



COVID-19 UPDATE

January 11, 2021

Global

Total cases- 90,382,173

Total deaths- 1,936,615

United States

Total cases- 22,410,608

Total deaths- 374,348

Global cases have passed 90 million as the death toll nears 2 million. In the United States, there are about 2,000 to 3,000 deaths per day on average, with the death toll closing in on the 400,000 mark. The U.S. is entering the second month of the vaccine rollout, and delays in the administration of doses have been widespread. New, more infectious COVID-19 variants have been detected across the world, most recently in Japan, and World Health Organization officials have been warning of increased stress on hospital systems. Research is being done to determine the effectiveness of vaccines on these new strains, though so far, results have been positive.

Trump Administration

- The **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** has announced that they will allow businesses that got their **Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)** loans forgiven to write off expenses paid for with that money, such as wages, rent, and utilities. This comes after a bipartisan move in Congress to clarify that business owners should be eligible for the PPP tax breaks.
- The **Department of the Treasury** has launched the \$25 billion **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**, established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021. The ERAP assists households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the pandemic.
 - The funds are provided directly to States (including the District of Columbia), local governments with more than 200,000 residents, and Native American tribes.
- An additional \$550 million funding extension announced Thursday means thousands of Covid-19 testing sites in vulnerable areas will continue to operate into April.
 - The program primarily provides testing sites in areas with “moderate-to-high social vulnerability” according to an announcement from the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**. The effort began in spring 2020. It is run through retail pharmacy chains, including CVS Health Corp., Rite-Aid and Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc.

Biden Presidential Transition

- **President-elect Biden** has announced that he will aim to release every available COVID-19 vaccine dose on hand when he takes office. Additional details will be shared next week on the plan for this process.

- This strategy is potentially risky because both Pfizer and Moderna’s vaccines require 2 doses administered at specific intervals, as the WHO recently clarified.
- The move has received strong support from Democratic governors of 8 states (California, Illinois, Kansas Michigan, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin).
- **President-elect [Joe Biden](#)** said December job losses indicate the U.S. needs to immediately provide additional pandemic relief and raise the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour.
 - The U.S. labor market lost jobs in December for the first time in eight months, reflecting a plunge in restaurant employment that highlights how surging coronavirus infections are taking a greater toll on parts of the economy.
 - Non-farm payrolls decreased by 140,000 from the prior month, according to a Labor Department report Friday that bucked economists’ forecasts for a modest gain. The unemployment rate held at 6.7%, halting a string of seven straight drops.
- **Moncef Slaoui**, chief scientific adviser to the U.S. Operation Warp Speed effort to develop Covid-19 vaccines, will stay on as a consultant to the **incoming Biden administration**, he said Wednesday.
- **President-elect [Joe Biden](#)** received his second dose of a coronavirus vaccine on Monday, and criticized Republican lawmakers who refused to wear masks while hiding from a mob at the U.S. Capitol last week.

Congress

- According to a spokesperson, **Senator Joe Manchin** (D-WV) is still assessing the need for more economic stimulus under the Biden administration, after a report saying he opposes boosting stimulus payments to \$2,000.
 - **Incoming Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer** (D-NY) said that boosting the stimulus payments would be his number one priority once Democrats secure control of the Senate.
 - Sen. Schumer hasn’t said whether or not he will use a fast-track procedural process requiring only 51 votes to pass a stimulus bill.
- **Lawmakers** may have been [exposed](#) to the coronavirus while they were held in a secure room during Wednesday’s attack on Congress, the Capitol’s attending physician said Sunday.
 - “Many members of the House community were in protective isolation in room located in a large committee hearing space,” physician Brian Monahan said in a statement. “During this time, individuals may have been exposed to another occupant with coronavirus infection.”
 - **Rep. Bonnie Watson** (D-NJ-12) has tested positive for COVID-19 after sheltering with maskless colleagues during the Capitol riots, the first lawmaker to do so.
- **Senate Democrats** on Monday demanded the Trump administration make changes to its [Covid-19](#) vaccine rollout strategy, saying it has “failed” states by not providing detailed guidance on how to effectively distribute the potentially lifesaving doses to Americans across the country.
 - The U.S. “cannot afford this vaccination campaign to continue to be hindered by the lack of planning, communication, and leadership we have seen so far,” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and 44 other Democrats told Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar [in a letter](#) dated Monday. “The metric that matters, and where we are clearly moving too slowly, is vaccines in arms.”

Vaccines and Treatment

- **Top U.S. health officials** encouraged states to start vaccinating people more widely, acknowledging that the immunization rollout has been slower than anticipated and opening the spigot for a broader range of Americans to begin getting shots.
 - **Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar** during a call with reporters Wednesday blamed the introduction of Covid-19 shots around the holidays and overly detailed state plans for hindering the vaccination campaign. He urged governors to vaccinate more seniors and other high-risk populations to prevent shots from sitting in freezers.
 - About 5.2 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer Inc.-BioNTech SE and Moderna Inc. have been administered in the U.S. since mid-December, according to data compiled by Bloomberg News. That represents a fraction of the number of doses distributed so far.
- Roughly 1 in 100,000 people have had a severe allergic reaction to the first Covid-19 vaccine, a rate that's higher than the flu vaccine but still quite rare, U.S. health officials said.
 - A [study](#) by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** released Wednesday outlined 21 cases of anaphylaxis among the first 1.9 million recipients of Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine, a rate of 11.1 per million doses administered. No anaphylaxis deaths have been reported, the CDC said.
- After much criticism, **New York State** will expand its distribution network to boost COVID vaccinations among its residents.
 - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo [warned](#) hospitals and health-care workers on Thursday that if they don't take Covid-19 vaccines while it's offered exclusively to them in the early days of the state's inoculation drive, they will lose their priority status when the vaccine rolls out to the general public.
 - The move will accelerate administration of the vaccine for healthcare workers, seniors living in nursing homes and people with disabilities. The expanded distribution network will also see vaccinations starting for essential workers and New Yorkers over the age of 75.
 - Police officers, firefighters, and other first responders will be able to get shots, along with educators, transit and public-safety workers.
 - Hospitals have increased distribution, but it's not enough, Governor Cuomo said. Only 23% of 2.1 million health-care workers have received shots so far. "We're not pleased with the rate," he said.
- **Big-box stores** should be on the table to improve access and speed up distribution of vaccines, said former Food and Drug Administration chief Scott Gottlieb.
 - Gottlieb, who sits on the board of Pfizer Inc., said supply isn't as much of an issue as distribution right now, but in two or three weeks it could become a greater concern. He noted that with roughly 40 million vaccines available around the country and about 50 million Americans over the age of 65, there's currently enough supply to vaccinate senior citizens "more aggressively" if more varied distribution points are opened.
- **Health Secretary Matt Hancock** [said](#) the U.K. is on course to meet its coronavirus vaccine target, but warned the surge in cases has left the state-run National Health Service in a "very, very serious situation."
 - Hancock said more than 200,000 people are being vaccinated every day, including one-third of the over-80s regarded as the group most vulnerable to the disease. He said mass vaccination centers are opening to accelerate the rollout.

- **Justin Trudeau's** government sought to [assure](#) the public it's trying to speed up delivery of vaccines amid pressure from health authorities who say they're running low on shots.
 - Canada has ordered more doses per capita than any other country -- reserving at least 214 million shots for 38 million people -- and was the second country after the U.K. to approve the Pfizer vaccine. It has also authorized Moderna's shot.
- **Moderna Inc.'s Covid-19** vaccine won [European Union approval](#), opening the way for a second weapon in the bloc's battle against a resurgent virus.
 - The European Union could approve the Covid-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca Plc and the University of Oxford by the end of January.
- The [European Union](#) has secured an additional 300 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, doubling the total available for the bloc's 27 member states to 600 million.
 - Of the new orders, 75 million will be available next quarter and the rest will arrive in the second half, according to Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the EU's executive arm. The EU has come under pressure from governments due to the slow roll-out of vaccination programs.
- The vaccine developed by **China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd.** was shown to be 78% effective against Covid-19 in late-stage Brazil trials, newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo [reported](#), citing data presented to the country's health regulator.

Other

- **France** will keep gyms, theaters and ski lifts closed until at least the end of January, and bars and restaurants until mid-February, Prime Minister Jean Castex said.
- **Chicago's** public school district, the third-largest in the U.S., is sticking with its plan to start bringing students [back to classrooms](#) on Monday, resisting pressure from a teachers' union that is demanding more safety measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
- **Puerto Rico's** new governor is opening beaches and parks, rolling back a curfew and ending Sunday lockdowns to give hard-hit businesses some breathing room.
 - Governor [Pedro Pierluisi](#), who took office on Saturday, said the new measures will be in effect for 30 days starting Friday.
- **D.C.** and much of **Virginia** moved into their next phases of [coronavirus](#) vaccinations Monday, targeting older residents and other vulnerable populations as a post-holiday surge of new infections in the Washington region continued to reach record highs.
 - D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser said the city will begin vaccinating residents 65 and older, while some jurisdictions in Virginia on Monday began making appointments to inoculate residents 75 and older. Health officials previously had worked to inoculate residents of nursing homes and assisted-living communities before moving to the next phase.

