

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

22nd Jun 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

WHO says Delta is the fastest and fittest Covid variant and will 'pick off' most vulnerable

- The highly contagious delta variant is the fastest and fittest coronavirus strain yet, and it will 'pick off' the most vulnerable people, especially in places with low Covid-19 vaccination rates, World Health Organization officials warned Monday.
- Delta, first identified in India, has the potential 'to be more lethal because it's more efficient in the way it transmits between humans and it will eventually find those vulnerable individuals who will become severely ill, have to be hospitalized and potentially die,' Dr Mike Ryan, executive director of the WHO's health emergencies program, said during a news conference.
- Ryan said world leaders and public health officials can help defend the most vulnerable through the donation and distribution of Covid vaccines. 'We can protect those vulnerable people, those front-line workers,' Ryan said, 'and the fact that we haven't, as Director-General (Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus) has said again and again, is a catastrophic moral failure at a global level.'
- [The WHO said Friday that Delta is becoming the dominant variant of the disease worldwide. The agency declared Delta a 'variant of concern' last month.](#) A variant can be labelled as 'of concern' if it has been shown to be more contagious, more deadly or more resistant to current vaccines and treatments, according to the health organization.
- **Delta is now replacing Alpha, the highly contagious variant that swept across Europe and later the U.S. earlier this year, Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said in a recent interview.**
- Studies suggest it is around 60% more transmissible than Alpha, which was more contagious than the original strain that emerged from Wuhan, China, in late 2019. 'We need to vaccinate now. Get everyone vaccinated now,' Offit said.
- Delta has spread to 92 countries, Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's technical lead for Covid, said Monday. It now makes up at least 10% of all new cases in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is on its way to becoming the dominant variant in the nation.
- **The United Kingdom recently saw Delta become the dominant strain there, surpassing its native Alpha variant, which was first detected in the country last fall. The Delta variant now makes up more than 60% of new cases in the UK.**

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The highly contagious delta variant is the fastest and fittest coronavirus strain that will "pick off" the most vulnerable people, the World Health Organization said. Delta has the potential "to be more lethal because it's more efficient in the way it transmits between humans," the WHO's Dr. Mike Ryan said.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/21/covid-delta-who-says-variant-is-the-fastest-and-fittest-and-will-pick-off-most-vulnerable.html>

Colombia's COVID-19 deaths pass 100000 in unrelenting third wave

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Reported deaths from COVID-19 in Colombia passed 100,000 on Monday, the country's health ministry said, amid warnings of potential scarcity of treatment drugs and oxygen in hospitals during a long and brutal third peak of infections and deaths. The country of 50 million people has reported more than 3.9 million cases of coronavirus infections, as well as 100,582 deaths. Colombia has seen record numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths in recent weeks, with some medical officials warning certain medical supplies are running low

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombias-covid-19-deaths-pass-100000-unrelenting-third-wave-2021-06-21/>

Mexico's coronavirus death toll rises to 231244

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Mexico's health ministry on Monday reported 1,268 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country and 57 more fatalities, bringing the total figures to 2,478,551 infections and 231,244 deaths. The government has said the real number of cases is likely significantly higher, and separate data published in March suggested the actual death toll is at least 60% above the confirmed figure.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexicos-coronavirus-death-toll-rises-231244-2021-06-21/>

WHO to set up mRNA COVID vaccine hub in South Africa

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has said it is setting up a hub in South Africa to give companies from poor and middle-income countries the know-how and licences to produce COVID-19 vaccines, in what President Cyril Ramaphosa called an historic step to spread lifesaving technology. The “tech transfer hub” could make it possible for African companies to begin manufacturing mRNA vaccines – the advanced technology now used in shots from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna – in as little as nine to 12 months, the WHO said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/who-mrna-covid-vaccine-hub-south-africa>

Experts warn India of third COVID-19 wave by October

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A third wave of coronavirus infections is likely to hit India by October, and although it will be better controlled than the latest outbreak the pandemic will remain a public health threat for at least another year, according to a poll of medical experts. The June 3-17 snap survey of 40 healthcare specialists, doctors, scientists, virologists, epidemiologists and professors from around the world showed a significant pickup in vaccinations will likely provide some cover to a fresh outbreak. Of those who ventured a prediction, over 85% of respondents, or 21 of 24, said the next wave will hit by October, including three who forecast it as early as August and 12 in September.

<https://www.gulftoday.ae/news/2021/06/18/experts-warn-india-on-third-covid-19-wave-by-october>

Tokyo Olympics to allow local fans – but with strict limits

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A sharply limited number of fans will be allowed to attend the Tokyo Olympics, organizers announced Monday as they tried to save some of the spirit of the Games where even cheering has been banned. Organizers set a limit of 50% capacity — up to a maximum of 10,000 fans, all of whom must be Japanese residents — for each Olympic venue, regardless of whether it is indoors or outdoors. Officials said that if coronavirus cases rise again the rules could be changed and fans could still be barred all together. Spectators from abroad were banned several months ago, and now some local fans who have tickets will be forced to give them up. The decision comes as opposition among Japanese to holding the Games in July remains high, though may be softening, and as new infections in Tokyo have begun to subside.

<https://apnews.com/article/tokyo-2020-tokyo-olympics-olympic-games-health-coronavirus-pandemic-79196dd729929f217321900ad1a1931a>

What will public school look like for US students this fall?

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As mask mandates are dropped in many public places in the United States and coronavirus vaccines become available for Americans aged 11 and up, many parents are wondering if their children will finally head back to the classroom this fall. There are still plenty of variables. Despite the fact that clinical trials are under way in younger children aged six months to 11 years, there's no firm timeline as to when vaccines will be widely available for kids — and some parents have been hesitant to have their young children receive COVID-19 shots at all.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/21/what-will-public-school-look-like-for-american-kids-this-fall>

World Bank, African Union join forces to expand access to COVID-19 vaccines

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The World Bank and the African Union said on Monday they would work together to accelerate COVID-19 vaccinations for up to 400 million people across Africa, bolstering efforts to vaccinate 60% of the continent's population by 2022. In a joint statement, the World Bank and the African Union said their agreement would provide needed resources to the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) initiative, allowing countries to purchase and deploy more vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/world-bank-african-union-join-forces-expand-access-covid-19-vaccines-2021-06-22/>

Unvaccinated Americans are at risk of an aggressive and more dangerous Covid-19 variant. These are the most vulnerable states

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Some states are making great strides in vaccinating their residents against Covid-19, but the ones that are not may soon be contending with a more transmissible variant, experts say. About 45.1% of the US population is fully vaccinated against Covid-19, CDC data showed, and in 16 states and Washington, DC, that proportion is up to half. But some states -- such as Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Wyoming -- have fully vaccinated less than 35% of residents. More than 500 days and 600,000 deaths since the first person in the United States was reported to have died from Covid-19, experts have upheld vaccines as the key to reopening the country safely and containing the variants, many of which are more transmissible.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/21/us/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

India's vaccinations hit record with free COVID shots

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India gave out a record 7.5 million vaccine doses on Monday under a federal campaign to inoculate all adults for free after weeks of criticism that a chaotic rollout had worsened a second wave that killed hundreds of thousands. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the government would buy 75% of all vaccines from drug makers and distribute them for free to states, which along with private hospitals had earlier been buying shots for people aged 18-45.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-53256-new-covid-19-cases-2021-06-21/>

Portugal speeds up vaccination as COVID-19 infections rise

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As the Delta coronavirus variant continues to spread, Portuguese authorities are scrambling to bring a worrying spike in cases under control and said they would accelerate vaccinations and increase testing. Just over 25% of the population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in Portugal, a

country of 10 million that faced its toughest battle against the virus in January. Most of those fully vaccinated are older or more vulnerable but a recent rise in cases around the populous Lisbon area led authorities to speed up the vaccination campaign, especially among younger people.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/portugal-speeds-up-vaccination-as-covid-19-infections-rise-idUSL5N2O32EX>

Repeat Coronavirus Vaccination Needed After 6 Months, Russian Health Minister Says

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Russians who were vaccinated against the coronavirus over six months ago should revaccinate themselves for extra protection as the country grapples with the third wave of the pandemic, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said Monday. Moscow, the epicenter of the pandemic in Russia, reported its highest-ever number of Covid-19 cases in a single day this weekend as the fast-spreading Delta variant first detected in India accounts for 90% of all infections in the capital. The variant is more resistant to Covid-19 antibodies which gradually decline after one is vaccinated or recovers from the virus.

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/06/21/repeat-coronavirus-vaccination-needed-after-6-months-russian-health-minister-says-a74287>

Young people have stepped up over the Covid-19 vaccine - for that they should be applauded

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In the race between the Delta variant and the Covid vaccines, it would seem that the vaccine is at least keeping pace. Not to push the analogy too far, there was an increasing danger that the faster spread of the new mutation of the virus would mean that it would establish itself and cause a spike in cases before the usual effects of “herd immunity” started to protect the community as a whole. That was certainly evidenced in the trends in the northwest of England, Bedford and elsewhere. Even though the link between infection, hospital admissions and death have been weakened by the vaccine programme and improved treatments, there was every possibility of a third wave of Covid. Hence the decision to postpone the so-called freedom day until 19 July.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/covid-vaccine-delta-lockdown-b1869282.html>

Companies give vaccines to workers, boosting Japan's rollout

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Thousands of Japanese companies began distributing COVID-19 vaccines to workers and their families Monday in an employer-led drive reaching more than 13 million people that aims to rev up the nation's slow vaccine rollout. Yuka Daimaru, among the Suntory workers getting the shot on a sprawling office floor, was visibly relieved after spending more than a year worrying about the coronavirus. “I was nervous, but it didn't hurt as much as I thought it would,” she said. “Now I don't have to worry as much on commuter trains or at meetings.” The Tokyo-based beverage maker plans to inoculate 51,500 people, including part-time workers and employees' families, with the Moderna vaccine.

<https://apnews.com/article/japan-coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-def4b6c1ed31609b71049db88f39fcb>

Covid 19 coronavirus: Vaccine hesitancy puts India's gains against virus at risk

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In Jamsoti, a village tucked deep inside India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, the common refrain among the villagers is that coronavirus spreads only in cities. The deadly infection, they believe, does not exist in villages. So when a team of health workers recently approached Manju Kol to get vaccinated, she locked up her house, gathered her children and ran to the nearby forest. The

family hid there for hours and returned only when the workers left in the evening. "I would rather die than take the vaccine," said Kol.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine-hesitancy-puts-indias-gains-against-virus-at-risk/B2CHMOIWEQZVE2JA2UHDP4VRKA/>

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The thud of drums and chanting filled streets across Brazil. A day of protest on the day official figures recorded over 500,000 deaths from COVID-19. The infection rates are officially between 80,000 and 100,000 people every day. But that is the recorded cases, experts say the real figure could be two, three or even four times higher. At current rates, Brazil will surpass the US for the greatest death totals; epidemiologists are warning Brazil could lose 800,000 people.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-in-brazil-the-fact-500-000-have-died-and-the-country-isnt-in-lockdown-is-too-much-for-some-to-take-12336762>

Surging infections divide UK airlines and gov't on reopening

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Britain's surging coronavirus infection rate is widening a rift between airlines and health authorities over the government's decision to maintain some of the tightest rules on travel in Europe. Travel industry officials plan to hold events on Wednesday in London, Edinburgh and Belfast to draw attention to some 195,000 jobs they say are at risk from restrictions on overseas trips. An adviser from Public Health England meanwhile warned that a fourth national lockdown may be needed this year to control the virus.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/21/surging-infections-divide-uk-airlines-and-govt-on-reopening>

CDC says U.S. young adults less likely to take COVID-19 vaccine

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Younger adults are seeking out COVID-19 vaccines at a slower rate than older adults, and if that pace of vaccination continues through August, vaccine coverage among younger adults will not reach levels achieved with older adults, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported on Monday. The agency said more work is needed to increase vaccination rates among younger adults to reduce COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cdc-says-us-young-adults-less-likely-take-covid-19-vaccine-2021-06-21/>

Covid-19 vaccine side effects: Women hope more research will discover if jab causing period problems

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Women around the world have been asking for several months whether early, heavy or painful periods might be an unlisted side effect to the Covid vaccine. The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has received reports from more than 4,000 women who suffered period problems after having their jab. Some 2,734 reports are linked to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, 1,158 related to the Pfizer/BioNtech jab, and 66 linked to the Moderna vaccine, up to May 17. The numbers roughly reflect the proportion of each vaccine in the UK's vaccination programme. The majority of issues were reported in women aged between 30 and 49 and typically involved "heavier than usual" bleeding. Other issues included delayed periods and unexpected vaginal bleeding. The watchdog said it is "closely monitoring" the reports having said a review with experts found that there was no need to list the problem as a potential side effect

alongside common issues such as a sore arm, fatigue or nausea.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-side-effects-women-hope-more-research-will-discover-if-jab-causing-period-problems-1063059>

Gilead's remdesivir reduces COVID-19 mortality risk- data

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Gilead Sciences Inc (GILD.O) said an analysis showed its antiviral remdesivir reduced mortality rates in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 and increased the likelihood of being discharged by day 28 after a five-day course of the treatment. The drugmaker said on Monday it analyzed data from 98,654 patients from three retrospective studies of the real-world treatment of hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/gileads-remdesivir-reduces-covid-19-mortality-risk-data-2021-06-21/>

Cuba says Abdala vaccine 92.28% effective against coronavirus

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Cuba said on Monday its three-shot Abdala vaccine against the coronavirus had proved 92.28% effective in last-stage clinical trials. The announcement came just days after the government said another homegrown vaccine, Soberona II, had proved 62% effective.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cuba-says-abdala-vaccine-9228-effective-against-coronavirus-2021-06-21/>

COVID-19: 'Really close call' on whether to vaccinate children, SAGE adviser says

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The question of whether or not children should be vaccinated against coronavirus is a "really close call", a member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has told Sky News. Calum Semple, professor of child health and outbreak medicine at the University of Liverpool, said children were at "much less risk of severe disease".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-really-close-call-on-whether-to-vaccinate-children-sage-adviser-says-12337901>

Moderna set to expand Covid-19 vaccine production

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Moderna Inc is adding two new production lines at its coronavirus vaccine manufacturing plant, as it prepares to ramp up booster shot production. The US biotech firm's plans will increase overall production capacity at its Massachusetts plant by 50 per cent, the Wall Street Journal first reported. The move indicates that Moderna expects the market for Covid-19 vaccines to endure as lockdown restrictions ease but strains of the virus remain in countries around the world.

<https://www.cityam.com/moderna-set-to-expand-covid-19-vaccine-production/>

Israeli study links pre-infection vitamin D deficiency with severe COVID-19 illness

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Israeli researchers have found that pre-infection deficiency of vitamin D is associated with increased COVID-19 severity and mortality, Bar Ilan University (BIU) said Monday. The study conducted by BIU and the Galilee Medical Center (GMC) assessed the correlation using low levels of vitamin D measured prior to infection and focused on disease severity. In the study, the records of COVID-19 patients who were admitted to GMC were searched for vitamin D levels measured 14 to 730 days prior to the positive test. It was found that compared with mildly or moderately diseased patients, those with severe or critical COVID-19 disease were more likely to have severe pre-infection vitamin D deficiency with levels less than 20 ng/mL.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-06/21/c_1310020199.htm

AMA vice president backs AstraZeneca, warns against mixing coronavirus vaccines

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A senior doctor has cautioned against mixing vaccines amid changes to the advice on AstraZeneca, which he says should remain a key part of Australia's coronavirus control efforts. Australian Medical Association (AMA) vice president Chris Moy said there has been a wave of cancellations at his Adelaide GP clinic since advice from the country's vaccine experts changed last week, following the death of a 52-year-old woman from a clotting condition linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-21/ama-vp-warns-against-mix-and-matching-coronavirus-vaccines/100230266>

US extends Covid-19 travel restrictions with Canada and Mexico

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The United States has extended Covid-19 restrictions on non-essential travel at land and ferry crossings with Canada and Mexico until July 21, according to a tweet from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Sunday. "To reduce the spread of #COVID19, the United States is extending restrictions on non-essential travel at our land and ferry crossings with Canada and Mexico through July 21, while ensuring access for essential trade & travel," DHS wrote.

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/us-canada-mexico-covid-travel-restrictions-extended/index.html>

Indonesia records its largest 1-day jump in COVID infections

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Indonesian health authorities announced the country's largest one-day jump in new coronavirus infections on Monday, as the number of confirmed cases since the pandemic began crossed 2 million. The Health Ministry reported 14,536 new infections and 294 deaths, bringing the country's total confirmed fatalities to more than 54,950. Both the total cases and total deaths are the most in Southeast Asia. Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, has seen infections surge in recent weeks, a climb that has been blamed on travel during last month's Eid al-Fitr holiday as well as the arrival of new virus variants, such as the the Delta version first found in India.

<https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-coronavirus-vaccine-coronavirus-pandemic-health-f32e32902371dfb7f883c8a1851a1c53>

Canada: Fully vaccinated citizens face no quarantine after July 5

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Canada will start cautiously lifting border restrictions for fully vaccinated citizens and other eligible people on July 5 but US and other foreign travelers will still be excluded, the government said on Monday. From 11:59pm EST on July 5 (03:59 GMT on July 6), those who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will no longer have to spend time in quarantine. The relaxation of the measures applies to Canadians and permanent residents.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/canada-fully-vaccinated-citizens-face-no-quarantine-after-july-5>

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and containing the variants, many of which are more transmissible.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/21/us/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

Covid-19 news: UK to announce plans for booster shots in coming weeks

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UK to decide on booster vaccine programme following results from trials testing different vaccine combinations. Plans for a covid-19 vaccine booster programme will be announced in the coming weeks, UK health minister Matt Hancock has said. On 21 June, Hancock told BBC Breakfast that ministers were waiting for results from trials testing the effects of different combinations of covid-19 vaccines. "In the next few weeks, when we get the clinical data through on what's the most effective combination [of covid-19 vaccines] to have [...] then we'll set out all the details for the booster programme for the autumn," said Hancock. Speaking to reporters on the same day, UK prime minister Boris Johnson said the NHS could face "big pressures" in winter with flu season and that it is unlikely that restrictions in England would be lifted before 19 July.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-uk-to-announce-plans-for-booster-shots-in-coming-weeks/>