

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Video: How the Pandemic Has Accelerated Child Marriage in India

In a bid to combat child marriage, Archana Sahay started a 24-hour helpline based in the central Indian city of Bhopal. When the coronavirus pandemic hit, she was inundated with calls: Some were what she had come to expect from already-vulnerable girls and people concerned with their welfare. Others caught her by surprise. On this episode of “The Pay Check,” Bloomberg explores how another unforeseen consequence of Covid-19 in India has been a significant increase in child marriage—and how one woman is trying to fight it.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-23/video-how-the-pandemic-has-accelerated-child-marriage-in-india>

Both sides blast WTO's patent waiver for COVID vaccines

Now that the World Trade Organization has relaxed intellectual property restrictions on COVID-19 vaccines, the question is: Will any developing countries take advantage to produce their own shots? With wealthy nations discarding expired vaccines and poor countries turning down donations because of a lack of demand, it's hard to imagine manufacturers in countries such as India and South Africa being motivated to produce jobs. Nonetheless, South Africa hailed the move, which allows vaccines and their ingredients to be produced without authorization from the patent holder over the next five years. The South African government also admitted however to the daunting task of gearing up for the manufacture of shots. “To scale up the production on the continent, further partnerships will be needed including access to know-how and technologies,” the South Africa government said in a statement.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/wtos-patent-waiver-covid-vaccines-political-stunt-pharma-says>

Eric Adams Stopped Enforcing Covid Vaccine Mandate for NYC Businesses

Mayor Eric Adams of New York City has not enforced the city's coronavirus vaccine mandate for employees at private businesses, and has no plans to begin inspecting businesses or begin fining those that are not in compliance. Newsday first reported on the lack of enforcement of the vaccine mandate for private employers. “We have been focused on prioritizing education instead of enforcement when it comes to the private sector mandate, which is how we've been able to get more than 87 percent of all New Yorkers with their first dose to date,” Fabien Levy, a spokesman for New York City Mayor Eric Adams, said in an email. Former Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled a vaccine mandate for employees at private businesses in December, the most far-reaching local measure in the United States at the time. The mandate applied to around 184,000 businesses of all sizes with employees who work on-site in New York City.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/23/nyregion/nyc-vaccine-mandate-adams.html>

Austria scraps COVID vaccine mandate, says it split society

Austria's health minister announced Thursday that the country is scrapping a dormant coronavirus vaccine mandate, saying the measure risked polarizing society and could even lead to fewer people getting the shot. The government announced plans last year requiring all people aged 18 and over to get vaccinated against COVID-19, the first country in Europe to do so. The law took effect in February but lawmakers suspended the mandate before police were due to enforce it in mid-March. Health Minister Johannes Rauch said the rise of new virus variants had changed citizens' perception

of the effectiveness and necessity of a vaccination, even among those willing to get the shot. This could deter them from voluntarily getting booster shots that will help curb the outbreak in the fall, he said. "The vaccine mandate hinders some people who are generally willing to get the shot from taking the booster, the idea being: I'm not going to be told what to do," said Rauch.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-austria-government-and-politics-0da830510f99e7018523d501518b747e>

South Africa repeals COVID rules on mask-wearing, gatherings, entry

South Africa has repealed COVID-19 restrictions on mask-wearing in indoor public spaces, limits on the size of gatherings and entry requirements at its borders, a notice in the government gazette showed.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/south-africa-repeals-covid-rules-on-mask-wearing-gatherings-entry/>

Austria scraps already-suspended COVID vaccine mandate

Austria is scrapping an already-suspended COVID-19 vaccine mandate as it has divided the country and is unlikely to raise one of western Europe's lowest vaccination rates, Health Minister Johannes Rauch said on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/austria-scraps-already-suspended-covid-vaccine-mandate-2022-06-23/>

COVID-19 vaccine scheme for world's poorest pushes for delivery slowdown

Leaders of the global scheme aiming to get COVID-19 vaccines to the world's poorest are pushing manufacturers including Pfizer and Moderna to cut or slow deliveries of about half a billion shots so doses are not wasted. COVAX, the World Health Organization-led scheme, wants between 400 and 600 million fewer vaccines doses than initially contracted from six pharmaceutical companies, according to internal documents seen by Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-19-vaccine-scheme-worlds-poorest-pushes-delivery-slowdown-2022-06-22/>

Covid-19 Vaccines Prevented 20 Million Deaths in One Year: Study

Covid vaccines that were developed in record time saved an estimated 20 million lives in the first year of the rollout, more than half of them in wealthier countries, according to the first study of its kind to quantify the impact. While more than 7 million deaths were likely averted in countries covered by Covax, the World Health Organization-backed distribution program, the research nonetheless highlights the devastation caused by uneven access. About one in five lives lost due to Covid in poorer countries could have been prevented if WHO targets had been reached, data published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal show.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-23/covid-shots-prevented-20-million-deaths-in-one-year-study>

Exit Strategies

UK Covid Cost: Government Spends £376 Billion on Pandemic Response

The coronavirus pandemic, marked by an ambitious vaccine rollout, has cost the UK government an estimated £376 billion (\$459 billion). The figure released Thursday by the National Audit Office has increased by £6 billion over the last ten months, with much of the expense going to support train traffic even as passenger numbers dwindled. The amount -- more than the annual gross domestic product of a country like Austria -- grew amid measures to administer vaccines, test and trace contact cases, and alleviate pressure on hospitals by improving patient discharge. The cost is estimated to be similar in neighboring France after governments across Europe opted to strain their finances to support the economy through the crisis.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-23/uk-government-spent-459-billion-on-covid-pandemic-response>

Shanghai's fashion stores struggle to clear lockdown stock hangover

Almost a month since Shanghai lifted its strict COVID-19 lockdowns, fashion retailers are stuck with

piles of unsold stock as cautious consumers stay away from the commercial hub's glitzy shopping districts. Curbs to stop the virus in Shanghai, China's fashion capital, ground the city of 25 million to a halt in April and May, leaving clothing and beauty product displays in stores untouched and containers of imported apparel stranded at port.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/shanghai-fashion-stores-struggle-clear-lockdown-stock-hangover-2022-06-23/>

Biden team launches all-out push to vaccinate youngest children

The Biden administration pushed American families to immunize infants and small children for COVID-19 on Thursday, deploying ads intended to tug at heartstrings as it contends with Republicans and parents who are leery or outright opposed to shots for children as young as 6 months. The Department of Health and Human Services released a 30-second ad urging parents to protect children 4 and younger, who became eligible for shots this week, while the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said COVID-19 has been one of the top five causes of death in children since the start of the pandemic.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/23/hhs-promotes-covid-19-vaccines-young-kids-new-ads/>

Why the timing of your next COVID shot is so important

The timing of your next COVID-19 vaccine may be more important than ever, as highly contagious Omicron subvariants are on the rise in Canada and waning immunity from previous vaccination and infection threatens to fuel another surge. Canada is once again a hotbed for variants, with BA.2.12.1 now making up more than 40 per cent of COVID cases, while BA.4 and BA.5 are quickly gaining ground at more than 10 per cent combined in late May — a major jump from less than one per cent weeks earlier.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/fourth-dose-omicron-booster-waning-immunity-1.6496394>

Over-60s urged to coronavirus vaccine top-up as new cases mount

Healthcare minister Ernst Kuipers has called on the general public to stick to the basic coronavirus rules and urged the over-60s who have not yet had a second booster vaccination to come forward. So far, just 40% to 59% of people entitled to a fourth vaccination (herhaalprik) have taken up the offer, depending on where they live. Extra measures to control the spread of the virus are not yet needed, the minister told reporters after a meeting of cabinet ministers which was called to discuss the rising infection rate.

<https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2022/06/over-60s-urged-to-coronavirus-vaccine-top-up-as-new-cases-mount/>

GP contract for autumn COVID-19 booster campaign due shortly

GP practices in England will be invited shortly to sign up for the COVID-19 autumn booster campaign after NHS England confirmed it would offer a fixed payment per job with a supplement for housebound patients.

<https://www.gponline.com/gp-contract-autumn-covid-19-booster-campaign-due-shortly/article/1790847>

U.S. delivers 2.7 mln COVID vaccine doses for kids under five to administration sites

The United States has delivered about 2.7 million doses of COVID vaccines for children below five years to administration centres while another one million shots will reach the sites soon, the Department of Health and Human Services said on Wednesday. Vaccine delivery to administration sites began on Friday, immediately after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted the emergency-use authorization, the federal agency said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-delivers-27-mln-covid-vaccine-doses-kids-under-five-administration-sites-2022-06-22/>

Denmark to offer fourth COVID vaccine dose to people over 50 years

Denmark plans to offer a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose in the autumn to those who are over 50

years old, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Wednesday as she announced a strategy to curb the spread of the disease over the coming months. Although COVID infections are still at low levels, Denmark has seen an increase in the number of cases after the new BA.5 subvariant of Omicron, which seems to spread more quickly than other variants, became dominant in the Nordic country.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/denmark-offer-fourth-covid-vaccine-dose-people-over-50-years-2022-06-22/>

South Africa repeals COVID rules as fifth wave fades

South Africa has repealed COVID-19 rules that made masks mandatory in indoor public spaces, limited the size of gatherings and imposed entry requirements at its borders, the health minister said on Thursday. South Africa has recorded the most coronavirus cases and deaths on the African continent, with over 3.9 million confirmed infections and more than 101,000 deaths. Minister Joe Phaahla said authorities had noted a decline in cases, hospitalisations and reported deaths and concluded that a limited fifth wave was dissipating.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safrica-repeals-covid-rules-mask-wearing-gatherings-entry-2022-06-23/>

Austria Ditches Vaccine Mandate After Omicron Alters Calculus

Austria will scrap a law requiring coronavirus vaccinations, ending a controversial rule that was never fully implemented after social opposition and new virus variants forced the government to backtrack. Lawmakers are set to vote on ending the mandate as soon as Thursday, before an initial suspension was set to expire in August. The rule was no longer proportionate, failed to convince vaccine skeptics and wasn't necessary in light of recent waves of the virus, Health Minister Johannes Rauch told reporters in Vienna Thursday.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-23/austria-ditches-vaccine-mandate-after-omicron-alters-calculus>

Partisan Exits

Grocery chain Publix refuses to offer Covid-19 vaccines to children under five

Federal authorities have finally expanded access to Covid-19 vaccines to children age six months to five years, but the major grocery chain and pharmacy retailer Publix will not offer vaccinations to the nation's youngest children at its more than 1,200 US stores. The Florida-based chain said it will not administer vaccines to young children "at this time" but has not released a statement explaining its decision. Florida has overseen a complicated vaccine rollout for young children as the Food and Drug Administration and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention prepared to expand access to vaccines more than a year after they became widely available for adults. State officials including the state's surgeon general cast doubt on the efficacy of vaccines and clashed with federal guidelines and guidance from medical experts, among others. Florida was also the only state that did not preorder vaccines for children under 5, which the White House warned could stall deliveries to medical providers in the state for those who did wish to inoculate their children.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/publix-covid-vaccine-children-b2107273.html>

Scientific Viewpoint

CDC Advisers Endorse Moderna's Covid-19 Vaccine for Kids 6 to 17 Years

Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention backed use of Moderna Inc.'s Covid-19 vaccine in children ages 6 to 17 years. Children in the age group already have access to Covid-19 vaccines made by Pfizer Inc. and its partner BioNTech SE. The advisers recommended on Thursday that Moderna's shot should also be made available to that age range, in a pair of 15-0 votes. The advisers' endorsement follows the Food and Drug Administration's authorization of the shots last week. It is one of the last steps before the Moderna shot would be more broadly available in doctors' offices, pharmacies and vaccine clinics. Many states and vaccination sites wait for the CDC's signoff before providing the inoculations. It typically follows the recommendations of its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices but doesn't have to. The panel is made up of pediatricians, epidemiologists and other health experts.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/modernas-covid-19-vaccine-for-kids-6-to-17-years-faces-cdc-review-11655982002>

U.S. CDC confirms evidence of local monkeypox transmission

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said there was evidence of local transmission of monkeypox, in addition to reports of cases where people had traveled abroad. The cases are mainly occurring in men who have sex with men, but women are also getting infected, CDC staff member Dr. Agam Rao said at a panel meeting on Thursday. Monkeypox, a viral infection that causes skin lesions, is endemic in certain parts of Africa. But the current outbreak has hit countries where the virus does not usually spread, sparking concern.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-cdc-confirms-evidence-local-monkeypox-transmission-2022-06-23/>

South African biotech company to develop first African-owned Covid-19 vaccine

A year after the creation of the mRNA Vaccine Technology Transfer Hub, a South African biotech company has teamed up with a Belgium-based firm to develop an African Covid-19 vaccine. South Africa's Afrigen Biologics and Belgium's Univercells will develop the first African-owned Covid-19 shot as part of a broader effort to reduce the continent's reliance on other regions for vaccines. During the signing of the agreement on Tuesday, Afrigen, based in Cape Town, said it is working to facilitate the production of mRNA vaccines at more than 15 manufacturing sites in low- and middle-income nations worldwide.

<https://www.zawya.com/en/business/healthcare/south-african-biotech-company-to-develop-first-african-owned-covid-19-vaccine-ixpzwbys>

Scientists probe Japan's remarkable COVID success in hunt for new vaccine to protect some of the most vulnerable

Japan's notable coronavirus pandemic resilience has generated scores of possible explanations, from the country's preference for going shoeless indoors, to the purportedly low-aerosol-generating nature of Japan's quiet conversation, to its citizens' beneficial gut bacteria. Even irreligiousness — said to have spared the Japanese from exposure to crowded houses of worship — has been touted as a virtue in the age of COVID-19. Despite having the world's oldest population, with almost one in three residents 65 or older, Japan has had fewer COVID fatalities per capita than almost any other developed nation.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/japan-covid-success-factors-hla-cellular-advantage-new-vaccine-research/>

Valneva Receives Positive CHMP Opinion for Marketing Authorization of its Inactivated COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate in Europe

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended marketing authorization in Europe for Valneva's inactivated whole-virus COVID-19 vaccine candidate, VLA2001, for use as primary vaccination in people from 18 to 50 years of age. The European Commission will review the CHMP recommendation, and a decision on the marketing authorization application for VLA2001 is expected shortly. If granted, this will be the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive a standard marketing authorization in Europe.

<https://apnews.com/press-release/globe-newswire/covid-technology-health-ad4b03bbf6770fc002ec49acc9a7f2ec>

Moderna's Covid-19 Vaccine for Kids 6 to 17 Years Faces CDC Review

Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are set to decide whether to recommend Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine for children ages 6 to 17 years. Children in the age group already have access to Covid-19 vaccines made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech. The advisers are discussing whether Moderna's shot should also be made available for that age range. The advisers' meeting follows the Food and Drug Administration's authorization of the shots last week.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/modernas-covid-19-vaccine-for-kids-6-to-17-years-faces-cdc-review-11655982002?mod=hp_listb_pos2

EU watchdog backs marketing authorisation for Valneva's COVID-19 shot

Valneva's COVID-19 vaccine was endorsed by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) on Thursday, although the French company's contract with the European Commission to supply the dose hangs in the balance. The original deal was for up to 60 million doses. But due to application delays and countries in Europe already having excess supply, the Commission has signalled that it wants to amend the agreement for a much smaller number of doses

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-watchdog-backs-marketing-authorisation-valnevas-covid-19-shot-2022-06-23/>

Omicron-specific COVID vaccines on the horizon, Pfizer chief says

COVID-19 vaccines that specifically target the Omicron and other variants are under development, Pfizer Inc's (PFE.N) chief executive said on Wednesday, adding that the company will be able to quickly adapt shots as the novel coronavirus mutates. While the ultimate approval decisions rest with U.S. regulators, "we are ready for that," the drugmaker's CEO Albert Bourla told MSNBC in an interview, noting that the Food and Drug Administration is convening a meeting later this month.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-specific-covid-vaccines-horizon-pfizer-chief-says-2022-06-22/>

Nearly 1 in 5 adults who had COVID have lingering symptoms - U.S. study

Nearly 1 in 5 American adults who reported having COVID-19 in the past are still having symptoms of long COVID, according to survey data collected in the first two weeks of June, U.S. health officials said on Wednesday. Overall, 1 in 13 adults in the United States have long COVID symptoms lasting for three months or more after first contracting the disease, and which they did not have before the infection, the data showed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nearly-1-5-adults-who-had-covid-have-lingering-symptoms-us-study-2022-06-22/>

Monkeypox News: Chelsea Clinic to Offer Vaccines in NYC to Vulnerable Groups

New York health officials will begin offering monkeypox vaccination to vulnerable groups at a temporary clinic in the city, where 28 cases have been identified as of Wednesday. New Yorkers who may have been exposed to monkeypox can get the vaccine, city health officials said Thursday. Eligible groups include "all gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (cisgender or transgender) ages 18 and older who have had multiple or anonymous sex partners in the last 14 days," the health department said in a statement. While shots were earlier offered to close contacts of confirmed cases, the department is expanding availability to eligible people who may have been exposed.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-23/monkeypox-shots-to-be-offered-in-new-york-city>

Paxlovid shown effective against visits for severe COVID-19

Pfizer's antiviral drug Paxlovid was tied to very few COVID-related visits to the emergency department (ED) or hospital, but people in socially vulnerable US regions are less likely to receive it or a similar COVID-19 drug, according to two studies published yesterday in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/06/paxlovid-shown-effective-against-visits-severe-covid-19>

Moderna 2-strain booster shows strong subvariant antibody response

Moderna reported that the bivalent (two-strain) mRNA vaccine it developed against Omicron showed a strong neutralizing antibody response against the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants and that it will seek regulatory approval in the coming weeks. Moderna's bivalent vaccine contains its original vaccine plus a strain that targets Omicron and its subvariants. The announcement comes amid rising BA.4 and BA.5 levels worldwide

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/06/moderna-2-strain-booster-shows-strong-subvariant-antibody-r>

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Coronavirus Resurgence

UK Covid cases double as 'severe' Omicron subvariants cause infections to rise by 98%

Covid cases have almost doubled this month, according to the latest figures. Symptomatic daily infections, which stood at 114,030 on June 1, have jumped by 105 per cent, or 119,790 to 223,820, according to the ZOE Covid study app. The increase means infection rates are now at the highest they have been for all but a few weeks of the pandemic so far, although remain well below the record of 349,011 on March 31.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/science/covid-cases-uk-omicon-ba4-ba5-variants-spread-1701842>

Coronavirus: 2 top Hong Kong officials infected, Beijing 'deeply concerned'

Two top Hong Kong officials who are members of Chief Executive-designate John Lee Ka-chiu's new cabinet, including the government's incoming No 2 minister, have tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of next week's celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the city's return to Chinese sovereignty. Their infections raised concerns over possible changes or adjustments to a much anticipated visit by state leaders as part of the celebration and the swearing-in of Lee's new government on July 1. The government revealed on Thursday that Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang Kwok-wai and Chief Executive's Office director Eric Chan Kwok-ki had returned positive results for their nucleic acid tests. Chan's wife earlier tested positive for the virus.

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/coronavirus-2-top-hong-kong-officials-infected-beijing-deeply-concerned/ar-AAYM5QL>

Covid-19 cases rise in Southeast Asia, Middle East and Europe: WHO report

The number of new Covid cases rose in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe last week, while the number of deaths globally dropped by 16 per cent, according to WHO's latest weekly pandemic report

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/covid-19-cases-rise-in-southeast-asia-middle-east-and-europe-who-report-122062201449_1.html

Britain is being swamped by yet another Covid wave - how can we stop them coming?

We are at the beginning of another wave of Covid - the third in six months. Roughly one in 50 people in England are currently infected, while that figure is as high as one in 30 in Scotland. An estimated 1.4 million people in the UK - more than 2% of the population - would have tested positive last week according to the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) infection survey. Chances are you know someone who's got the disease. Covid hospitalisations have also been rising for the past couple of weeks. On Monday there were more than 1,000 admissions in England - the first time we've reached that level since April. It's possible that some of the stark 40% week-on-week rise in prevalence reported last Friday is due to large numbers of people getting together over the extended platinum jubilee weekend. However, scientists who have been monitoring the Covid situation closely have been predicting an uptick for a while now. Two new subvariants - BA.4 and BA.5 - of the Omicron variant have been increasing their share of UK infections for several weeks. Last week they finally overtook the BA.2 version of Omicron responsible for the most recent wave that the UK experienced, in March and April.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/23/britain-covid-wave-pandemic-matt-hancock-world-vaccinated>

France is facing a new COVID-19 wave - French vaccination chief

France is facing a new wave of COVID-19 infections fuelled by new variants of the disease, French vaccination chief Alain Fischer said on Wednesday, as daily new cases reached an almost two-month peak the day before at more than 95,000. Speaking on France 2 television, he said there was no

doubt there was once again an upsurge of the pandemic in the country, adding he was personally in favour of reinstating mandatory face mask wearing on public transport. The question is: 'what intensity does this wave have?'" Fischer said. Other European countries, especially Portugal, are also seeing an increase, due two new Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5, which, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, are likely to become dominant in the region.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-is-facing-new-covid-19-wave-french-vaccination-chief-2022-06-22/>

New Lockdown

Macau extends COVID shutdown of city, casinos stay open

Macau extended its COVID-19 restrictions including the closure of bars, cinemas, hair salons and outdoor parks from Thursday, its chief executive said as the world's biggest gambling hub battles to curb a rise in locally transmitted cases. Casinos are allowed to remain open while theatres, fitness centres, and leisure facilities must halt operations from 5 p.m. local time on Thursday, Ho Iat Seng said in a statement on the government's website.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/macau-extends-covid-shutdown-city-casinos-stay-open-2022-06-23/>