

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Overnight News Roundup

Rising COVID-19 cases highlight 'precarious position' in many under-vaccinated regions as variant pressures build up

- In the USA, many states have reported that COVID-19 infections which have seen progress in a reduction in cases from earlier this year, are now reporting that infections are starting to inch up once more.
- [Experts point to two likely reasons](#). State governors and mayors are tossing aside restrictions like capacity caps on businesses and, in some states, mask mandates, even as a level of virus cases per day remain stubbornly around the 50,000 cases level. This is not far below where it was during parts of the last 2020 summer, during what was then considered to be a dangerous surge.
- The second reason is that the B.1.1.7 variant is building up a head of steam in the U.S. It could be reaching the point in some places where it starts to drive outbreaks. Another New York City variant called B.1.526 could be buoying cases in that region, even though it is not yet having national impact.
- What is occurring could be the early days of localized springtime outbreaks that, while not on the scale of the winter surges, will lead to many more people getting sick. This scenario adds further pressure to accelerate the vaccination campaigns.
- In the USA vaccines have been slower to reach people of colour and only about 40% of the 65 and older group are fully vaccinated and about a third of the long term care group residents are still not covered. Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy believes that these are going to be the groups most likely to be impacted by the new various variants.
- [Dr Deepti Gurdasani is Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, argues that as the impact of opening up schools hits in the UK there will inevitably be a third wave](#). Gurdasani suggests that the government is going to have to consider a Zero Covid strategy in tandem with an aggressive vaccination campaign rollout if it is to get the pandemic fully under control.
- Germany is warning of an exponential growth in COVID-19 infections, with some twenty countries in the EU now reporting an increase in the rate of positive tests and 15 of them also saying hospital or intensive care admissions have increased, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. [There are growing concerns that low rates of vaccination across the bloc could lead to new variants capable of evading existing vaccines that would otherwise keep most of the UK's vulnerable people safe](#).

Vaccines versus variants - the race is on

Rising Covid-19 cases in some states highlight 'precarious position' as variants build up in U.S.

The United States is in for a celebratory summer, experts and political leaders have forecasted — when widespread availability of Covid-19 vaccines will allow the safe return of gatherings and activities shunned for the past year. But epidemiologists have been warning it might not be a smooth road to that point, and now, data in some states are pointing to, if not just stalled progress, increased cases. In New Jersey, average daily cases fell below 3,000 in late February and have

recently been around 3,800. Michigan saw its average daily infections go from just over 1,000 to more than 2,000 over the same period, and hospitalizations have been increasing for three weeks. Other states, including Minnesota and Missouri, have also seen infections inch up in recent weeks, while many other states' progress from earlier this year has flattened out, not budging from levels that would have once alarmed the public.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/03/20/rising-covid19-cases-in-some-states-highlight-precarious-position/>

Covid-19 third wave 'inevitable' in the UK, warns epidemiologist

The mass reopening of schools has put the UK on track for a third coronavirus wave, according to this epidemiologist. Dr Deepti Gurdasani is Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, specialising in epidemiology and statistical genetics. She spoke to Andrew Castle about the fight back against the pandemic across the continent. Andrew wondered whether the UK should expect a third wave of the virus, to which Dr Gurdasani believed that it is "inevitable." "We're actually seeing the start of that already. We know drops have plateaued in most regions in the UK right now. In Scotland we're actually seeing rises right now which is consistent with what many of us predicted with partial school openings," she revealed. Dr Gurdasani stressed the knock-on impact of reopening schools for the UK's coronavirus numbers: "As the impact of full school openings is felt, it's very likely that R will rise above one and we'll start to see that surge of cases soon."

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/andrew-castle/uk-coronavirus-third-wave-is-inevitable-amid-school-reopening/>

COVID-19: Fears of third wave grow in Europe as Germany warns of 'exponential growth' in infections

Fears of a third coronavirus wave are growing, with Germany among the European countries warning of an "exponential growth" in infections. Twenty countries in the European Union have now reported an increase in the rate of positive tests and 15 have said hospital or intensive care admissions have increased, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The sharp rise in infections and the EU's continuing struggle to get its COVID-19 inoculation drive up to speed have forced some countries to go back into lockdown or re-think the easing of restrictions.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-fears-of-third-wave-grow-in-europe-as-germany-warns-of-exponential-growth-in-infections-12251203>

SAGE Professor warns of 'fourth wave' of Covid-19 despite vaccine success

SAGE adviser Professor Andrew Hayward said that a rise in positive tests is probable but hoped that the vaccines would reduce the number of deaths and hospitalisations. Speaking to Times Radio, the University College London scientist was asked if a surge of infections could occur if "mistakes" as we come out of lockdown. He said: "I think another wave is possible, likely even. "I guess the difference is that another wave will cause substantially fewer deaths and hospitalisations because of high levels of vaccination across the sorts of people who would have ended up in hospital or unfortunately dying if they haven't been vaccinated.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/fourth-wave-covid-19-health-uk-b925336.html>

Masks and social distancing could last for years says UK expert

Covid: Masks and social distancing 'could last years'

People may need to wear face coverings and socially distance for several years until we return to normality, a leading epidemiologist has predicted. Mary Ramsay, the head of immunisation at Public Health England, said basic measures could be in place until other countries successfully roll out jabs. She also said a return of big spectator events required careful monitoring and clear instructions about staying safe. The defence secretary has not ruled out the foreign holiday ban being extended. Ben Wallace told BBC One's Andrew Marr Show that booking a break abroad now would be "premature" and "potentially risky".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56475807>

Vaccine 'passports' for travel

Qantas boss: Governments 'to insist' on vaccines for flying

The boss of Australian airline Qantas has told the BBC that "governments are going to insist" on vaccines for international travellers. Coronavirus vaccines are seen as crucial to reviving an industry that saw worldwide passenger numbers fall 75.6% last year. Chief executive Alan Joyce said that many governments are talking about vaccination as "a condition of entry". Even if they weren't, he thinks the airline should enforce its own policy. "We have a duty of care to our passengers and to our crew, to say that everybody in that aircraft needs to be safe," Mr Joyce said. He believes that would justify changing the terms and conditions on which tickets are booked.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56460329>

Holidays abroad this summer unlikely for most Britons, scientist warns

Holidays abroad are "extremely unlikely" for most Britons this summer due to the risk of importing new variants of COVID-19, a scientist who advises the government said on Saturday, leaving airlines and travel companies bracing for a second lost peak season. Britain has banned travel for most people during the current lockdown and has said overseas holidays will not be allowed until May 17 at the earliest. But Mike Tildesley, a scientist on a government advisory body, said the risk of importing vaccine-resistant variants back into the UK would likely scupper the nation's annual getaway.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-travel/holidays-abroad-this-summer-unlikely-for-most-britons-scientist-warns-idUSKBN2BC0FM>

Portugal to quarantine travellers from South Africa via other countries

Portugal said on Saturday that passengers arriving from South Africa via a stopover in another country must also quarantine for 14 days and present a negative COVID-19 test taken 72 hours before arrival, the interior ministry said on Saturday. Direct flights from South Africa have already been halted and although few cases of the COVID-19 variant first detected in South Africa have been diagnosed in Portugal so far, the measure was intended to prevent any further spread, the ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-portugal-south-afr-idUSKBN2BC0HL>

COVID-19: Greece travel corridor brought in 'a large amount of virus', say UK experts

The government's decision to allow free travel to and from Greece last summer could have had a significant impact on the spread of the virus, according to a Public Health England study quietly published this week. The previously unreported analysis, which was conducted by PHE and the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium, revealed that Greece was the largest source of imported infections between June and September, making up 21% of new cases, compared with 16% for Croatia and 14% for Spain. It also suggested that holidaymakers who didn't need to quarantine - as those from Greece did not - were more likely to pass on the virus once they arrived back.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-greece-travel-corridor-brought-in-a-large-amount-of-virus-say-experts-12250258>

Rolling out vaccination programmes

Coronavirus vaccine Phase 1b rollout frustrating Australian GP clinics

Health Minister Greg Hunt this week announced what would have been music to the ears of more than 6 million Australians — it's now your turn to get the coronavirus vaccine. But for general practices across the country, the news sounded like thousands of phones that would not stop ringing. The Australian government released a list of GP clinics that would be able to start vaccinations from March 22 and an online eligibility checker that gives a contact number for vaccine providers in your area. Kathy Turner, a GP based near Geelong in Victoria, said the government told people to contact their GPs without giving prior warning to clinics, some of which had not yet received doses.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-19/coronavirus-vaccine-phase-1b-gp-clinics-few-doses-available/100018052>

Pfizer coronavirus vaccine doses wrongly delivered to Perth instead of Adelaide, delaying SA rollout

A shipment of Pfizer vaccine doses destined for South Australia has been wrongly delivered to Western Australia, causing delays to the state's rollout. The ABC understands aged care facilities involved in the phase 1A rollout were told by the federal Department of Health that COVID-19 immunisations would not be happening today as scheduled. Impacted care homes were originally told the delay was the result of a "logistics issue". It is not clear how many vaccines were included in the shipment, but some were expected to be second-round doses for aged care residents.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-19/sa-coronavirus-vaccines-wrongly-delivered-to-perth/100018366>

Coronavirus vaccine rollout tipped to meet targets despite flooding, international supply issues

Federal health authorities say they are confident the next phase of Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program will meet its targets, despite international supply issues and weather-related delivery delays. Phase 1B of the program is due to start on Monday, with about 6 million Australians eligible to receive their first doses. Deputy Chief Medical Officer Michael Kidd said the medical regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, expected to complete the approvals process for locally produced doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine "in the coming days"

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-21/covid-19-vaccine-update-from-chief-medical-officer/100019850>

US coronavirus vaccine rollout becomes 'less messy'

In December, then President-elect Joe Biden set a goal of getting 100 million people vaccinated against Covid-19 in the first 100 days of his presidency. At this rate, it looks like US will hit that mark on Friday, which is day 58. "These milestones are significant accomplishments, but we have much more to do," Biden said Thursday. "That's just the floor. We will not stop until we beat this pandemic." The country still has a long way to go, but the vaccine rollout is looking a lot less chaotic. As of Thursday, about 12.3% of people are fully vaccinated in the US. That's a long way from herd immunity, where enough people have been vaccinated or had the disease to have immunity, if herd immunity is even achievable.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/18/health/vaccine-rollout-less-messy/index.html>

Ontario COVID-19 vaccines expand to people 75 and older, 60 and older to begin at pharmacies with AstraZeneca

Ontario is expanding its booking system to make an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine to people who are 75 and older across the province, effective Monday, March 22. "The progress we are making on our Vaccine Distribution Plan demonstrates what can be done when we unleash the full potential of Team Ontario," a statement from Ontario Premier Doug Ford reads. "Thanks to the efforts of an army of frontline health care heroes and volunteers, we are getting needles in arms even faster than we had imagined. All we need now is a steady and reliable supply of vaccines from the Federal government to ensure anyone who wants one, gets one as soon as possible so we can all stay safe."

<https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/covid-19-vaccine-ontario-book-appointment-astra-zeneca-142533656.html>

A rapid COVID-19 vaccine rollout backfired in some US states

A surprising new analysis found that states such as South Carolina, Florida and Missouri that raced ahead of others to offer the vaccine to ever-larger groups of people have vaccinated smaller shares of their population than those that moved more slowly and methodically, such as Hawaii and Connecticut. The explanation, as experts see it, is that the rapid expansion of eligibility caused a surge in demand too big for some states to handle and led to serious disarray. Vaccine supplies proved insufficient or unpredictable, websites crashed and phone lines became jammed, spreading confusion, frustration and resignation among many people. "The infrastructure just wasn't ready. It

kind of backfired," said Dr. Rebecca Wurtz, an infectious disease physician and health data specialist at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health. She added: "In the rush to satisfy everyone, governors satisfied few and frustrated many."

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/rapid-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-135215391-150349805.html>

Getting vaccination in arms

1 in 4 New Yorkers has received at least 1 COVID-19 vaccine dose

About 1 in 4 New Yorkers has received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, according to state data. Nearly 7.5 million total doses, including more than 1 million over the past seven days, have been administered statewide,

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/1-in-4-new-yorkers-has-received-at-least-1-covid-19-vaccine-dose/ar-BB1eN6hk>

COVID-19: Half of UK adults have received first vaccine dose, health secretary says

More than half the UK's adult population has now received a first COVID vaccine dose, the government has said. Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the milestone as a "fantastic achievement" and said: "Let's keep going!" He said: "Like the rest of the country I am immensely proud of the progress we have made so far in rolling out vaccinations. "There is still further to go and I encourage everyone to take up the offer when asked to do so. "I received my first vaccine yesterday and would like to thank the brilliant NHS staff I met, alongside the teams and volunteers working across the UK to deliver this vital protection."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-half-of-uk-adults-have-received-first-vaccine-dose-health-secretary-says-12247856>

Many health-care workers have not gotten a coronavirus vaccine

Health-care workers were the first group in the United States to be offered coronavirus vaccinations. But three months into the effort, many remain unconvinced, unreached and unprotected. The lingering obstacles to vaccinating health-care workers foreshadow the challenge the United States will face as it expands the pool of people eligible and attempts to get the vast majority of the U.S. population vaccinated. According to a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, barely half of front-line health-care workers (52 percent) said they had received at least their first vaccine dose at the time they were surveyed. More than 1 in 3 said they were not confident vaccines were sufficiently tested for safety and effectiveness.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/03/19/health-workers-covid-vaccine/>

Local doctors angry as Kenya offers COVID vaccines to diplomats

Kenya has offered free COVID-19 vaccines to all diplomats based there, including thousands of United Nations staff, even though it has not completed inoculating its own health workers, other front-line staff or elderly, drawing criticism from local medics. The offer was made in a March 18 letter sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to diplomatic missions and seen by Reuters news agency.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/20/kenyan-covid-vaccine-offer-to-diplomats-draws-local-doctors-ire>

We can get most Germans vaccinated by summer's end: BioNTech founder

The founder of BioNTech, partner with Pfizer in making one of the first coronavirus vaccines to be approved for use, is optimistic that the virus will be under control in most European countries by the end of the summer despite a faltering vaccine roll-out. In Germany, owners of shuttered shops and would-be holidaymakers are increasingly restive over COVID-19 restrictions. Some 20,000 people protested against lockdown in the central city of Kassel on Saturday. European Union governments are facing criticism over the slow start to their vaccination campaigns, with supply hiccups leaving the bloc lagging far behind countries such as Israel, Britain and the United States.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany/we-can-get-most-germans-vaccinated-by-summer-e>

Renewed lockdown

Germany set to extend COVID-19 lockdown, draft proposal says

Germany is set to extend a lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic into its fifth month, according to a draft proposal, after infection rates exceeded the level at which authorities say hospitals will be overstretched. The recommendation is contained in a draft, seen by Reuters, prepared by Chancellor Angela Merkel's office ahead of Monday's videoconference of regional and national leaders to decide on the next round of measures to deal with the pandemic. At their last meeting early this month, the leaders agreed a cautious opening, overriding the objections of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said more infectious variants had made the pandemic hard to control.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-cases/germany-set-to-extend-covid-19-lockdown-draft-proposal-says-idUSKBN2BD0CW>

India and Pakistan suffer resurgence of COVID-19 cases

India and Pakistan reported a big jump in new coronavirus infections on Thursday, driven by a resurgence in cases in their richest states. In efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, Punjab state in India extended a night curfew across nine districts and the New Delhi city government announced an increase of vaccinations to 125,000 doses per day from around 40,000 at present, officials said. Local authorities in the Indian state of Odisha sought additional vaccine doses and in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state, authorities ordered schools and colleges to be shut across eight administrative divisions until April 10.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-cases/india-and-pakistan-suffer-resurgence-of-covid-19-cases-idUSKBN2BA0BA>

Bosnian capital tightens rules as COVID-19 deaths spike

Bosnia's capital is tightening measures against the new coronavirus as authorities struggle to cope with rising infections and a spike in deaths caused by COVID-19. Sarajevo has mourned dozens of victims this month, as daily new cases in Bosnia rose from just a few hundred to more than 1,700 this week. Twenty-one new deaths were reported in the capital on Friday alone. "This is a war without weapons," said an elderly resident who identified himself only by his first name, Hajrudin.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/bosnian-capital-tightens-rules-as-covid19-deaths-spike-sarajevo-covid-europe-eastern-europe-britain-b1819733.html>

Philippines says wider lockdown possible as coronavirus infections spike to record levels

A wider lockdown in the Philippines cannot be ruled out if its surge in Covid-19 infections continues, its health minister has said, as authorities announced strict curbs on international arrivals to arrest the virus spread. The government is facing renewed criticism over its handling of the epidemic after a jump in coronavirus cases - more than 40,000 in the past week - a year after it imposed one of the world's strictest and longest lockdowns. Officials attribute the spike to a relaxing of some mobility restrictions to allow people to return to work and revive the economy after a 9.5% contraction last year, South-East Asia's deepest economic slump.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/03/20/philippines-says-wider-lockdown-possible-as-coronavirus-infections-spike-to-record-levels>

Vienna's hospitals straining as country weighs opening terraces: minister

Vienna's hospitals are close to the level of strain from COVID-19 reached last autumn that forced a lockdown to be imposed, Austria's health minister said on Friday, days before a decision on whether to let restaurants open outdoors. Infections have been steadily increasing since Austria loosened its third lockdown on Feb. 8 by letting non-essential shops reopen despite stubbornly high COVID-19

cases at the time. A nighttime curfew replaced all-day restrictions on movement. Austria has recorded 504,581 cases of the disease so far, including 8,982 deaths. The number of new infections reported rose above 3,500 on Friday, the highest level since early December, when cases were falling during the second national lockdown. The government plans to let restaurant, cafe and bar terraces reopen on March 27, a decision it will review on Monday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria/viennas-hospitals-straining-as-country-weighs-opening-terraces-minister-idUSKBN2BB1CQ>

India coronavirus cases surge to four-month high, some lockdowns return

India reported 40,953 new coronavirus cases on Saturday, the biggest daily jump in nearly four months, with its richest state and economic backbone Maharashtra accounting for more than half the infections. Deaths rose by 188 to 159,404, the health ministry reported, underscoring a resurgence of the virus in the world's third worst affected country, after the United States and Brazil. Some regions in India have already reimposed containment measures, including lockdowns and restaurant closures, and more are being considered. Doctors have blamed the fresh infection wave on people's relaxed attitude to mask-wearing and other social distancing measures, warning that hospital wards were swiftly filling up in states like Maharashtra.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-india-cases-idINKBN2BC06J>

France, Poland and Ukraine impose new lockdown measures

Poland, France and Ukraine have introduced partial lockdowns as they battle surging coronavirus infections. Residents in Poland, parts of France, including Paris and the Ukrainian capital Kyiv faced new restrictions on Saturday, with most shops shut and people urged to work from home.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/20/new-lockdowns-hit-europe-as-infections-soar>

Children may need to receive Covid-19 vaccine before herd immunity is achieved

Children may need to receive Covid-19 vaccine before herd immunity is achieved, Dr Fauci says

This has included more and more states opening up vaccine eligibility to include larger segments of their residents. But Dr Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease expert, said that the country reaching herd immunity against Covid-19 might also depend on vaccinating children,

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/children-may-need-to-receive-covid-19-vaccine-before-herd-immunity-is-achieved-dr-fauci-says/ar-BB1eLrzO>

WHO panel backs AstraZeneca vaccine

WHO panel gives nod to AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, has 'tremendous potential'

The World Health Organization (WHO) exhorted the world to keep administering AstraZeneca's COVID-19 shots on Friday, adding its endorsement to that of European and British regulators after concerns over blood clotting. "We urge countries to continue using this important COVID-19 vaccine," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference in Geneva. He was speaking after the global health body's vaccine safety panel said available data about the AstraZeneca shot did not point to any overall increase in clotting conditions. European and British regulators also said this week that the benefits of AstraZeneca's shot outweighed the risks, prompting various nations to lift their suspensions.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/lifestyle/wellbeing/who-gives-nod-to-astrazeneca-vaccine-and-its-tremendous-potential/ar-BB1eLnQi>