

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

24th May 2022

Lockdown Exit

Indian vaccine giant Serum plans African plant in global expansion

"It's never been a better time to be a vaccine manufacturer. I'm looking at expanding our manufacturing across the globe," SII Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla said during an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "There are some great countries out there: South Africa, Rwanda, you know, to name a few that we're looking at." Poonawalla said he was meeting some African officials in Davos to discuss his plans. Asked about possible investments, he said such projects typically required at least around \$300 million.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indian-vaccine-giant-serum-plans-african-plant-global-expansion-2022-05-23/>

Shanghai reopens some public transport, still on high COVID alert

Shanghai reopened a small part of the world's longest subway system on Sunday after some lines had been closed for almost two months, as the city paves the way for a more complete lifting of its painful COVID-19 lockdown next week. With most residents not allowed to leave their homes and restrictions tightening in parts of China's most populous city, commuters early on Sunday needed strong reasons to travel.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/shanghai-reopens-some-public-transport-still-high-covid-alert-2022-05-22/>

Tesla plans to ramp up to pre-lockdown output in Shanghai by Tuesday

Tesla Inc plans to restore production at its Shanghai plant to the level at which it had operated before the city's COVID-19 lockdown by Tuesday, a day later than its most recent recovery plan, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters. Tesla will more than double its daily output to 2,600 electric vehicles at its Shanghai plant from Tuesday, according to the memo detailing the plan. That compares to around 1,000 EVs produced on Monday, according to the memo, and would bring Tesla's weekly output to nearly 16,000 units, the memo showed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/tesla-plans-ramp-up-pre-lockdown-output-shanghai-by-tues-memo-2022-05-23/>

N.Korea says virus situation 'under control'

North Korea said on Tuesday it was witnessing a "stable" downward trend in its first confirmed COVID-19 outbreak, reporting less than 200,000 new patients with fever symptoms for a third consecutive day on Tuesday. The COVID wave, declared on May 12, has fuelled concerns over a lack of vaccines, inadequate medical infrastructure and a potential food crisis in the country of 25 million. At least 134,510 people newly showed fever symptoms as of Monday evening, taking the total number of such cases to 2.95 million since late April, the official KCNA news agency reported. The death toll stood at 68.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nkorea-reports-another-134510-people-with-fever-amid-covid-outbreak-kcna-2022-05-23/>

BoE's COVID policy not to blame for inflation, Bailey says

Governor Andrew Bailey on Monday pushed back against his critics who blame the Bank of England for allowing inflation to accelerate to a 40-year high, saying the facts do not support this. The British central bank has been accused by lawmakers in Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative

Party and even by former governor Mervyn King of being too slow to halt a rise in consumer prices that are up 9% compared with a year ago.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/boes-covid-policy-not-blame-inflation-bailey-says-2022-05-23/>

China Covid Lockdowns: Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai Rules Still Widespread

Beijing and Tianjin continue to ramp up Covid restrictions as cases climb, while reopening in Shanghai looks to be taking place in fits and starts, with most people still unable to move about freely. The emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant has spurred increasingly stringent pandemic curbs in China since March, in some cases snap lockdowns that carried heavy costs for the local population and economy. The pattern of transmission and restrictions across the country could offer insight into what regions may be vulnerable to disruption in the days ahead. Nationwide, overall cases are trending down. Of China's top 50 cities by economic size, only Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai currently have widespread restrictions in place.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-23/key-port-city-boosts-curbs-with-beijing-china-lockdown-tracker>

Oman ends all COVID protective measures

Oman announced on Sunday the lifting of all measures that had been taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in all venues and for all activities, state TV reported, citing a statement from the government committee dealing with the pandemic. There have been 389,943 infections and 4,260 coronavirus-related deaths reported in the sultanate since the pandemic began, according to Reuters data.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/oman-ends-all-covid-protective-measures-2022-05-22/>

Exit Strategies

Most Hongkongers do not need fourth Covid shot, expert says; 190 cases logged

Most Hongkongers under the age of 60 do not need a fourth dose of a Covid-19 vaccine as it will only provide brief protection, a government adviser has said, as infections dropped below 200 for the first time in more than three months. Professor Lau Yu-lung, who chairs the government's Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases, on Monday said the priority remained convincing the vulnerable elderly to take a third vaccine shot, noting the rate of severe illness or death among residents aged 18 to 59 was close to zero.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3178767/coronavirus-most-young-hongkongers-should>

Thousands of people incorrectly offered Covid booster vaccines by Welsh Government

More than 9,000 people have been incorrectly offered a Covid booster by the Welsh Government. It means 9,500 people who were not intended by the Government agency the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation have been given, offered, or were due to be offered a booster as part of the spring campaign. The Welsh Government's health minister has said she will honour the offer to those who were due to receive it and that Wales has enough vaccines so this won't impact the planned autumn booster campaign. You can see who is eligible under that scheme here. The issue was identified on May 16 by health boards and Welsh Government was informed the following day. An investigation with the NHS Delivery Unit, health boards, Digital Health and Care Wales and Public Health Wales was carried out.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/covid-spring-booster-jab-vaccination-24033466>

COVID: On the road with the 'vaccine convoys' critical to keeping up the fight against coronavirus

It is difficult to know what COVID is doing to the people of Africa. The World Health Organization (WHO) says the death toll has been vastly undercounted in much of the world, but poor data collection in most African countries makes it difficult to assess the true impact on the continent.

Evidence on COVID-related deaths in South Africa suggests there are serious grounds for concern. Experts at South Africa's Medical Research Council believe hundreds of thousands of deaths have been lost in the paperwork. The real death toll is thought to be three times the official number of 101,000.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-on-the-road-with-the-vaccine-convoys-critical-to-keeping-up-the-fight-against-coronavirus-12618209>

Covid-19—How Europe's vaccine donations went tragically wrong

Covid vaccine equity remains out of reach, as wealthy nations drag their feet on donations, and vaccine stocks pass their use-by dates, write Lucien Hordijk and Priti Patnaik On 21 December 2021, a truck piled with brown cardboard boxes drove to the Goja rubbish dump in Abuja, Nigeria. Inside the boxes were a million doses of AstraZeneca's covid-19 vaccine, which were tipped onto the heap, among dirty plastic bags and papers. Two months earlier, Nigeria had agreed to receive 2.6 million doses of the vaccine from the Covax facility, an initiative set up to distribute covid-19 vaccines equitably worldwide. The vaccines, in large part coming from Europe, had been close to expiry. "Some of these vaccines came in with a shelf life of about four weeks," said Faisal Shaibu, a Nigerian government official tasked with organising vaccination of the country's 200 million population against covid-19. Following quality inspections and regional allocations, Nigeria administered 1.53 million doses. But the rest were thrown away. Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, and Indonesia have destroyed vaccines received from Europe and North America because they arrived close to expiry

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o1286>

White House sees decision on Moderna COVID shot for kids under 5 in next few weeks

White House COVID-19 response coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said on Sunday he expects a U.S. Food and Drug Administration decision on authorizing Moderna's vaccine for children under age five within the next few weeks. Moderna completed its application and FDA experts are looking closely at the data, Jha said on ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, adding that the analysis is likely to be completed in the next few week and that a final decision would follow a meeting of the agency's expert advisers.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-sees-decision-moderna-covid-shot-kids-under-5-next-few-weeks-2022-05-22/>

South Korea's daily COVID infections dip to near 4-month low under 10000

South Korea's daily new COVID-19 infections dropped to below 10,000 for the first time in nearly four months on Monday, as the highly contagious Omicron variant recedes despite eased pandemic restrictions. The figure of 9,975 is the lowest since South Korea reported 8,570 cases in late January, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency. South Korea ditched most of its pandemic-related restrictions, including an outdoor mask mandate, earlier this month as cases slowed after peaking at more than 600,000 in mid-March

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skoreas-daily-covid-infections-dip-near-4-month-low-under-10000-2022-05-23/>

Shanghai makes way towards COVID lockdown exit, Beijing plays defence

Shanghai cautiously pushed ahead on Saturday with plans to restore part of its transport network in a major step towards exiting a weeks-long COVID-19 lockdown, while Beijing kept up its defences in an outbreak that has persisted for a month. Shanghai's lockdown since the beginning of April has dealt a heavy economic blow to China's most populous city, stirred debate over the sustainability of the nation's zero-COVID policy and stoked fears of future lockdowns and disruptions.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-inches-towards-covid-lockdown-exit-beijing-plays-defence-2022-05-21/>

Partisan Exits

U.S. Justice Department to appeal judge's ruling on COVID border migrant rules

The U.S. Justice Department will appeal a federal judge's decision blocking the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions that empower agents at the U.S.-Mexico border to turn back migrants without giving them a chance to seek asylum. "The Department of Justice intends to appeal," spokesman Anthony Coley said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/us-justice-department-appeal-judges-ruling-covid-border-migrant-rules-2022-05-23/>

Boris Johnson met civil servant to discuss timing of 'partygate' report publication, his spokesman says

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson met senior civil servant Sue Gray this month to discuss the timings for publication of a report she had overseen into COVID-19 lockdown-breaking parties at Downing Street, his spokesman said on Monday. The government is expected this week to publish a long-awaited report into the events held at Johnson's Downing Street office during coronavirus lockdowns. Police have handed out 126 fines in connection with the parties.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-met-civil-servant-discuss-timing-partygate-report-publication-spokesman-2022-05-23/>

UK report into Downing Street lockdown parties "not very far off," Boris Johnson says

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said a report by a senior civil servant into COVID-19 lockdown rule breaches in his Downing Street offices was due to be published soon, and rejected criticism the inquiry was not independent. "I'm not going to comment or give any running commentary on her report until we get it, and I think that to be frank, the moment is not very far off," he told reporters on Monday, referring to the report by senior official Sue Gray.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-report-into-downing-street-lockdown-parties-not-very-far-off-pm-johnson-2022-05-23/>

Continued Lockdown

Beijing extends work-from-home 'requirement' for millions as COVID spreads

The Chinese capital extended its work-from-home requirement for many of its 22 million residents to stem a COVID-19 outbreak, while Shanghai deployed more testing and curbs to hold on to its hard-won "zero COVID" status after two months of lockdown. Beijing said 99 new cases were detected on Sunday, up from 61 the previous day - the largest daily tally so far during a month-old outbreak that has consistently seen dozens of new infections every day.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-urges-millions-keep-working-home-amid-covid-outbreak-menace-2022-05-23/>

Scientific Viewpoint

WHO says no evidence monkeypox virus has mutated

The World Health Organization does not have evidence that the monkeypox virus has mutated, a senior executive at the U.N. agency said on Monday, noting the infectious disease that has been endemic in west and central Africa has tended not to change. Rosamund Lewis, head of the smallpox secretariat that is part of the WHO Emergencies Programme, told a briefing that mutations tended to be typically lower with this virus, although genome sequencing of cases will help inform understanding of the current outbreak.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-says-no-evidence-monkeypox-virus-has-mutated-2022-05-23/>

Three Doses of Pfizer's Covid-19 Vaccine 80% Effective in Young Children, Company Says

Three doses of the Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE Covid-19 vaccine were 80% effective at preventing symptomatic Covid-19 and generated a robust immune response in children ages 6 months to 5

years old, the companies said. The vaccine was also found to be safe and well-tolerated among the children in the study, the companies said Monday. Many of the children had received at least some of their shots during the Omicron wave, suggesting that the three-dose series worked well against the highly contagious variant after the two doses produced mixed results. “We have a big problem called Omicron, and I think we have a good solution,” Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla said in an interview. The companies reported the findings without much detail via press release based on an early analysis of study results.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/three-doses-of-pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-80-effective-in-young-children-company-says-11653302701>

FDA lifts hold on Ocugen's COVID-19 vaccine trial. But is it too late for the shot?

Six weeks after slapping a clinical hold on a trial of Ocugen’s COVID-19 vaccine, the FDA has lifted (PDF) it. That’s the good news for the Malvern, Pa. company, which has partnered with India’s Bharat Biotech on the shot known commercially as Covaxin. But the flip side for Ocugen is the declining demand for COVID vaccines in the United States. If Ocugen ever secures regulatory approval for Covaxin, will anyone want it—especially given the current surplus of available COVID jabs?

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/fda-lifts-hold-ocugens-covid-19-vaccine-trial-it-too-late-shot>

Women who are pregnant or nursing should receive a COVID booster vaccination

In the current work, the researchers examined humoral immunity elicited by the booster dose of SARS-CoV-2 mRNA vaccines in 63 subjects comprising breastfeeding, pregnant and age-matched nonpregnant females. They studied the antibody response to the spike (S) proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron and ancestral strains in a group of 12 nursing, 31 pregnant, and 20 nonpregnant age-matched volunteers who received an mRNA-1273 or BNT162b2 booster dose after completing the primary COVID-19 vaccination. Further, the researchers analyzed the transmission of vaccine-triggered antibodies in 15 maternal-cord pairs at delivery. The eligible subjects were lactating, pregnant, and nonpregnant women aged 18 to 45 years. Moreover, all included participants were vaccinated with SARS-CoV-2 mRNA booster dose between August and December 2021. The participants were selected from two tertiary care hospitals by practitioners or were self-referred. Blood samples were taken from all volunteers four weeks following the booster dose vaccination and at delivery in pregnant women. Furthermore, umbilical cord and maternal blood were obtained during delivery for 15 women who gave birth during the research period.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220523/Women-who-are-pregnant-or-nursing-should-receive-a-COVID-booster-vaccination.aspx>

Largest study to date on the effect of vaccination on long-COVID

In a recent study published in the British Medical Journal, researchers evaluated the association between coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination and long COVID symptoms among adults residing in United Kingdom (UK) communities with positive COVID-19 history before vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines have been effective in decreasing severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections, transmission, hospitalizations, and deaths. The likelihood of long COVID may be lower among individuals who are infected by SARS-CoV-2 after vaccination; however, the association between COVID-19 vaccination and long COVID symptoms is not clear.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220523/Largest-study-to-date-on-the-effect-of-vaccination-on-long-COVID.aspx>

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City of Hope develops new immunotherapy to treat Covid-19

Scientists at City of Hope in the US have developed a novel immunotherapy that could offer a new treatment pathway for treating Covid-19 and other infections. The immunotherapy leverages natural killer (NK) cells with a specific molecule that can act on the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The study adds to the expertise of City of Hope in utilising CAR T cell therapy, natural killer cells and

other immunotherapies to aid in detecting better therapies for cancer and other ailments.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/city-of-hope-immunotherapy/>

Long Covid 1: assessing the long-term health effects of Covid-19

Long Covid is more than a prolonged recovery from a respiratory infection; it is a multisystem, and potentially long-term and life-changing, disease. Many people carry the illness burden, including nurses, who may be disproportionately affected due to their high risk of Covid-19 infection. In this first in a series of three articles on long Covid, we look at what is known about the condition, its symptoms, causes and prognosis, and the nurse's role, particularly in symptom management.

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/clinical-archive/long-term-conditions/long-covid-1-assessing-the-long-term-health-effects-of-covid-19-23-05-2022/>

Drugmakers propose swift pandemic response benefiting poorer countries

Global drugmakers are lobbying for wealthy nations to fund a supply mechanism that would secure vaccines for low-income countries without delay in case of a new pandemic, but said the proposal was contingent on free cross-border trade. The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) said in a statement on Monday that global pandemic vaccine distribution needs to be put on a new footing because the world's poorest countries were forced to wait for shots during the current pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/drugmakers-propose-swift-pandemic-response-benefiting-poorer-countries-2022-05-22/>

AstraZeneca says EU regulator approves COVID shot as booster

Drugmaker AstraZeneca said on Monday its COVID-19 vaccine, Vaxzevria, has been approved in the European Union by the bloc's drugs regulator as a third-dose booster in adults following a committee endorsement last week. The vaccine can now be used as a booster following the two-dose Vaxzevria schedule or by those who have been previously vaccinated by an mRNA vaccine, such as the ones made by Pfizer and BioNTech or Moderna

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/astrazeneca-says-covid-shot-approved-eu-booster-2022-05-23/>

U.S. drug regulator lifts clinical hold on Ocugen's COVID vaccine trial

Ocugen Inc said the U.S. drug regulator has lifted the clinical hold on a mid-to-late stage trial of the COVID-19 vaccine being developed by its Indian partner Bharat Biotech. The Food and Drug Administration paused the trials of the shot, Covaxin, in April after an inspection of a Bharat Biotech facility by the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed deficiencies in the manufacturing process.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-drug-regulator-lifts-clinical-hold-ocugens-covid-vaccine-trial-2022-05-23/>

Pfizer/BioNTech say three COVID shots generate good response in children under 5

Drugmakers Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE said on Monday that three doses of their COVID-19 vaccine generated a strong immune response in children under age 5 and was safe and well-tolerated in their clinical trial. The companies said they plan to soon ask global regulators to authorize the shot for the age group, children for whom no vaccine is currently approved in most of the world. They said they expect to complete their submission of data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizerbiontech-say-3-covid-shots-generate-good-response-under-5s-2022-05-23/>

Pfizer, BioNTech tout COVID booster data for young children and plan to finish FDA filing

Pfizer and BioNTech, after revealing positive data from a COVID-19 vaccine booster trial in young children, plan to complete their rolling FDA submission this week. The companies said that the safety, immunogenicity and vaccine efficacy data for the three-dose regimen were consistent with the data seen in adults. Efficacy reached 80.3% in the booster trial. Previously, a two-dose regimen

failed to work in young children. The age group is the only one not yet cleared for a COVID-19 vaccine. The shots are one-tenth of the dose strength for adults. In the trial, 1,678 children received a third dose at a time when omicron was the dominant COVID-19 variant.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-biontech-plan-complete-eua-submission-youngest-age-group-vaccines-complete-positive-0>

Vir, WuXi Biologics terminate COVID antibody pact as US rollout faces uncertain future

The U.S. distribution of Vir Biotechnology's GSK-partnered COVID-19 antibody has been put on hold for more than a month. Now, a collaborator in the therapy wants out. WuXi Biologics has returned China rights to Vir's COVID antibody, sotrovimab, the latter company said in a securities filing (PDF) published Friday. As part of the termination agreement, Vir will pay WuXi Bio \$7 million to cover the Chinese CDMO's development expenses. If sotrovimab is eventually approved in China, Vir is also on the hook to pay WuXi Bio tiered royalties on sales ranging from low single-digit percentages to low double-digit percentages, the company said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/vir-wuxi-biologics-terminate-covid-antibody-pact-just-us-rollout-pauses>

Pfizer/BioNTech to seek Covid vaccine authorization for children under age 5

Vaccine makers Pfizer and BioNTech said they will complete their submission for emergency use authorization of their Covid-19 vaccine for children under the age of 5 this week after a study of a third dose found it improves the efficacy of the vaccine. Just hours after the news was made public, the Food and Drug Administration announced it expects to convene its independent vaccine advisers, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, on June 15 to review the submission. The companies said that, with three doses, the vaccine performed about as well in young children as it does in adults. The vaccine was well-tolerated, induced a strong immune response, and was 80.3% effective at preventing Covid infections at a time when the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was circulating.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/05/23/pfizer-biontech-to-seek-vaccine-authorization-for-children-under-age-5/>

Omicron breakthrough infections may spare young hearts; no need to delay mammogram after vaccination

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Omicron breakthrough infections may spare young hearts. The Omicron variant of the coronavirus does not have a negative affect on cardiovascular health in young adults who have been vaccinated, a small study suggests.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/science/omicron-breakthrough-infections-may-spare-young-hearts-no-need-delay-mammogram-2022-05-23/>

Monkeypox in Europe: Officials Call on Nations to Boost Efforts

As monkeypox cases climb in the UK, European health officials are calling on countries to review the availability of vaccines and step up efforts to identify and report new infections. Countries should check on supplies of smallpox vaccines, antiviral therapies and protective equipment for health workers, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said Monday. The recommendations come as England reported that cases almost tripled to 56 from 20. The cousin of the smallpox virus has previously been mostly confined to regions in Africa, but health authorities are concerned about cases ticking up in Europe and North America. The World Health Organization had said that 92 cases and 28 suspected cases had been identified in 12 countries outside of those African nations where it is endemic as of May 21.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-23/european-officials-call-on-nations-to-boost-monkeypox-efforts>

Smallpox Vaccine Enters Wider Production Amid Monkeypox Outbreak

Danish vaccine maker Bavarian Nordic A/S is making more of a smallpox vaccine typically stockpiled

in case of biological warfare, as governments seek doses that also offer protection against monkeypox amid an unusual outbreak around the world. Monkeypox, a viral illness that is only rarely detected outside of Africa, has been reported in recent weeks in at least 17 countries including the U.S., U.K., Spain, Portugal and Australia, according to nonprofit data platform Global.health. In the U.S., a case was confirmed in Massachusetts and at least five more are suspected—one each in Florida, New York and Washington and two in Utah, state officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/smallpox-vaccine-enters-wider-production-amid-monkeypox-outbreak-11653329895>

Coronavirus Resurgence

California coronavirus spread significantly worsens, with cases doubling in some areas

The number of coronavirus cases in California significantly worsened last week, hitting a level not seen since the winter's omicron surge and raising concerns about the possibility of a big jump in infections this summer. Weekly coronavirus cases roughly doubled across wide swaths of California, including Riverside and Santa Barbara counties, as well as the Central Valley and Silicon Valley. They rose by roughly 85% in Orange, San Bernardino and Ventura counties. Statewide, the increase was 63%, bringing the case rate to 231 for every 100,000 residents. A rate of 100 and above is considered a high rate of transmission.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/california-coronavirus-spread-significantly-worsens-with-cases-doubling-in-some-areas/>

Covid-19: 6000 community cases on Monday, nine deaths

The Ministry of Health is today reporting 6000 community cases, 363 hospitalisations and nine deaths. There are 363 people in hospital, including 14 in intensive care with Covid-19. The seven-day rolling average of case numbers is 7712 – last Monday it was 7702. On Sunday, the ministry reported 4990 community cases and 10 deaths.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/128725086/covid19-6000-community-cases-on-monday-nine-deaths>

Two cases of new Covid-19 variant of concern confirmed in Ireland

Two cases of a newly classified Covid-19 variant of concern have been confirmed in Ireland. On May 12 the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control reclassified two sub-lineages of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, BA.4 and BA.5, from variants of interest to variants of concern. In the chief medical officer's latest weekly report on Covid-19 to Health Minister Stephen Donnelly, he says that two cases of BA.4 have been identified as of the week beginning May 7. Dr Tony Holohan said: "In the context of the international situation in relation to these variants, it should be noted that, as of week 18 2022 (May 7), two cases of BA.4 and no cases of BA.5 have been identified in Ireland."

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/two-cases-of-new-covid-19-variant-of-concern-confirmed-in-ireland-41676259.html>

Covid cases in Africa pass 11.59 million-mark

The number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Africa reached 11,596,707, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has said. The specialized healthcare agency of the African Union (AU) said the death toll across the continent stands at 252,892 and that 10,918,957 patients have recovered from the disease, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya are among the countries with the most cases on the continent, the most cases on the continent, said the Africa CDC.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/covid-cases-in-africa-pass-11-59-million-mark/articleshow/91743556.cms>

China reports 869 new COVID cases on May 22 vs 898 a day earlier

Mainland China reported 869 new coronavirus cases on May 22, of which 187 were symptomatic and 682 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Monday. That compares with 898 new cases a day earlier - 169 symptomatic and 729 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There was one new death, bringing the death toll to 5,223. As of May 22, mainland China had confirmed 223,332 cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/china-reports-869-new-covid-cases-may-22-vs-898-day-earlier-2022-05-23/>

North Korea's fever cases under 200000 for second day amid silence on aid offer

North Korea's daily fever cases stayed below 200,000 for a second day in a row, state media said on Monday, as Pyongyang remained silent on South Korean and U.S. offers to help fight its first confirmed COVID-19 outbreak. The COVID wave, declared on May 12, has fuelled concerns over a lack of vaccines, inadequate medical infrastructure and a potential food crisis in the country of 25 million. U.S. President Joe Biden said on Saturday that Washington had offered COVID-19 vaccines to China and North Korea, but "got no response."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkoreas-fever-cases-under-200000-2nd-day-amid-silence-aid-offer-2022-05-22/>