



## COVID-19 UPDATE December 21, 2020

### *Global*

Total cases – 76,928,774

Total deaths – 1,695,307

### *United States*

Total cases – 17,848,395

Total deaths – 317,684

Global cases near 77 million amid growing alarm over an outbreak of a more contagious coronavirus strain in the United Kingdom that has prompted more than 30 nations to ban travelers from the country. The United States surpassed 300,000 coronavirus deaths last week, just four weeks after the death toll reached 250,000. The U.S. now averages more than 200,000 new cases per day, and public health experts warn that another 100,000 Americans could die in the next month. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are now being administered across the country and, after months of negotiations, Congress reached a deal on pandemic relief legislation.

### **Congress**

- The **House** and **Senate** are set to vote on a roughly [\\$900 billion pandemic relief bill](#) that would be the second-biggest economic rescue measure in the nation's history.
  - The aid package will be attached to a \$1.4 trillion measure to fund government operations through the end of the fiscal year, and congressional leaders said they expect the legislation to easily pass both chambers. The White House said President Donald Trump would sign it.
  - The plan would provide direct payments of \$600 to most Americans and \$300-per-week in enhanced unemployment benefits through March. Expiring programs for gig workers and the long-term unemployed also would continue.
  - There would be \$284 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program that provides forgivable loans to small businesses. The package includes money for transportation -- including airlines -- vaccine distribution and education
- On Monday, **House Democrats** on the **Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis** investigating political interference at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued subpoenas for Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and CDC Director Robert Redfield.
  - **Subcommittee Chairman James E. Clyburn** wrote a [letter](#) explaining the necessity of the subpoenas and detailing H.H.S. appointees' attempts to manipulate the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports to benefit President Trump.

### **Trump Administration**

- **Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin** said Monday that Americans could begin receiving stimulus checks as early as next week if Congress passes the agreed-upon COVID-19 relief legislation.

- On Monday, the **State Department** said that it would impose stricter precautions against COVID-19. The agency will reduce its onsite workforce in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia until January 18.

#### **Biden Presidential Transition**

- **President-elect Joe Biden** received the coronavirus vaccine on Monday during a live television event in Delaware. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, will be vaccinated next week.
- In response to the pandemic relief deal struck by Congress, President-elect Joe Biden said in a statement: “I am heartened to see members of Congress heed that message, reach across the aisle, and work together. But this action in the lame-duck session is just the beginning. Our work is far from over.” He is expected to seek another major economic relief package after taking office in January.

#### **Vaccines and Treatment**

- **Moderna’s** Covid-19 vaccine was cleared by U.S. regulators last week, the second vaccine to gain emergency authorization this month as a historic mass immunization effort ramps up nationwide. The **FDA’s** decision to grant the authorization last week for the shot’s use among adults means that two of the six candidates supported by Operation Warp Speed are now available to the public, an unprecedented feat accomplished in less than one year. Shots from **AstraZeneca** and **Johnson & Johnson** that are also receiving U.S. support are expected to be submitted for review in 2021.
- The first Covid-19 shots have been given to more than **1.8 million people** in five countries, according to data collected by Bloomberg. It’s the start of the biggest vaccination campaign in history and one of the largest logistical challenges ever undertaken.
  - The initial round of COVID-19 vaccinations began last week, with health-care workers and residents of long-term care facilities receiving most of the doses. The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** reported Sunday that the U.S. administered 556,208 vaccines in the first week of the country’s mass inoculation campaign.
  - Multiple high-ranking government officials received Pfizer-BioNTech’s coronavirus vaccine over the past several days, including **Vice President Mike Pence, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi**.
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** issued new [guidelines](#) on Saturday addressing allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Surgeon General Jerome Adams** said Sunday that immigration status should not be a barrier to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and encouraged undocumented immigrants to get vaccinated.
- The elderly and front-line essential workers, including firefighters, teachers and grocery store workers, should be next in line for coronavirus vaccines, **an advisory committee to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** voted yesterday. The first round of vaccinations, which started last week, is going mostly to health-care workers and residents of long-term care facilities. After the Phase 1B group, the third tranche, or Phase 1C, would include those ages 65 to 74, younger people with high-risk medical conditions, and other essential workers, including those who work in the construction, food service and legal fields, the **CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices** recommended
- Several U.S. states, including **Oregon, Nevada, and Washington** say that the federal government cut their allocations of the COVID-19 vaccine by approximately 40 percent without explanation.
- **European Union regulators** approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Monday, clearing the way for distribution in all 27 member countries.

## MONUMENT ADVOCACY

- On Sunday, head of Operation Warp Speed **Moncef Slaoui** said that 5.9 million doses of the Moderna vaccine and two million doses of the Pfizer vaccine will be shipped to states on Monday.
- **Nursing homes** will begin inoculating residents through **Walgreens** and CVS this week as part of a deal between the companies and the federal government.

### Other

- Last week, the **United Kingdom** warned of a new coronavirus variant that is spreading much faster than the original strain of the disease. A full lockdown was imposed on Sunday in **London** and **Southeast England** in an effort to contain the “out of control” spread of the mutated virus.
  - Multiple nations, including **France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, India, Canada, and Israel**, have imposed measures barring flights from the U.K.
  - **Assistant Secretary for Health Brett Giroir**, a member of the White House coronavirus task force, said that for now, the **United States** does not need to impose travel bans. He and **Vivek Murthy**, President-elect Joe Biden’s nominee for Surgeon General, expressed confidence that the vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. will be effective against this variant of COVID-19.
  - **New York Governor Andrew Cuomo** urged the federal government to take action, warning that “right now, this variant in the U.K. is getting on a plane and flying to J.F.K.”
- **Italy** will impose a “stop-and-go” lockdown from December 24 to January 6. Restrictions will be tighter on Christmas, New Year’s, and the Epiphany holiday on January 6.
- The **Austrian government** ordered non-essential stores to close from December 26 to January 18. Restaurants and hotels will remain closed and schools will not reopen as scheduled after the Christmas holidays.
- **Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer** announced that in-person learning will resume, and indoor activities like casinos, movies, and bowling will resume at reduced capacity. Bans on indoor dining, nightclubs, and indoor and contact sports will remain in place.
- **Tennessee Governor Bill Lee** signed an executive order limiting public gatherings to 10 people. Places of worship and some other activities are exempt from the restrictions, and Governor Lee declined to order a statewide mask mandate.
- An [investigation](#) from the **Associated Press** and the **Marshall Project** found that 20 percent of all state and federal prison inmates in the United States have contracted COVID-19.
- **D.C.** will prohibit indoor dining and add new restrictions just before Christmas, according to a new D.C. order released Friday.
  - [Mayor Muriel Bowser’s order](#) will close museums and libraries, require reservations to swim in a city pool, halt DC Circulator National Mall routes and recommend nonessential businesses to telework.

