

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

12th Sep 2022

News Highlights

China Restricts Domestic Travel as Covid Outbreaks Grow

Article reports that China is stepping up its Covid defenses as a key Communist Party meeting looms, restricting internal travel further as swathes of the country remain under tight lockdowns. The National Health Commission on Thursday announced a raft of measures that will be in place until the end of next month to fight a virus that shows little sign of slowing. Authorities told citizens to minimize travel during the mid-Autumn festival next week and National Day holidays in October, ordinarily key periods for domestic tourism, and asked local governments to test all residents regularly for Covid regardless of infection levels.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-09/china-restricts-domestic-travel-as-covid-outbreaks-grow>

How should New Zealand manage COVID from now - limit all infections or focus on preventing severe disease?

As the New Zealand government reviews mask mandates and other pandemic measures this week, we argue it's time to reconsider the overall COVID strategy. With the arrival of Omicron, the pandemic landscape has changed worldwide. Omicron's latest BA.5 variant now dominates and, in the second half of 2022, most people in all countries have acquired immunity either from vaccination or infection, or both.

<https://theconversation.com/how-should-new-zealand-manage-covid-from-now-limit-all-infections-or-focus-on-preventing-severe-disease-189461>

China's Public Puts on a Show of Zero Covid for an Audience of One

As fire was raging in the mountains surrounding the southwestern Chinese metropolis of Chongqing, 10 million residents stood in 100-plus-degree heat to get Covid tests. Two cases were detected that day in August. A week earlier in Xiamen, in the country's southeast, pandemic workers swabbed the throats of fishermen before they tested their catch of fish and crab. Cars got swabbed, too, at an auto show last week in Chengdu, in the southwest. When a strong earthquake struck Chengdu on Monday, the first instinct of many residents was not to run for safety but to ask for permission to leave their homes under lockdown. "Don't come downstairs! @all," a property manager warned in a group chat.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/09/business/china-covid-zero-xi-jinping.html>

Bank of America Child-Care Spending Nears Pre-Covid Level as Parents Get Back to Work

The number of Bank of America Corp. customers making child-care payments neared pre-pandemic levels last month, an encouraging sign for the labor market as parents get back to work. Those making such payments now total about 94% of the level seen in January 2020, a noticeable jump from the prior month, the Bank of America Institute said in a report Friday. The dollar value of child-care spending per customer was up about 7% from a year ago when adjusting for inflation.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-09/bofa-child-care-spending-nears-pre-covid-level-as-parents-work>

Top scientists join forces to study leading theory behind long COVID

Top scientists from leading academic centers are banding together to answer a key question about the root cause of long COVID - whether fragments of the coronavirus persist in the tissues of some individuals. The effort, known as the Long Covid Research Initiative, aims to streamline research and

quickly pivot to clinical trials of potential treatments. By sharing diverse skill sets and resources, the group hopes to uncover the scientific underpinnings of the disease and use that to design evidence-based trials.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/top-scientists-join-forces-study-leading-theory-behind-long-covid-2022-09-08/>

On COVID alert, more Chinese cities advise residents to stay put for holiday

More Chinese cities advised residents on Wednesday to avoid unnecessary trips for the upcoming holiday long weekend, adding to COVID policies that are keeping tens of millions of people under lockdown and exacting a growing economic toll. Nanjing and Wuxi, major cities in eastern China's Jiangsu province, recommended residents not leave town during the Saturday-Monday mid-autumn festival, echoing similar advisories made by other cities this month.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/covid-alert-more-chinese-cities-advise-residents-stay-put-holiday-2022-09-07/>

What scientists have learnt from COVID lockdowns

Most scientists agree that lockdowns did curb COVID-19 deaths and that governments had little option but to restrict people's social contacts in early 2020, to stem SARS-CoV-2's spread and avert the collapse of health-care systems. "We needed to buy ourselves some time," says Lauren Meyers, a biological data scientist at the University of Texas at Austin. The pandemic's true health cost: how much of our lives has COVID stolen? At the same time, it's clear that lockdowns had huge costs, and there is debate about the utility of any subsequent lockdown measures. School and university closures disrupted education. Closing businesses contributed to financial and social hardship, mental ill health and economic downturns. "There's costs and benefits," says Samir Bhatt, a public-health statistician at Imperial College London and the University of Copenhagen. Scientists have been studying the effects of lockdowns during the pandemic in the hope that their findings could inform the response to future crises. They have reached some conclusions: countries that acted quickly to bring in stringent measures did best at preserving both lives and their economies, for instance. But researchers have also encountered difficulties. Analysing competing harms and benefits often comes down not to scientific calculations, but to value judgements, such as how to weigh costs that fall on some sections of society more than others.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-02823-4>

Pharmacists warn they do not have sufficient Covid boosters for autumn rollout

Pharmacies in England warned they have insufficient Covid jabs for the autumn booster campaign. Around 1.6 million care home residents, staff and housebound people will start to be given jabs to protect them ahead of winter. An additional four million people including the over-75s will be able to book a fourth jab. But Leyla Hannbeck, of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies, said some members had receiving just a third of their orders. 'We've known for months that there's going to be a vaccination process from autumn onwards,' she told the Sunday Telegraph.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11179437/Pharmacists-warn-not-sufficient-Covid-boosters-autumn-rollout.html>

Unrelenting COVID rules cast clouds over Hong Kong schools

In Hong Kong, stringent COVID-19 curbs have long made life for school students extremely hard. Now, a new rule requiring higher vaccination levels could upend what progress has been made towards resuming full-day in-person classes.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/unrelenting-covid-rules-cast-clouds-000821062.html>

Exit Strategies

Kim Jong Un suggests N.Korea may begin COVID vaccinations

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has suggested that the isolated country could begin COVID-19

vaccinations in November, state media reported on Friday. In a speech on Thursday to the North Korean national assembly, Kim cited World Health Organization warnings that the winter could see a resurgence in coronavirus infections. "Therefore, along with responsible vaccination, we should recommend that all residents wear masks to protect their health from November," he said, without elaborating.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kim-jong-un-suggests-nkorea-may-begin-covid-vaccinations-2022-09-09/>

Long Covid Costs Australia Economy \$3.6 Billion a Year: Report

Long Covid is costing the Australian economy the equivalent of \$3.6 billion a year in lost output, the Australian Financial Review reported, citing an exclusive data analysis. Based on data from the country's Treasury estimating some 31,000 workers called in sick because of the condition in June, the analysis by think tank Impact Economics and Policy found the economic cost came in at A\$100 million (\$68 million) a week, according to the AFR. That amounts to some A\$5.2 billion on an annual basis.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-10/long-covid-costs-australia-economy-3-6-billion-a-year-report>

Why China Is Still Imposing Lockdowns

The world has moved on from the coronavirus pandemic—except for China. Chinese leaders continue to lock down some of the country's largest cities, spend millions of dollars on testing, and hunt down individual case after individual case. Nothing—neither a sinking economy nor the availability of vaccines and improved treatments nor the country's growing isolation—has persuaded the leadership to change course. The latest wave of lockdowns has largely confined millions to their homes: Just two of those lockdowns, involving the southwestern metropolis of Chengdu and the tech hub of Shenzhen, affected a combined population roughly equivalent to all of Canada's.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/09/china-lockdowns-zero-covid-policy/671385/>

State and Local Jobs May Take Until 2026 to Recoup Pandemic Losses

The sluggish recovery in US state and city employment has left payrolls hundreds of thousands of positions below pre-pandemic levels, a deficit that may take years to plug as the private sector lures away workers. State and local payrolls rose to about 19.4 million last month, the highest since March 2020, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data released Friday. However, that's still roughly 650,000 less than the peak from right before Covid-19 struck, even after states and municipalities received hundreds of billions of dollars in federal stimulus to ease the pandemic's blow.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-07/state-local-jobs-may-take-until-2026-to-recoup-pandemic-losses>

U.S. Plans Shift to Annual Covid Shots as New Boosters Roll Out

U.S. health authorities plan to recommend that people get Covid-19 boosters once a year, starting with the new shots now rolling out, a shift from their current practice of issuing new advice every several months. The annual cadence would be similar to that of flu shots, White House officials said, though elderly people and those with weakened immune systems may need more frequent inoculations. A shift to annual Covid-19 boosters would be a departure from current practice and comes after many people in the U.S. have ignored calls to get a first or second booster, partly due to fatigue with repeat inoculations.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-plans-shift-to-annual-covid-shots-as-new-boosters-roll-out-11662484424>

Hong Kong Targets Removal of Hotel Quarantine Requirement

Hong Kong is targeting November to end hotel quarantine for visitors to the city, Bloomberg reports. Hong Kong has already reduced the hotel quarantine requirement from 21 days to 7 days to 3 days, although a further 4 days of "health monitoring" is still required during which people can leave their homes but may not enter high-risk premises like restaurants and bars. The end of hotel quarantine altogether is planned to occur ahead of a summit of global bankers and a popular international

rugby competition later this year.

<https://www.regulationasia.com/hong-kong-targets-removal-of-hotel-quarantine-requirement/>

World's First Covid Vaccine You Inhale Is Approved in China

China became the first country to approve a needle-free, inhaled version of a Covid-19 vaccine made by Tianjin-based CanSino Biologics Inc., pushing the company's shares up as much as 14.5% Monday morning in Hong Kong. China's National Medical Products Administration approved CanSino's Ad5-nCoV for emergency use as a booster vaccine, the company said in a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on Sunday. The vaccine is a new version of CanSino's one-shot Covid drug, the first in the world to undergo human testing in March 2020 and which has been used in China, Mexico, Pakistan, Malaysia and Hungary after being rolled out in February 2021.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-05/world-s-first-covid-vaccine-you-inhale-is-approved-in-china>

Moderna Sees Annual US Market for Covid-19 Shots Ranging Up to \$13 Billion

Annual US sales of Covid-19 shots could be high as \$12.9 billion, with health officials likely recommending an annual booster, vaccine maker Moderna Inc. said in a meeting with investors. Exactly how big the market will be for shots made by the company and its rivals depends on who keeps receiving boosters, Moderna said. It could be as little as \$5.2 billion annually, depending on shots' prices and how many people receive them, officials said Thursday in a meeting with investors in Boston.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-08/moderna-sees-annual-us-market-for-covid-19-shots-ranging-up-to-13-billion>

Partisan Exits

Anger at plans to roll back Covid vaccines to under-11s in England

The decision to reduce the number of children who are offered Covid jabs has prompted outcry from parent groups and academics. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said children who had not turned five by the end of last month would not be offered a vaccination, in line with advice published by the UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in February 2022. UKHSA said the offer of Covid jabs to healthy five to 11-year-olds was always meant to be temporary. UKHSA's Green Book, which provides information on the vaccine rollout for public health professionals, states: "This one-off programme applies to those aged 5 to 11 years, including those who turn five years of age before the end of August 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/06/anger-at-plans-to-roll-back-covid-vaccines-to-under-11s-in-england>

New York Governor Lifts Mask Mandate for NYC Subways

New York Governor Kathy Hochul lifted the state's mask requirement for public transit, removing one of the last remaining government mandates of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hochul announced the decision on Wednesday after months of confusion among commuters befuddled by varying national, state and local rules on where face coverings are required. Covid numbers are stable, putting the state "in a good place now," she said. "We haven't seen any spikes, and also people are getting back to work, back to school," Hochul said during a press conference at a health center in New York City, shortly before receiving her omicron-targeted booster that's being made available this week. "We have to restore some normalcy to our lives."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-07/new-york-governor-lifts-mask-mandate-for-shelters-nyc-subways?srnd=prognosis>

How Pfizer and BioNTech Modified Covid-19 Vaccines for Fall Boosters

Before new versions of the Omicron strain took hold in the U.S., Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE had begun tinkering with their widely used Covid-19 vaccine. In May, researchers tracking how coronavirus strains behave saw the potential for Omicron subvariants to predominate. Just in case,

the companies started building blueprints of shots reformulated to target BA.4, BA.5 and other substrains, and laid the groundwork for testing them. The preparations proved prescient, a big reason, along with manufacturing enhancements, that tens of millions of doses of Pfizer-BioNTech boosters modified to target BA.4 and BA.5 are now rolling out. "If we're going to be ready for the disease and its migration, I don't have the time to wait," said Mike McDermott, Pfizer's chief global supply officer.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-pfizer-and-biontech-modified-covid-19-vaccines-for-fall-boosters-11662341462>

Boris Johnson's Father Halts Xinjiang Trip After Covid Lockdown

Stanley Johnson, the father of the UK's outgoing prime minister, has left China after being caught in a Covid lockdown that spoiled his plans to shoot a travel film in Xinjiang, where London has accused Beijing of widespread rights abuses. The former Conservative member of the European Parliament, who has pushed for closer ties between the UK and China, was in quarantine in the megacity of Chengdu when it went into lockdown last week. His youngest child, Max, who studied for an MBA at Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University and had been due to accompany his father to Xinjiang, told Bloomberg News that Johnson had "left for the UK."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-05/boris-johnson-s-father-halts-xinjiang-trip-after-covid-lockdown>

UK has classified \$1.3 bln of COVID 'bounce back' loans as suspected fraud -source

The British government is set to release data showing around 1.1 billion pounds of small business loans (\$1.27 billion) made under a COVID-19 emergency lending scheme has already been classified as suspected fraud, a source told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-has-classified-13-bln-covid-bounce-back-loans-suspected-fraud-source-2022-09-02/>

Continued Lockdown

Britain's Lloyds racks up \$350 million of likely scam COVID loans

Lloyds Banking Group has been hit by more than 300 million pounds (\$348 million) of suspected fraud linked to COVID-19 pandemic-era recovery loans for small businesses, the highest among big bank peers, according to government data. British banks overall have classified some 1.1 billion pounds worth of the emergency lending scheme known as "bounce back" loans as fraud, the data published on Monday by Britain's Department for Business, Energy and Industry (BEIS) showed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/britains-lloyds-racks-up-350-million-likely-scam-covid-loans-2022-09-06/>

Hong Kong Targets Removal of Hotel Quarantine Requirement

Hong Kong is targeting November to end hotel quarantine for visitors to the city, Bloomberg reports. Hong Kong has already reduced the hotel quarantine requirement from 21 days to 7 days to 3 days, although a further 4 days of "health monitoring" is still required during which people can leave their homes but may not enter high-risk premises like restaurants and bars. The end of hotel quarantine altogether is planned to occur ahead of a summit of global bankers and a popular international rugby competition later this year. The heads of major Wall Street banks have been invited to the November conference, organised by the HKMA (Hong Kong Monetary Authority), but many are reluctant to receive quarantine exemptions to attend as they do not want to be singled out for perceived preferential treatment. The hotel quarantine requirement is also seen as a deterrence for visitors looking to attend the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens tournament, scheduled from 4-6 November, as well as an international legal conference at the end of the same month.

<https://www.regulationasia.com/hong-kong-targets-removal-of-hotel-quarantine-requirement/>

China's Guiyang Locks Down Some Areas to Contain Covid Outbreak

China sealed off parts of Guiyang, capital of the mountainous southern Guizhou province, as an increase in virus cases triggered a stringent response in line with the country's Covid Zero strategy.

Lockdowns will be imposed in almost all communities in six of Guiyang's 10 districts for four days through the end of Thursday, the local government said in a statement. Residents in the affected areas will only be allowed to leave their homes for Covid tests, and all cab services will be suspended, authorities said. The moves come after the city of 6.1 million reported 132 virus cases as of Monday morning, 28 more than a day earlier

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-05/china-s-guiyang-locks-down-some-areas-to-contain-covid-outbreak>

China puts 65m people into semi-lockdown ahead of party summit

China has intensified its efforts to rein in outbreaks of Covid-19 ahead of a major political meeting by placing about 65 million people under semi-lockdown, according to local media reports. The Chinese Communist party will begin its 20th congress on 16 October, with party chief Xi Jinping widely expected to be reinstated as president for a third term. According to a report on the business portal Caixin, 33 Chinese cities – including eight major provincial and municipal centres – have been placed under China's lowest "static management" tier of lockdown, disrupting the lives of an estimated 65 million residents.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/05/china-puts-65m-people-into-semi-lockdown-ahead-of-communist-party-summit>

Scientific Viewpoint

New Covid wave in autumn 'virtually certain' say French experts

Immunologist Brigitte Autran, president of new government health advisory body the Comité de veille et d'anticipation des risques sanitaires (Committee to monitor and anticipate health risks) which has replaced the Conseil scientifique, told Le Parisien that "the Covid epidemic is not behind us" and said that the French would have to get used to "living with" the virus. The Covidtracker website currently shows that the virus is in decline across France, with the R-rate currently at 0.7 – any figure lower than one indicates that the number of infections is falling.

<https://www.thelocal.fr/20220817/new-covid-wave-in-autumn-virtually-certain-say-french-experts/>

Scientists Found a New Antibody That Neutralizes All COVID Variants

COVID-19 vaccines have been effective at keeping people from getting severely ill and dying from the virus, but they've required different boosters to try to keep on top of all of the coronavirus variants that have popped up. Now, researchers have discovered an antibody that neutralizes all known COVID-19 variants. The antibody, called SP1-77, is the result of a collaborative effort from researchers at Boston Children's Hospital and Duke University. Results from mouse studies they've conducted were recently published in the journal Science Immunology, and they look promising.

<https://www.prevention.com/health/a41092334/antibody-neutralize-covid-variants/>

SINOVAC Approved to Initiate Clinical Trial for Its Omicron Containing COVID-19 Vaccine in Chile

Sinovac Biotech Ltd., a leading provider of biopharmaceutical products in China, announced that the Chilean Public Health Institute (Instituto de Salud Pública, ISP) approved a phase II clinical trial for its inactivated Omicron strain COVID-19 vaccine and trivalent COVID-19 vaccine (ancestral, Delta and Omicron variants) on August 31st. The clinical trial will evaluate the immunogenicity and safety of one booster dose of the two candidate vaccines in adults who had received two booster doses of CoronaVac®, mRNA, or adenovirus vector COVID-19 vaccine. This study is the world's first study researching multivalent inactivated COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20220906005511/en/SINOVAC-Approved-to-Initiate-Clinical-Trial-for-Its-Omicron-Containing-COVID-19-Vaccine-in-Chile>

Long COVID's link to suicide: scientists warn of hidden crisis

The 56-year-old, who caught the disease in spring 2020, still had not recovered about 18 months later when he killed himself at his home near Dallas, having lost his health, memory and money. "No one cares. No one wants to take the time to listen," Taylor wrote in a final text to a friend, speaking of the plight of millions of sufferers of long COVID, a disabling condition that can last for months and years after the initial infection.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/long-covids-link-suicide-scientists-warn-hidden-crisis-2022-09-08/>

US Orders 100 Million COVID Tests, White House Says More Needed

The United States will boost its stockpile of at-home COVID-19 tests, ordering more than 100 million tests from domestic manufacturers, the White House said on Thursday, but warned it was a short-term solution. President Joe Biden's administration has repeatedly and unsuccessfully asked Congress for more pandemic money. It said last week it would request \$22.4 billion in emergency funding for COVID-19 relief ahead of a potential case surge in autumn. "The administration is acting, within its limited funding, to increase the supply of at-home COVID-19 tests in the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) by purchasing over 100 million additional at-home, rapid tests from domestic manufacturers," the White House said in a statement.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-orders-100-million-covid-tests-white-house-says-more-needed-6736908.html>

Pandemic Readiness Lobby Draws In Biotech, Government Members

Drug and biotechnology firms, academics, investors and former government officials are launching a new lobbying group that hopes to improve long-term support for technology and products to combat future pandemics and other biological threats. Initial members of the group include Roche Holding AG's Genentech unit, Flagship Pioneering Inc., Ginkgo Bioworks Holdings Inc., Siga Technologies Inc., Coherus Biosciences Inc., ImmunityBio Inc., IGM Biosciences Inc., Texas A&M University and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The group, which will be called the Medical Countermeasures Coalition, or MC2, says it hopes to create sustained investment and a better market for pandemic preparations, which have often fallen victim to what is known as the cycle of "panic and neglect" following emergencies

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-07/pandemic-readiness-lobby-draws-in-biotech-government-members?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpid=google

How Pfizer and BioNTech Modified Covid-19 Vaccines for Fall Boosters

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-pfizer-and-biontech-modified-covid-19-vaccines-for-fall-boosters-11662341462>

So Long to Anthony Fauci, Unlikely Avatar of Polarization

Dr. Anthony Fauci, who announced his pending retirement from the National Institutes of Health on Aug. 22, worked for more than 50 years as a little-known civil servant in a low-profile federal agency. He spent his final two years in government as a highly divisive public figure. Fauci's sudden rise to national prominence was the accidental consequence of an unforeseen global catastrophe. But he then, perhaps inevitably, found himself enmeshed in today's polarized political battles. After all, partisan conflict in America increasingly separates those who think well-credentialed experts like

Fauci should exert major influence over policy making from those who find that prospect unappealing — or even frightening.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-09-05/so-long-to-anthony-fauci-an-unlikely-avatar-of-polarization>

COVID app that detects virus in your voice 'more accurate than lateral flow tests'

Users will be required to give information about their medical history, smoking status and demographics and record some respiratory sounds, such as coughing and reading a short sentence.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-app-that-detects-virus-in-your-voice-more-accurate-than-lateral-flow-tests-12690450?curator=upstract.com>

Pfizer/Biontech Covid-19 Booster Approved by UK Medicines Regulator

An updated Covid-19 booster vaccine has been approved for use in the UK. The second "bivalent" vaccine, made by Pfizer/BioNTech, targets two coronavirus variants and has been approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in those aged 12 and above. The regulator confirmed on Saturday that the vaccine had met its standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. The vaccine targets both the original strain of coronavirus and the Omicron variant that emerged at the end of 2021, and follows a similar booster from Moderna which was approved in August.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-03/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-booster-approved-by-uk-medicines-regulator>