

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

15th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

Covid-19 Outbreak Shuts Down Some China Factories, Including Apple Supplier

A surge in Covid-19 cases led Chinese manufacturing hubs Shenzhen and Changchun to lock down in recent days, halting production at many electronics and auto factories in the latest threat to the world's battered supply chain. A number of manufacturers including Foxconn, Technology Group, a major assembler of Apple Inc.'s AAPL, iPhones, said they were halting operations in Shenzhen in compliance with the local government's policy. The government placed the city into lockdown for at least a week and said everyone in the city would have to undergo three rounds of testing after 86 new cases of domestic Covid-19 infections were detected Sunday.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-outbreak-shuts-down-some-china-factories-including-apple-supplier-11647246503?mod=business_lead_pos3

How Australia's Swift Bid to Crush Covid Saved Lives

When the world was confronted with the coronavirus in early 2020, Australia responded hard and fast with what would be—at first—one of the most successful efforts to combat the pandemic. On this episode of Storylines, we recount how Australia leveraged its geography and strict travel rules to quickly become an example for holding Covid-19 at bay. But a lack of diligence on the vaccine front coupled with the arrival of the delta variant would upend this Covid-zero strategy.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/how-australia-s-swift-efforts-to-crush-covid-19-in-2020-saved-lives>

New Zealand Teenagers Ineligible for Covid Vaccine Booster Shot

New Zealand teenagers will remain ineligible for Covid-19 booster shots for several more weeks, even as the omicron outbreak runs through universities and schools. Government ministers are not expected to make a final decision on boosters for 16 and 17 year olds until April “at the earliest,” said Astrid Koornneef, Director of the National Immunisation Programme. Pfizer boosters are currently only approved by medicines regulator Medsafe for those aged 18 years and up. “Medsafe has only very recently received Pfizer's application for the use of its vaccine for 16 and 17 year olds,” Koornneef said in an emailed statement. “Medsafe is working at pace to review the application, however we do not expect a final decision on this from ministers until April at the earliest.”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/new-zealand-teenagers-face-omicron-without-vaccine-booster-shot>

Are Covid Cases Going Back Up? Sewer Data Has Potential Warning

A wastewater network that monitors for Covid-19 trends is warning that cases are once again rising in many parts of the U.S., according to an analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data by Bloomberg. More than a third of the CDC's wastewater sample sites across the U.S. showed rising Covid-19 trends in the period ending March 1 to March 10, though reported cases have stayed near a recent low. The number of sites with rising signals of Covid-19 cases is nearly twice what it was during the Feb. 1 to Feb. 10 period, when the wave of omicron-variant cases was fading rapidly. It's not clear how many new infections the signs in the sewage represent and if they will turn into a new wave, or will be just a brief bump on the way down from the last one. In many parts of the country, people are returning back to offices and mask rules have been loosened — factors that can

raise transmission.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/are-covid-cases-going-back-up-sewer-data-has-potential-warning>

China's pandemic playbook runs low on pages

Chinese policymakers might have to add new pages to their Covid-19 playbook. Recycling tough policies from 2020 will put an aggressive “around 5.5%” annual growth target even further out of reach. With financial hubs Shanghai and Shenzhen locking down as contagion surges, Chinese companies might feel a sense of disheartening *déjà vu*. Draconian measures adopted in Shenzhen, a city of nearly 20 million adjacent to Hong Kong, are reminiscent of 2020, when authorities sealed buildings, banned public transport, and shut malls and factories while necessities like food were often rationed and delivered by officials

<https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/chinas-pandemic-playbook-runs-low-pages-2022-03-14/>

Hong Kong rules out tightening COVID curbs for now as death toll soars

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said on Monday there were no plans to tighten strict social distancing measures as the Chinese-ruled territory battles to contain a coronavirus surge that has submerged its health system amid soaring deaths. Lam said there was limited room to tighten further, with the global financial hub already having put in place the strictest measures since the pandemic started. Gatherings of more than two people are banned, most venues are shut - including schools - and masks are compulsory everywhere, even when exercising outdoors.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-leader-says-no-plans-tighten-covid-social-distancing-measures-2022-03-14/>

More than 200 people given wrong dose of coronavirus vaccine

In the Netherlands, more than 200 people have been offered an extra coronavirus vaccine after it emerged they were mistakenly given an insufficient dose. A mix-up with needles and syringes meant 247 people were injected with 0.15ml of the vaccine rather than 0.25ml, the regional health service in West Brabant said. All those affected were given the Moderna vaccine at Breda International Airport on March 4.

<https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2022/03/more-than-200-people-given-wrong-dose-of-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Covid-19: Two Christchurch vaccination sites to close over next few weeks

Two Covid-19 vaccination centres are set to close in Christchurch to allow health authorities to focus on “priority areas and at-risk populations” where booster uptake has been lagging behind. Dr Helen Skinner, the Canterbury District Health Board's Covid-19 emergency co-ordination centre controller, said the Omicron outbreak and staffing challenges has meant the Canterbury DHB has had to re-prioritise its Covid-19 vaccination programme.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/128053375/covid19-two-christchurch-vaccination-sites-to-close-over-next-few-weeks>

Coronavirus Daily: A Rural-Urban Vaccine Divide in the US

In President Joe Biden’s National Covid-19 Preparedness Plan there’s a glaring omission: efforts to improve on high levels of vaccine hesitancy in rural parts of the U.S. First-dose vaccination coverage is about 59% for people in rural areas compared with 75% for those in urban areas, according to a recent government study, and that disparity has more than doubled since April 2021. Overall, more than 65% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated. The divide is particularly stark among children and teenagers who need parental consent to get vaccinated. Only about 15% of children ages 5-11 have been vaccinated in rural areas, compared with 31% in urban areas.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-03-14/coronavirus-daily-a-rural-urban-vaccine-divide-in-the-u-s>

France lifts COVID-19 rules on unvaccinated, mask wearing

France lifted most COVID-19 restrictions on Monday, abolishing the need to wear face masks in most settings and allowing people who aren't vaccinated back into restaurants, sports arenas and other venues. The move had been announced earlier this month by the French government based on assessments of the improving situation in hospitals and following weeks of a steady decline in infections. It comes less than a month before the first round of the presidential election scheduled on April 10.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/paris-ap-france-covid-french-b2035238.html>

America marks two years of Covid - is it prepared for the next pandemic?

Even as Covid-19 remains a threat, US public health officials and researchers are looking to the next potential pandemic – whether it's influenza, another coronavirus, antimicrobial resistance, or a different health threat entirely – as they hope to build on the progress and avoid the pitfalls of the past two years. Knowledge of how respiratory viruses work – and how to battle them – has increased exponentially during this outbreak. But at the same time, misinformation about infectious diseases, especially vaccines and treatments, has multiplied, presenting new challenges. Scientists, several of whom have advised Joe Biden, recently released a 136-page “roadmap” for moving from Covid crisis to what they term the “next normal”. These investments include supporting health workers and strengthening health systems, as well as supporting survivors with long-term symptoms.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/america-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-vaccines-public-health>

White House: Omicron BA.2 COVID variant has circulated in U.S. for some time

The White House said on Monday that the Omicron BA.2 sub-variant of COVID-19 had been circulating in the United States for some time, with roughly 35,000 cases at the moment, and more money was needed to help fight it. White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said the tools the country had, including vaccines and medicines, were all effective tools against the virus. "We need additional COVID funding," Psaki said, referring to a White House request for more money from Congress. "Some programs, if we don't get funding, could abruptly end or need to be pared back and that could impact how we are able to respond to any variant."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-omicron-ba2-covid-variant-has-circulated-us-some-time-2022-03-14/>

Exit Strategies

Foxconn halts Shenzhen operations, adjusts China production on COVID curbs

China's efforts to curb its largest COVID-19 outbreak in two years has forced companies from Apple supplier Foxconn to automakers Toyota and Volkswagen to suspend some operations, raising concerns over supply chain disruptions. Multiple Chinese provinces and cities have tightened restrictions in line with Beijing's zero-tolerance goal of suppressing contagion as quickly as possible, among them the southern Chinese tech hub of Shenzhen. Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley, is carrying out mass testing after dozens of new local cases were recorded. Officials have suspended public transport and urged people to work at home this week as much as possible.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/foxconn-suspends-shenzhen-operations-adjusts-production-line-minimise-impact-2022-03-14/>

Novavax's COVID vaccine rollout in EU off to a slow start

Demand for the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Novavax has been underwhelming in the EU's main countries in the early rollout, so far undermining hopes that it could convince vaccine sceptics to get a shot. Over 85% of adults in the 27-country EU bloc have received at least one dose and nearly two-thirds of them have also had a booster, but tens of millions remain unvaccinated. The Novavax vaccine, the latest to receive the EU regulators' approval under the trade name of Nuvaxovid, was expected to persuade some sceptics because it is based on a more conventional technology than the other four vaccines authorised so far in the EU.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novavaxs-covid-vaccine-rollout-eu-off-slow-start-data->

[2022-03-14/](#)

Covid-19 vaccination teams to visit 'all Hong Kong care homes by Friday'

Covid-19 vaccination teams will visit all care facilities in Hong Kong by Friday in a bid to push inoculation among the elderly, while at-home jabs will also be offered to residents with mobility issues, the city's civil service chief has said. Secretary for the Civil Service Patrick Nip Tak-kuen, who is responsible for the local vaccination campaign, said on Sunday that 52 per cent of residents at 1,096 elderly care homes had received at least one vaccine dose.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3170304/coronavirus-vaccine-outreach-teams-vis-it-all-hong>

Lack of Covid-19 testing and reporting worries iwi vaccinators

In New Zealand, Iwi collective Te Ranga Tupua says the reason Whanganui, Rangitīkei, South Taranaki and the Waimarino regions have not seen an explosion in Covid-19 cases could be down to people "going bush". Te Ranga Tupua has been sending mobile clinics into the least vaccinated areas of the four regions since early December in an effort to lift Māori vaccination rates. But now it's raising concerns that people are either not getting tests or failing to report rapid antigen test (RAT) results.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/ldr/463284/lack-of-covid-19-testing-and-reporting-worries-iwi-vaccinators>

New Brunswick lifts all COVID-19 restrictions for 2nd time, hopes for different outcome

No more provincially mandated masks. No more limits on gatherings or distancing rules. No more legally required isolation for people infected with COVID-19. New Brunswick lifted all remaining COVID-19 restrictions at 12:01 a.m. AT Monday with the end of the mandatory order, nearly two years after it began.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/new-brunswick-covid-19-restrictions-lifted-emergency-order-1.6382298>

Test to Treat: pharmacists say Biden's major new Covid initiative won't work

A major new Biden administration initiative to facilitate access to Covid-19 antivirals will have a limited impact and fail to mitigate certain health inequities, major pharmacist groups argue, because pharmacists are restricted from prescribing the pills. Announced in Joe Biden's State of the Union address, the "Test to Treat" program is meant to address the maddening difficulty Americans have had in accessing Covid-19 treatments. The administration will channel newly increasing stocks of antiviral pills to major retail pharmacies that have in-house clinics, providing one-stop testing and antivirals access.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/covid-biden-new-covid-initiative-wont-work-pharmacists>

Australians told to get boosters amid COVID threat from new Omicron strain

Australian authorities warned the slow rollout of COVID-19 vaccine booster shots could unleash a new wave of infections amid the threat from the highly contagious BA.2 sub-variant of the Omicron coronavirus strain. Australia battled record cases and hospitalisation rates during the initial Omicron wave, but they have steadied over the past six weeks. Most states have been easing social distancing rules, with mask requirements being rolled back at indoor venues and businesses asking staff to return to offices.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australians-told-get-boosters-amid-covid-threat-new-omicron-strain-2022-03-14/>

U.S. seeks to expand Trump-era COVID data collection under CDC

The Biden administration wants to expand a federal COVID-19 tracking system created during the pandemic to provide a more detailed view of how respiratory and other infectious diseases are affecting patients and hospital resources, according to a draft of proposed rules reviewed by

Reuters. The plan would build upon a hospital data collection system designed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Trump administration. Management of the program was transferred last month to HHS's lead public health agency, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-us-seeks-expand-trump-era-covid-data-collection-under-cdc-2022-03-14/>

Moscow mayor ends mask requirement, citing improving COVID situation

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin on Monday cancelled a long-standing requirement for people to wear protective medical masks in public, citing the improving situation with COVID-19 and the need to support businesses facing sanctions pressure. Daily coronavirus cases peaked at 203,949 on Feb. 11 as the highly contagious Omicron variant spread rapidly across the country, but have fallen steadily since then. On Monday, 41,055 new infections were recorded.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/moscow-mayor-ends-mask-requirement-citing-improving-covid-situation-2022-03-14/>

India to start vaccinating 12- to 14-year-olds against COVID-19

India will start administering COVID-19 vaccinations to 12- to 14-year-olds from March 16, the country's health ministry said on Monday, as schools reopen across the country with standard restrictions amid a significant fall in cases. The government also decided to remove the condition of co-morbidity for people above 60 years to receive a booster shot, the ministry said

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/india-start-vaccinating-12-14-year-olds-against-covid-19-2022-03-14/>

Lockdowns Spread Across China as Race to Contain Covid-19 Outbreak Intensifies

Fallout from China's race to halt its worsening coronavirus outbreak is growing as authorities order lockdowns and other restrictions across more of the country. All 24 million residents of northeastern Jilin province, which borders Russia and North Korea, were locked down on Monday, the first time since Covid-19 was first detected two years ago in Wuhan that such restrictions have been imposed on an entire province. Shenzhen city began a weeklong lockdown on Monday, closing public transport, nonessential businesses and schools, while companies in Shanghai began shutting down over the weekend.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/lockdowns-spread-across-china-as-race-to-contain-covid-19-outbreak-intensifies-11647266905>

Partisan Exits

New Zealand divided over how to handle 20,000 daily Covid cases after years of barely any

For much of the past two years, New Zealand has weathered the pandemic by stopping Covid-19 at its borders, which closed to almost everyone but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents on 19 March 2020. Until recently anyone entering the country went into managed hotel isolation. With a million New Zealanders living overseas, and not enough capacity within the hotel quarantine system to accommodate everyone who wanted or needed a space, our border controls have caused misery for many people. The absence of tourists, backpackers and foreign students has been difficult for many industries. With family in the UK and Australia, I've found it tough. But controlling the entry of the virus into the country has been key to our success. It enabled us to embrace a "go hard and early" elimination strategy, stamping out any cases that leaked through the border.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/world/new-zealand-divided-handle-20000-daily-covid-cases-1514182>

Continued Lockdown

Hong Kong leader says no plans to tighten COVID social distancing measures

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said on Monday there were no plans to tighten strict social distancing measures as the Chinese-ruled territory battles to contain a coronavirus surge that has submerged

its health system amid soaring deaths. Lam said there was limited room to tighten further, with the global financial hub already having put in place the strictest measures since the pandemic started. Gatherings of more than two people are banned, most venues are shut - including schools - and masks are compulsory everywhere, even when exercising outdoors.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-leader-says-no-plans-tighten-covid-social-distancing-measures-2022-03-14/>

China does not have a new Covid variant. Yet it's on lockdown. Why?

As the world breathes the first whiffs of normality in over two years, and cities open up with people returning to work and children to schools, China is staring at another spate of lockdowns. Beijing locked down a city of 17.5 million people on Sunday, restricting access by suspending services amid fears of another possible coronavirus outbreak. China, where the first coronavirus cases were detected in late 2019 in the central city of Wuhan, has reported a total of 4,636 deaths on the mainland out of 1,15,466 confirmed cases since the pandemic started. According to Worldometer, China on Monday reported 1436 cases in 24 hours. Its numbers are low compared with some countries, but authorities say they are ready to lock down communities if one case is found.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/science/story/covid-19-china-putbreak-lockdown-zero-tolerant-policy-xi-jinping-mass-testing-travel-ban-omicron-1925095-2022-03-14>

Hong Kong Can't Impose Snap Lockdown Like Shenzhen, Lam Says

Hong Kong doesn't have the infrastructure to roll out a lockdown and compulsory testing as swiftly as mainland China, according to Chief Executive Carrie Lam, whose announcement of a now-delayed city-wide test sparked chaos and confusion in the financial hub. The 17.5 million residents of the southern Chinese technology hub of Shenzhen were told on Sunday that they'd go into a week-long lockdown while three rounds of city-wide testing are conducted. In contrast, Lam said almost three weeks ago that everyone in Hong Kong -- home to 7.4 million people -- would be tested three times in March, before the plan was indefinitely postponed last week as authorities prioritize vaccinating the elderly and reducing fatalities in what's become the world's deadliest outbreak.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/hong-kong-can-t-impose-snap-lockdown-like-shenzhen-lam-says>

Scientific Viewpoint

Serious Covid Linked to Higher Risk of Depression Months Later

Serious Covid-19 was linked to a higher risk of depression and anxiety months later in a large study, adding to a growing body of data showing the impact the disease can have on mental health. People who were bedridden for at least seven days were about 60% more likely to experience symptoms of depression, according to the study, published in The Lancet Public Health. That contrasts with those who had Covid but weren't bedridden, who were less likely to experience depression and anxiety than people who never had the disease at all. The study "suggests that mental health effects aren't equal for all Covid-19 patients," said Unnur Anna Valdimarsdottir, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Iceland who helped lead the research.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/serious-covid-linked-to-higher-risk-of-depression-months-later>

A 4th dose of Covid-19 vaccine will be needed, Pfizer's CEO says, but the company is working on a shot to handle all variants

To help fend off another wave of Covid-19, people will need a fourth dose of vaccine, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told CBS on Sunday. "Many variants are coming, and Omicron was the first one that was able to evade -- in a skillful way -- the immune protection that we're giving," Bourla told CBS' "Face the Nation." "The protection we are getting from the third (dose) it is good enough -- actually quite good for hospitalizations and deaths," Bourla said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/health/pfizer-vaccine-4th-dose/index.html>

Philippines FDA grants approval to Sinovac's paediatric Covid-19 vaccine

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Philippines has granted emergency use authorization (EUA) to Chinese firm Sinovac's Covid-19 vaccine, CoronaVac, for use in paediatric individuals, CNN Philippines reported. According to the approval, the vaccine is intended for immunisation of children aged six years and above against Covid-19. Pharmaceutical consortium IP Biotech Group aided in the initial delivery of the private sector-procured Sinovac vaccines. Philippine News Agency (PNA) quoted IP Biotech Group chairman Enrique Gonzales as saying in a statement: "Making this vaccine available to the younger age segment is a game-changer protecting the country's youth and preserving recent gains in controlling the pandemic. This will also ensure greater access and vaccine equity for the Philippines."

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/philippines-fda-sinovac-vaccine/>

War in Ukraine could make the Covid-19 pandemic worse, WHO says

The World Health Organization (WHO) said Sunday it is concerned the war in Ukraine could worsen the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is trying to do more to limit the spread of infectious diseases. Cases in the region are down from the previous week, but there's significant risk there will be more severe disease and death due to low vaccination rates in Ukraine, as well as among the more than two million who've fled the country to surrounding areas, regions also with low vaccination rates. Ukraine's Covid-19 vaccination rate is around 34%, while neighboring Moldova's is around 29%, according to Our World In Data. There have been a total of 791,021 new cases of Covid-19 and 8,012 new deaths in Ukraine and in surrounding countries between March 3 and 9, a WHO situation report published Sunday said. "Unfortunately, this virus will take opportunities to continue to spread," said Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on Covid-19, during a Wednesday news briefing. "

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/health/who-ukraine-war-covid-19/index.html>

For kids with COVID-19, everyday life can be a struggle

Eight-year-old Brooklynn Chiles fidgets on the hospital bed as she waits for the nurse at Children's National Hospital. The white paper beneath her crinkles as she shifts to look at the medical objects in the room. She's had coronavirus three times, and no one can figure out why. Brooklynn's lucky, sort of. Each time she has tested positive, she has suffered no obvious symptoms. But her dad, Rodney, caught the virus — possibly from her — when she was positive back in September, and he died from it. Her mom, Danielle, is dreading a next bout, fearing her daughter could become gravely ill even though she's been vaccinated. "Every time, I think: Am I going to go through this with her, too?" she said, sitting on a plastic chair wedged in the corner. "Is this the moment where I lose everyone?"

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/washington-children-american-academy-of-pediatrics-national-institutes-of-health-zoom-b2035075.html>

Covid-19 vaccine 'reduces infections in children' - study

A single dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine can reduce infections among children, a new study suggests. And if a child gets Covid-19 after being vaccinated they are "likely to have a milder disease", researchers from King's College London and ZOE Ltd said. While the Covid-19 vaccines have been shown to ward off serious disease and death, questions have arisen over their ability to reduce the spread of infections. The latest study examined the effectiveness of a single dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine in children.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/england-children-pfizer-emma-duncan-omicron-b987936.html>

Novavax's COVID vaccine rollout in EU off to a slow start

Demand for the COVID-19 vaccine produced by U.S. biotech firm Novavax has been underwhelming in the European Union's main countries in the early rollout, so far undermining hopes that it could

convince vaccine sceptics to get a shot. Over 85% of adults in the 27-country EU bloc have received at least one dose and nearly two-thirds of them have also had a booster, but tens of millions remain unvaccinated. The Novavax vaccine, the latest to receive the EU regulators' approval under the trade name of Nuvaxovid, was expected to persuade some sceptics because it is based on a more conventional technology than the other four vaccines authorised so far in the EU.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novavaxs-covid-vaccine-rollout-eu-off-slow-start-data-2022-03-14/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19: Countries in the Americas are warned not to lower their guard

Covid-19 is on the retreat across the American continents but it is too early for the region to let its guard down, warned the Pan American Health Organisation, the World Health Organization's regional office for the Americas, on 9 March. Reported cases of covid-19 fell by 26% in the past week and deaths by nearly 19%, as the omicron wave of infections tailed off. But ongoing transmission and future variants could expose the region's public health priorities once more, said PAHO's director, Carissa Etienne. A total of 2.6 million people have died from covid-19 in the Americas, the highest number of any region of the world and almost half of the global total, despite being home to only 13% of its population. "This is a tragedy of enormous proportions, and its effects will be felt for years to come," said Etienne on the second anniversary of the pandemic. Patchy vaccination coverage has left countries vulnerable to current and future variants of SARS-CoV-2. Around 248 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean are yet to receive a single dose of a covid vaccine, with vaccination rates particularly low in hard-to-reach rural areas.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o664>

Covid-19 cases continue to rise in China's worst outbreak since Wuhan

China reported thousands of new local Covid-19 cases Sunday as the Omicron variant drove the worst outbreak in the country since Wuhan in early 2020, according to the National Health Commission (NHC). Health officials said 2,125 cases were reported across 58 cities in 19 of 31 mainland provinces, marking the fourth consecutive day China reported more than 1,000 daily local cases. More than 10,000 cases have been reported since the latest outbreak began in early March, the NHC said. Saturday, the commission reported 3,122 local cases -- the highest number of daily infections since the Wuhan outbreak and the first time new cases have exceeded 3,000 in a day, NHC data showed. Throughout the pandemic, China has adhered to a strict zero-Covid policy that aims to stamp out all outbreaks and chains of transmission using a combination of border controls, mass testing, quarantine procedures and lockdowns.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/14/china/china-covid-outbreak-monday-intl-hnk/index.html>

Britons should brace for rising Covid cases, says Sajid Javid

Britons should brace for a rise in Covid infections after the easing of restrictions, the health secretary has said, as the latest figures show rates are increasing as people socialise more. Sajid Javid said the UK remained in a "very good position" but rising infection rates were to be "expected". To reduce the risk of serious infection, he urged adults eligible for a booster vaccine to have one, given that one in five had not yet received it. The latest data from the Office for National Statistics Covid-19 Infections Survey showed an increase in cases across the whole of the UK. In the week ending 5 March, one in every 25 people in England, one in 13 in Northern Ireland, one in 18 in Scotland and one in 30 in Wales were estimated to have Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/britons-should-brace-for-rising-covid-cases-says-sajid-javid-uk>

Hong Kong reports 32430 COVID cases, 264 deaths

Hong Kong health authorities reported 32,430 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, as the city's leader said her government was trying build capacity to deal with the crisis that has swept through care

homes. Although Chief Executive Carrie Lam said government efforts were improving, she said they had yet to reach everybody in isolation to see whether people needed help. "With so many people put under isolation or quarantine, the government has been strengthening our capability to support them. However, we're still catching up," she told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-32430-covid-cases-264-deaths-2022-03-13/>

Omicron-hit Chinese province bans travel in rare measure against COVID

A northeastern Chinese province on Monday imposed a rare travel ban on its population as the region's Omicron outbreak helped drive China's tally of new local COVID-19 cases so far this year higher than any recorded in 2021. Mainland China reported 1,337 new domestically transmitted COVID infections with confirmed symptoms on March 13, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Monday. That brought the registered total this year to more than 9,000, compared with 8,378 in 2021, according to Reuters calculations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/china-records-more-local-covid-cases-so-far-this-year-than-whole-2021-2022-03-14/>

COVID comes back

This morning, Chinese stocks fell as domestic COVID-19 cases jumped to a two-year high, prompting Beijing's technology and financial hubs to impose restrictions. How severe the outbreak will prove and how much pain it will bring to the global economy is anyone's guess, but the economic fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is already taking a heavy toll.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/covid-comes-back-2022-03-14/>

China battles multiple outbreaks, driven by stealth omicron

China banned most people from leaving a coronavirus-hit northeastern province and mobilized military reservists Monday as the fast-spreading "stealth omicron" variant fuels the country's biggest outbreak since the start of the pandemic two years ago. The National Health Commission reported 1,337 locally transmitted cases in the latest 24-hour period, including 895 in the industrial province of Jilin. A government notice said that police permission would be required for people to leave the area or travel from one city to another. The hard-hit province sent 7,000 reservists to help with the response, from keeping order and registering people at testing centers to using drones to carry out aerial spraying and disinfection, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-china-taiwan-d2d2a0e6635a90270cfd746854cdd856>

France's COVID infections keep rising, hospitalizations up

French health authorities reported 18,853 new COVID-19 infections on Monday, a figure showing a week-on-week increase for the tenth consecutive time on the day France lifted most of the restrictions put in place to contain the pandemic. The seven-day moving average of new cases, which evens out reporting irregularities, reached 65,882, the highest since Feb. 24. The number of people hospitalized for COVID-19 rose by 8, to 20,925, a figure still 37% lower than the pandemic peak of 33,497 reached in November 2020. But it has gone up for the second day running, a first since early February. And the week-on-week decrease has been decelerating for nine days.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/frances-covid-infections-keep-rising-hospitalizations-up-2022-03-14/>

'Deltacron,' the Delta-Omicron hybrid COVID variant, appears to be in the US, according to a new study

The so-called Deltacron COVID variant appears to be present in the U.S., with two cases identified by a California lab since January, according to a new study published Saturday to research site medRxiv. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control-affiliated lab Helix, based in San Mateo, Calif., found two unique cases of Delta-Omicron hybrids when sequencing nearly 30,000 positive COVID samples

obtained from U.S. individuals between November and February, according to the study, published to a preprint server for health sciences papers that haven't yet been peer reviewed, cofounded by Yale University and The British Medical Journal. The Delta-Omicron hybrids—SARS-CoV-2 genomes with features of both Delta and Omicron variants of COVID, known as recombinants—are rare, according to the study, which added that there is no evidence such mutations spread more easily than the highly transmissible Omicron.

<https://fortune.com/2022/03/13/deltacron-covid-variant-in-united-states-us-report-delta-omicron-coronavirus-covid19/>