The company's parent, Carnival Corp, said on Friday it would drop mandatory testing for guests vaccinated against COVID-19 and allow unvaccinated passengers to travel without an exemption in some cases, after a similar move by rival Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd

<https://www.reuters.com/business/carnival-cruise-bookings-soar-after-it-eases-covid-testing-requirements-2022-08-16/>

India sees huge decline in daily Covid-19 cases, logs 8,813 new infections | Mint

Covid-19 cases in India witnessed a huge decline on Tuesday with the country recording 8,813 new infections in the past 24 hours, taking the cumulative caseload to 4,42,77,194, according to the Union Health Ministry data. The country's overall death toll stands at 5,27,098. Currently, India's active caseload stands at 1,11,252. The country registered daily positivity rate at 4.15%, while the weekly positivity rate is 4.79%. So far, a total of 4,36,38,844 people have been recovered from the coronavirus infections since the onset of the global pandemic, including 15,040 recoveries reported in the past 24 hours. The recovery rate is 98.56%.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-sees-huge-decline-in-daily-covid-19-cases-logs-8-813-new-infections-11660619197880.html>

China's economic ills persist under COVID-19 lockdowns

A rash of COVID-19 outbreaks and a bump in consumer prices saw China's economy slump in July, with economic authorities reporting slower retail growth and record high youth unemployment. Data released Monday by the National Bureau of Statistics of China showed retail sales grew 2.7% in July, down from the 3.1% year-over-year increase seen in June. Unemployment among 16-24 year-old consumers has also continued rising, reaching 19.9% in July, according to Monday's data — topping June's previous record high of 19.3%. Urban unemployment across all age groups decreased slightly to 5.4%, a difference of 0.1 percentage points from the prior month.

<https://www.cfodive.com/news/china-economic-ills-persist-covid-19-lockdowns/629710/>

Jill Biden tests positive for COVID-19, has 'mild' symptoms

First lady Jill Biden tested positive for COVID-19 and was experiencing "mild symptoms," the White House announced Tuesday. She had been vacationing with President Joe Biden in South Carolina

when she began experiencing symptoms on Monday. She has been prescribed the antiviral drug Paxlovid and will isolate at the vacation home for at least five days. Joe Biden tested negative for the virus on Tuesday morning, the White House said, but would be wearing a mask indoors for 10 days in line with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. He recovered from a rebound case of the virus on Aug. 7.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/jill-biden-ap-joe-biden-white-house-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-b2146106.html>

Western Trust eases Covid-19 restrictions for Altnagelvin, South West Acute and Omagh Hospital

The Western Trust has eased Covid-19 visiting rules in hospitals in Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh by increasing the number of people allowed to visit their loved ones. The new guidance will now allow for two visitors to visit at the same time, for one hour per day, per patient from four nominated visitors. The Northern Ireland trust said that exceptions would continue to apply in some areas, but it's hoped that a move to a further 'gradual easing' of restrictions would continue during the next review on September 5.

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/western-trust-eases-covid-19-24767232>

Covid-19: Masks no longer needed in clinical settings in Wales

THE use of masks in clinical settings in Wales is no longer mandatory as of today. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) says the change comes amid a reduction in the rates of Covid-19 infections over recent weeks. It adds however that the position will be reviewed once more should numbers begin to rise again in Wales.

<https://www.rhyljournal.co.uk/news/20661113.covid-19-masks-no-longer-needed-clinical-settings-wales/>

Michigan hits COVID-19 spike as state adds 23,165 cases, 103 deaths over last week

The state added 23,165 cases and 103 deaths from COVID-19 on Tuesday, including totals from the previous six days, a 44% increase from last week, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Michigan reported an average of about 3,309 cases per day over the last seven days, a double-digit increase from 2,305 cases per day a week prior. On Aug. 9, the state said it had added 16,137 cases and 137 deaths from the virus in the previous week. On Monday, the state reported that 1,004 adults and 33 pediatric patients were hospitalized with confirmed infections, an increase from last week's 969 adults and 22 children. Inpatient records were set on Jan. 10, when 4,580 adults were hospitalized with COVID.

<https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2022/08/16/michigan-covid-19-spike-state-adds-23165-cases-103-deaths-over-last-week/10337011002/>

Exit Strategies

What Is Bivalent Vaccine? New Moderna Omicron Covid Booster Explained

The new shot targets two separate strains of Covid-19 — the original version of the virus that emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan along with the BA.1 subvariant, the earliest version of omicron. Other versions of omicron, BA.4 and BA.5, are now more prevalent, but the virus is evolving faster than new vaccines can be formulated and tested, and this is the closest match available that has received clearance. Moderna has another shot available that targets the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants, which has been ordered by the US, but not yet cleared.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-16/moderna-s-mrna-omicron-targeted-covid-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>

Marshall Islands, haven from Covid for two years, gets 3,000 cases in space of weeks

After dodging the Covid-19 pandemic for two years, the Marshall Islands is grappling to control the spread of infections, which have tripled since the first community transmissions were detected a

week ago. The number of positive cases in the north Pacific nation, which has a population of about 60,000 people, has skyrocketed to more than 3,000 cases with four Covid-linked deaths and seven hospital admissions. One thousand cases were reported in the capital, Majuro, on Sunday, which was “almost double from the previous day”, said the health secretary, Jack Niethendal.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/marshall-islands-haven-from-covid-for-two-years-gets-3000-cases-in-space-of-weeks>

Has Covid-19 led to an increase in hepatitis cases in children? Here's what a doctor says

It is no secret that Covid-19 can cause other health complications in both adults and children. Almost three years into the pandemic now, doctors now have answers pertaining to health situations, specifically for kids. That brings us to the question of whether Covid can lead to an increase in hepatitis cases in children. According to Dr Bhavini Shah, the head of microbiology at Neuberg Supratech Reference Laboratories, there has been a spike in acute hepatitis among children across the world, including India, in recent times. “At the start of April 2022, health experts from around the world have been observing the unexplained outbreak of acute hepatitis in kids. India saw a kind of hepatitis in 37 children two to six weeks after Covid-19 infection during an outbreak of the Delta variant,” the doctor says.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/covid-19-increase-hepatitis-cases-children-health-8092101/>

Public urged to get next-generation Covid vaccine

All over-50s are likely to be offered an updated coronavirus vaccine in a booster campaign due to begin within a month. Yesterday Britain became the first country to approve a jab that directly targets the Omicron strain of the virus, and officials are confident of having tens of millions of doses of next-generation vaccines ready for autumn. Half the population is being urged to have a fourth vaccination to reduce the risk of illness over winter and ease pressure on the NHS.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/c294702e-1cbd-11ed-add4-d333562d46fb?shareToken=d90547032f96f77ee7121ba7c72347d1>

Covid vaccine: When can I get my booster jab?

Britain appears to have just seen off its latest wave of Covid-19 infections, although experts continue to warn that another could arrive this autumn unless due care is taken. The country saw a 43 per cent spike in coronavirus cases at the beginning of June, seemingly caused by people coming together to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee over the course of a four-day weekend. Driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 sub-variants of Omicron – the strain that spread so rapidly across the UK in December 2021 and January 2022 before gradually falling away – cases continued to rise to a peak of around 4.6m cases in mid-July before gradually beginning to decline.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-vaccine-booster-jab-where-boots-b2146004.html>

Quebec kicks off new COVID-19 vaccination campaign, starting with long-term care homes

On Monday, Quebec started offering fifth doses of COVID-19 vaccine to residents of long-term care homes and private seniors' residences. The Health Ministry said it launched the new vaccine campaign for at-risk people because it expects infections to rise in the fall after schools reopen. It said the recommended interval between booster doses is at least five months. Public Health Director Dr. Luc Boileau has said the government will be intensifying its message around vaccination in the coming weeks, as the health system prepares for another COVID-19 wave. He has also said Quebecers should continue wearing masks in crowded places and at the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/long-term-care-covid-vaccination-1.6551539>

West Lothian residents aged 65 and over in line for winter Covid-19 booster jab

West Lothian people aged 65 and over will be in line for a winter booster jab to protect the most

vulnerable from Covid-19 and ease the pressure on hospitals. Letters with appointment times will begin landing on doormats in the coming weeks so NHS Lothian can get ahead of any potential surge in infections. The booster jabs will be given at the same time as the flu vaccine to those eligible where possible – evidence shows that administration of both vaccines together is a safe and efficient way to deliver maximum protection over the winter months. Frontline health and social care workers are also eligible for the winter booster jab, with the online portal to book vaccination appointments available from 22 August.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/west-lothian-residents-aged-65-27750826>

A complicated fall vaccine campaign: Updated Covid boosters, flu shots, and how to time the jabs

For the health officials who steer vaccination campaigns, it's going to be a complicated fall. The U.S. plan to roll out updated Covid-19 boosters will not only coincide with the logistical tangle of the regular flu shot drive, but will also face questions about when people should get the new shots to provide themselves with the best protection through our third Covid winter. It's a balancing act that health officials run into every year with flu. Vaccinating tens of millions of people takes weeks. People also need a few weeks after their shot for their immune systems to be fully primed. And yet, vaccinators don't want to put shots in arms too early, either.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/08/16/a-complicated-fall-vaccine-campaign-updated-covid-boosters-flu-shots-and-how-to-time-the-jabs/>

Partisan Exits

Albanese confirms there will be a Royal Commission into COVID-19 response

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese "made clear" there will be a Royal Commission into Australia's COVID-19 response, says Sky News Political Editor Andrew Clennell. "Just not now," Mr Clennell said.

<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/albanese-confirms-there-will-be-a-royal-commission-into-covid19-response/video/928523924ec57871dcaf526eab7dc2fd>

AFL fines Sydney, St Kilda, Richmond, Brisbane and Collingwood for COVID-19 breaches

An audit by the AFL has revealed five clubs breached COVID protocols through the season. Each club has been hit with a fine, with Sydney's \$100,000 penalty the heaviest. The breaches are in regard to discrepancies surrounding RATs

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-16/afl-covid-fines-sydney-st-kilda-richmond-brisbane-collingwood/101339886>

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla Tests Positive for Covid With Mild Symptoms

Pfizer Inc. Chief Executive Officer Albert Bourla said he tested positive for Covid-19 and is receiving Paxlovid, the treatment made by his company. Bourla said he's feeling well although experiencing very mild symptoms, according to a statement Monday. He's received four doses of Covid vaccine, also made by Pfizer in collaboration with BioNTech SE. The CEO is one of many people who have contracted Covid despite receiving full vaccination and boosting. The mutating coronavirus has continually found ways to at least partially evade immunity induced by shots and previous infections, although usually causing milder cases.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-15/pfizer-ceo-bourla-tests-positive-for-covid-with-mild-symptoms>

Continued Lockdown

Pandemic pushes 2.3 million Filipinos into poverty

Preliminary results of the family income and expenditure survey for 2021 released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on Monday showed that the poverty rate had worsened to 18.8 per cent from 16.7 per cent in 2018.

<https://www.nationthailand.com/international/ann/40018946>

Scientific Viewpoint

What, Exactly, Is 'Paxlovid Mouth,' and How Do You Get Rid of It?

The 56-year-old in Montclair, N.J., was looking for a reprieve from a persistent residual taste—“like your mouth is just clenched around a grapefruit rind”—that came after she took Paxlovid, Pfizer’s antiviral drug to treat Covid-19. Ms. Witten is one of many people who have scouted remedies for what is informally known as Paxlovid mouth, a taste that can linger for as long as you take the drug. Patients who have taken Paxlovid have described it as sun-baked trash-bag liquid, a mouthful of dirty pennies and rotten soymilk. They have tried to erase the taste with salves from cinnamon to milk to pineapple. They are also trading strategies online. A Pfizer spokesperson acknowledged the side effect, called dysgeusia, and pointed to a study that found the symptom occurred 5.6% of the time people took the drug. The study was funded by Pfizer and published in the New England Journal of Medicine. The company said most patients’ dysgeusia symptoms were mild.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-exactly-is-paxlovid-mouth-and-how-do-you-get-rid-of-it-11660606455>

Artificial intelligence can explain why each COVID-19 wave impacts our bodies differently

Researchers have identified what they believe to be robust metabolic markers of Covid, a discovery which could lead to better understanding and treatments for people that suffer from symptoms of the disease months after diagnosis. Scientists from the University of Surrey collected blood samples of hospital patients and found that Covid-19 changed people's metabolism. The team observed that the effects of Covid-19 changed over time, with the first wave disrupting metabolites differently from the second.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/08/220816120247.htm>

Bharat Biotech says Phase 3 trial over, intranasal vaccine safe

Bharat Biotech has submitted data from Phase 3 clinical trials of BBV154, its intranasal Covid vaccine candidate, to the drug regulator. It has sought approval both as a primary two-dose vaccine, and a heterologous booster shot. A heterologous booster implies that the third or subsequent dose of the vaccine is different from its primary dose. Typically, the primary dose comprises two shots. The Hyderabad-based company claimed that BBV154, which is stable at 2-8 degrees Celsius, is proven to be safe, well-tolerated and immunogenic in the subjects under controlled clinical trials. “Being an intranasal vaccine, BBV154 may produce local antibodies in the upper respiratory tract. These may provide the potential to reduce infection and transmission. Further studies are being planned,” the company noted on Monday.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/bharat-biotech-seeks-approval-for-intranasal-coronavirus-vaccine-122081500813_1.html

From nasal vaccines to pills: the next defences against Covid

When the autumn booster programme begins next month, many people are likely to receive Moderna’s new bivalent vaccine, designed to protect against the original Covid strain and the more transmissible Omicron variant. As Covid continues to evolve, so will vaccination strategies. Here we look at some of the developments in the pipeline.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/from-nasal-vaccines-to-pills-the-next-defences-against-covid>

Covid-19: Southampton vaccine trial calls for pregnant women

A national Covid-19 vaccine trial is now calling for pregnant women from across the South. The study, taking place at University Hospital Southampton, will start to recruit participants later this month. It will look into the immune response to vaccination at different dose intervals - either four to six weeks or eight to 12 weeks. Participants will need to be between 18 and 44-years-old and 13 to 34 weeks pregnant on the day of vaccination. Women who have had previous vaccinations can still take part as the trial focuses on boosters, the size of the dose and which vaccine works best. The study, led by St George's, University of London, is backed by £7.5 million of government funding.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hampshire-62550755>

Health DG: Paxlovid for high-risk Covid-19 patients, not for mild cases or prevention

The country's policy on the usage of Covid-19 antiviral drug Paxlovid does not include low-risk, asymptomatic patients, says Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah. The medication was also not for prevention of Covid-19, he said. The ministry's policy on administration of Paxlovid for Covid-19 was in line with the intent to reduce hospitalisation and deaths, he said. "The Malaysian policy on the usage of Paxlovid has not included low risk patients who have no symptoms or usage for prevention of infection. "Paxlovid is an antiviral and thus has to be started early when the illness is still in the mild category. "The usage of Paxlovid is based on risk stratification from real Covid-19 patients' data, who are determined as at high risk of deterioration.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/08/16/health-dg-paxlovid-for-high-risk-covid-19-patients-not-for-mild-cases-or-prevention>

How efficient is backward contact tracing in COVID-19?

Study finds COVID associated with abnormal placental pathologies in nearly 50% of cohort. The features of the newly emerging SARS-CoV-2 Omicron BA.2.75 subvariant. Inhaled aprotinin found to reduce viral load in mild-to-moderate COVID-19

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220816/How-efficient-is-backward-contact-tracing-in-COVID-19.aspx>

The hunt for a universal Covid-19 vaccine

In the mid 1980s, Jonathan Heeney was a PhD student at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), Maryland, when he was told to fly to Oregon – on the opposite side of the country – to investigate a mysterious new disease which was causing a surge of sudden deaths in a group of captive cheetahs. For Heeney, it proved to be his first known encounter with a coronavirus. "We eventually determined that this was a coronavirus which had jumped from domestic cats into these cheetahs," he says. "And because cheetahs were a new host, it caused a lot of death and destruction. So that was my introduction to them." Four decades on and Heeney is at the helm of DIOSynVax, a biotechnology company based in Cambridge, UK, who recently received a \$42m (£34m/€41m) grant from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the foundation backed by Bill and Melinda Gates, the Indian and Norwegian governments, and the World Economic Forum, among others.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220815-the-hunt-for-a-universal-covid-19-jab>

'Next Generation' Moderna Coronavirus Booster Jab Approved for Use in Adults

A "next generation" coronavirus booster jab which may only need administering once a year has been approved for use in adults. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has authorised Moderna's bivalent vaccine, which targets the original Covid strain and the Omicron variant.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-15/-next-generation-moderna-coronavirus-booster-jab-approved-for-use-in-adults>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Egypt's COVID-19 situation remains stable, cases down 50%: Minister

Minister of Health and Population Khaled Abdel-Ghaffar said on Monday that the epidemiological situation of the coronavirus in Egypt is currently stable. "We are in a safe stage, and we have had a decrease in the last two weeks in the number of community cases by up to 50 percent in infections, and 26 percent in deaths," he explained. The Minister of Health explained that the hospital occupancy rate of coronavirus patients is currently very low – the lowest point since the beginning of the pandemic. He added that his ministry had reserved considering the current situation as a sixth wave, as it has already declined in a short period.

<https://www.egyptindependent.com/egypts-covid-19-situation-remains-stable-cases-down-50-minister/>

N.S. COVID-19: Rise in cases, hospitalizations in July

Nova Scotia is reporting a rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations for the month of July, while the number of deaths decreased compared to previous months, according to the provincial government's monthly COVID-19 summary. During July, health officials say nine people died from COVID-19, six fewer than what was reported for the month of June. Of the nine deaths, six people were aged 70 and older, and three were living in a long-term care facility.

<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-s-reports-increase-in-covid-19-cases-hospitalizations-for-month-of-july-decrease-in-deaths-1.6027922>

China's service sector sustains recovery amid COVID-19 resurgence

China's service sector, a key driver of its economic growth, has sustained recovery momentum in July despite a resurgence of sporadic COVID-19 cases and a weak property market. The services production index grew 0.6 percent year on year last month, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. In the first seven months, the index dropped by 0.3 percent year on year, narrowing 0.1 percentage points from that of the first six months.

<https://english.news.cn/20220816/dfc82b9e9be8476ba7f76032aa7a7518/c.html>

Chinese mainland reports 530 new local confirmed COVID-19 cases

The Chinese mainland on Monday reported 530 locally-transmitted confirmed COVID-19 cases, of which 426 were in Hainan Province, the National Health Commission said Tuesday. Altogether 1,838 local asymptomatic carriers were newly identified on the day, including 785 in Hainan, 629 in Tibet Autonomous Region and 248 in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, said the commission in its report. A total of 117 COVID-19 patients were discharged from hospitals after recovery on the Chinese mainland on Monday. The total number of COVID-19 patients discharged from hospitals after recovery reached 224,688 on the Chinese mainland as of Monday.

<https://english.news.cn/20220816/01295785dae04e7f80b4036cf9a9fb49/c.html>

Shanghai reports 3 new local asymptomatic COVID cases, no symptomatic for Aug 15

Shanghai reported three new domestically transmitted asymptomatic coronavirus cases for Aug. 15, down from five a day earlier, while no local symptomatic cases were reported, versus one the day before, the city government said on Tuesday. No cases were reported outside quarantined areas, compared with one the day before. Shanghai recorded no COVID-19-related deaths for Aug. 15, unchanged from a day earlier.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-reports-3-new-local-asymptomatic-covid-cases-no-symptomatic-aug-15-2022-08-16/>

China Covid Cases Near Three-Month High With Hainan, Tibet Outbreaks

China reported more than 2,000 new coronavirus infections for a fourth day as outbreaks flare across the country, raising the prospect of more disruptive restrictions in line with its Covid Zero strategy. Nationwide, there were 2,368 cases for Monday, near the highest level since May. More than half the infections are in the tropical island of Hainan, where an outbreak has stranded more than 150,000 tourists who have faced lockdowns, frequent testing and a dearth of flights.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-16/china-covid-cases-hold-near-three-month-high-on-holiday-hotspots>

New Lockdown

Crowds try to flee Shanghai Ikea store to avoid strict COVID-19 lockdown in China

Authorities tried to lock people in a Shanghai building and Ikea store over COVID-19 concerns. Video clips shared online show a large group of people trying to leave. China has recently reported an increase in coronavirus cases

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-16/shanghai-covid-19-ikea-store-lockdown/101339164>