



COVID-19 UPDATE August 31, 2020

Global

Total cases – 25,325,617

Total deaths – 847,847

United States

Total cases – 6,020,186

Total deaths – 183,355

Total # tests – 77,068,493

As of Monday afternoon, coronavirus cases in the U.S. increased 0.4% to 6.02 million, as compared to the same time yesterday, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and Bloomberg News. The national increase in cases was below the average daily increase of 0.7% over the past week. California had the largest number of confirmed cases at 708,675, a 0.6% increase from the same time the previous day. North Dakota experienced a 2.9% increase in the number of cases from the same time yesterday, bringing the total to 11,816. Texas saw the largest number of deaths reported in the last 24 hours, with 76 lives lost

Trump Administration

- The federal government announced it will buy nearly all of the 15-minute Covid-19 tests Abbott Laboratories plans to produce this year after the company was given emergency approval for the test. Under the agreement, the government will pay \$750 million for 150 million tests.
- Workers are ineligible for virus-related paid family leave and jobless relief if they decide to educate their children from home if the school gives them the choice of either online or in-person learning, the Labor Department said. The department clarified this issue in two guidance documents that applied the newly enacted federal paid leave benefits and expanded unemployment insurance programs to three common scenarios facing working parents across the U.S. as schools open in the coming days
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revised its COVID-19 testing guidelines to recommend that people who do not display symptoms do not need to be tested, even if they were exposed to the virus. The modified guidelines have been met with skepticism from public health experts, who almost universally urge frequent and widespread testing. Testing is necessary to identify asymptomatic carriers of the virus –models indicate that approximately half of transmission events can be traced to individuals who do not yet (and may never) display symptoms. At least 33 states have rejected the CDC's new recommendations and will continue to encourage testing for people who have been exposed to COVID-19 and have no symptoms.

- All nursing homes must test their staff for Covid-19 regularly to detect exposure to the virus under new requirements CMS announced yesterday. There was “good compliance” with previous recommendations that nursing homes test staff routinely in surging states, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma said in a press briefing. But “we want to make sure that every single nursing home is doing this, and if they are not then they’re going to face sanctions,” she said
- Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will testify before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis on Sept. 1, the committee said in a statement. The hearing will focus on questions of additional economic relief for children, workers, and families, as well as the implementation of existing stimulus programs.
- The Department of Agriculture announced that it will allow schools and community programs to resume providing free breakfasts and lunches to all students without requiring parents to apply or demonstrate financial need. The policy was introduced in the spring at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and was scheduled to end when classes began in the fall. After urging from Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue reversed this decision and said the program would continue through the end of 2020.

Vaccine

- On Wednesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released [guidelines for distributing a coronavirus vaccine](#) if one is approved for public use in the United States. Health-care workers, essential personnel, and vulnerable Americans, such the elderly and individuals with underlying health conditions, would be the first to receive the vaccine.
- CDC director Dr. Robert Redfield said on Friday that if a coronavirus vaccine is authorized, there will likely be a limited supply at first. One factor contributing to potential shortages is the possibility that the vaccine will require two separate doses. Paul Mango, deputy chief of staff for policy at the Department of Health and Human Services, announced Friday that in order to accelerate the rollout process, drug companies have already begun manufacturing three vaccines that have not yet been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.
- Stephen Hahn, the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, told the Financial Times on Sunday that he is willing to consider granting emergency authorization for a COVID-19 vaccine, bypassing the normal approval process for new drugs. Hahn said that the FDA is prepared to approve a vaccine before Phase Three clinical trials are complete if officials determine that the benefits exceed the potential risks. This announcement comes one week after President Trump accused the FDA of delaying vaccine production to hurt him politically. However, Hahn insisted that the decision to fast-track a vaccine was not an attempt to appease the president or improve his re-election chances.
- Sanofi will begin human trials of an experimental vaccine against the coronavirus next week, Chief Executive Officer Paul Hudson said Thursday. The drug giant is planning to move to final-stage trials toward the end of the year.
- Moderna presented new safety data from an early trial that provides the first evidence that its Covid-19 vaccine stimulates the immune systems of older people. Antibody levels in subjects over 55 years old were comparable to those seen in younger adults, the company said.
- Novavax may file for U.S. approval for its Covid-19 vaccine in December, Czech newspaper Hospodarske Noviny reported, citing Chief Executive Officer Stanley Erck. Novavax plans to partly produce the vaccine at its Czech plant.

Congress

- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows spoke last week for the first time in three weeks about the stalemate on a new pandemic relief bill, without making any breakthrough to put negotiations back on track. Pelosi said Democrats are continuing to insist on their demand that the White House and congressional Republicans double their offer on a stimulus package for an economy still reeling from high unemployment and business closures spurred by the pandemic.
 - Pelosi said they're "at a tragic impasse" because the Trump administration won't acknowledge the funding levels that experts and scientists know is needed. She said Democrats were now willing to reduce their initial \$3.4 trillion proposal to \$2.2 trillion, about \$200 billion less than they'd suggested earlier in the month. The Republicans have offered about \$1 trillion in stimulus.
 - Meadows yesterday predicted that there would be no stimulus deal with House Democrats until the end of September, and said that it may be combined with a stopgap resolution needed to sustain funding of the government beyond Oct. 1, and avert a shutdown
- Ninety-one Democrats in the House, led by Reps. Rosa DeLauro (Conn.), Sylvia Garcia (Texas), Deb Haaland (N.M.), Tulsi Gabbard (Hawaii), and Betty McCollum (Minn.), sent a letter to CDC Director Robert Redfield "condemning, urging the immediate halt of, and demanding an explanation for" recent changes to Covid-19 testing guidelines that suggest not all those exposed need to be tested. "It is difficult to comprehend how this updated guidance will work to provide any public health benefits to our country," they wrote
 - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said the new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention testing guidelines are "scary and dangerous" after the agency raised the bar on who should get tested for Covid-19.
- House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) and two subcommittee chairwomen yesterday called on Hahn to make sure that "sound science and the protection of public health alone drive FDA's COVID-19 vaccine approval process," according to a statement. Pallone, Health Subcommittee Chairwoman Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), and Oversight Subcommittee Chairwoman Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) cited mounting "political pressure" being exerted on the FDA by the Trump administration.
- The House Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis has obtained eight weeks of reports from the White House coronavirus task force, which show the administration was aware of surging virus cases since June, Subcommittee Chairman James Clyburn (D-S.C.) said in a statement. The White House "has known since June that coronavirus cases were surging across the country and many states were becoming dangerous 'red zones' where the virus was spreading fast," Clyburn said. The reports were issued from June 23 through Aug. 9, according to the statement. Read the reports [here](#).

Other

- Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds ordered bars, breweries, wineries, and night clubs in six counties to close for more than three weeks starting Thursday as Covid-19 infections rise among young people.
- France is ready to institute a new national lockdown as a last resort as Europe grapples with how to contain the resurgent coronavirus. Plans to restrict movement are ready, but the country will do everything possible to avoid measures that clobbered the economy in the second quarter, France's Prime Minister Jean Castex said on Thursday.

MONUMENT ADVOCACY

- As the United States approaches 6 million coronavirus cases, college administrations across the country struggle to contain outbreaks associated with reopening. Over 8,700 cases have been reported at colleges and universities in 36 states as they reopen for the fall semester. At the University of Alabama, for example, more than 1,300 students have tested positive for coronavirus since classes started on August 19.

