

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Norway Was a Pandemic Success. Then It Spent Two Years Studying Its Failures.

If you could have flown anywhere in the world in 2019 to ride out a hypothetical pandemic, you probably wouldn't have picked Norway. In fact, when a group of distinguished health experts gathered that year to rank hundreds of countries based on their pandemic readiness, they put Norway in 16th place. They were quickly proven wrong. It turned out that few places outperformed expectations more than Norway. Not long ago, the World Health Organization published mortality stats from the past two years, which showed that nearly every country's excess death count spiked during the pandemic. Norway's barely moved. The Norwegians had pulled off the closest thing possible to an optimal response to the most vexing problems that Covid-19 presented. So how did they do it? As it happens, the Norwegians also wanted to know.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/norway-covid-pandemic-commission-11656453506>

China Quarantine Cut Just First Step in Ending Global Isolation

China cut in half the length of time inbound travelers must spend in quarantine, making it easier for citizens to return and foreign companies to tend to business in the world's second-largest economy after two-and-a-half years of isolation. Experts on topics from economics to health to business welcomed the move, though they said the reduction to 10 days of quarantine, from as long as three weeks previously, was just a first step toward reintegrating with the world. Health leaders in China said it wasn't a major policy change, but a subtle adjustment as the virus itself continues to mutate.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-28/what-experts-say-about-china-s-seismic-covid-quarantine-shift>

Video: The Dance School Lifting Up Kenya's Lost Girls of Covid

On this episode of "The Pay Check," Bloomberg Digital Originals explores how closed schools and economic hardship created a crisis for young women and girls in Kenya, and how an after-school program in Nairobi's biggest informal settlement is creating a safe haven for some of them.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-29/video-the-dance-school-lifting-up-kenya-s-lost-girls-of-covid>

Searches for overseas flights surge after China shortens quarantine

Online searches for air tickets on international routes with China surged after Beijing unexpectedly said it would slash COVID-19 quarantine norms, travel platforms said on Wednesday, a sign of pent-up demand after two years of tough curbs.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/travel/news/searches-for-overseas-flights-surge-after-china-shortens-quarantine/ar-AAYZhdi>

China's easing COVID curbs spark travel inquiry surge, and caution

Online searches for Chinese airline tickets on domestic and international routes surged on Wednesday, after Beijing said it would slash COVID-19 quarantine requirements and made changes to a state-mandated mobile app used for local travel. The unexpected moves mark a significant easing of rigid curbs that have severely curtailed travel and battered China's economy, although tough measures remain in place including a scarcity of international flights, and many social media users voiced caution.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/searches-overseas-flights-surge-after-china-shortens-quarantine-2022-06-29/>

Widespread relief for Shanghai's restaurant sector as dine-in resumes

Restaurants and eateries in China's largest city Shanghai begun reopening their doors to diners on Wednesday, bringing widespread relief to an industry that was badly hit by the city's two month COVID-19 lockdown. Large chains such as hot pot brand Haidilao, fine dining establishments and family owned eateries had started scrubbing tableware and getting uniforms laundered since Saturday when authorities announced the curbs were lifting, a month after the city's lockdown eased on June 1.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/widespread-relief-shanghais-restaurant-sector-dine-in-resumes-2022-06-29/>

COVID can't break South Africa's love affair with shopping malls

With two days to go until opening to the public, workers rush to put the finishing touches on the Kwena Square shopping complex, a shiny \$13 million sign that South Africans are defying the global "retail apocalypse". Not even COVID-19 could separate them from their beloved malls. "I love going to the mall with my daughter and my grandkids," said 54-year-old Kowie Erasmus, who's eagerly awaiting Friday's grand opening of Johannesburg's Kwena Square, which broke ground at the height of the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/covid-cant-break-south-africas-love-affair-with-shopping-malls-2022-06-29/>

Japan May retail sales rise faster than expected as COVID curbs ease

Japanese retail sales rose for a third straight month in May, reinforcing views that strong consumption will lead an economic rebound this quarter, although rising inflation poses a risk to household spending for the rest of 2022. Retail sales rose 3.6% in May from a year earlier, government data showed on Wednesday, slightly higher than the median market forecast for a 3.3% gain. It followed an upwardly revised 3.1% increase in April and marked the third month of advancement since March, when the government lifted all coronavirus restrictions on face-to-face services.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/japan-may-retail-sales-rise-faster-than-expected-covid-curbs-ease-2022-06-29/>

The Best and Worst Places to Be as World Enters Next Covid Phase

Since November 2020, Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking has tracked the best and worst places to be during the pandemic, using a range of datapoints to capture a monthly snapshot of how the world's biggest economies were handling this once-in-a-generation health crisis. Twenty editions in, the virus has become something most countries are living with. After nearly two years of fluctuation—during which the top and bottom of the Ranking shifted as the pandemic shape-changed—places have largely settled into their permanent positions, drawing the project to a natural close. June, 2022 will be our last update. In a reflection of how far we've come since the coronavirus first emerged in central China, this month's top ranked are those most effectively putting the pandemic in the rearview mirror, with the fewest scars. They've been able to reopen their borders and economies without a substantial spike in deaths.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/covid-resilience-ranking/?srnd=premium-uk>

China Cuts Covid Quarantine to 10 Days for Travelers and Close Contacts

China reduced quarantine times for inbound travelers by half, the biggest shift yet in a Covid-19 policy that has left the world's second-largest economy isolated as it continues to try and eliminate the virus. Travelers will now only need to spend seven days in a quarantine facility, and then monitor their health at home for a further three days, according to a revised government protocol released Tuesday by China's National Health Commission. That's down from 14 days hotel quarantine in many parts of China currently, and as many as 21 days of isolation in the past. The change, which still leaves China an outlier in a world that has mostly adjusted to living with the virus, comes after Beijing and Shanghai said they had no new locally-transmitted Covid infections on Monday, for the first time since February, following months of bruising curbs.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-28/china-cuts-quarantine-in-half-for-travelers-and-close-contacts>

Exit Strategies

Ireland puts army on standby to help at Dublin airport amid COVID surge

Ireland agreed on Tuesday to put the army on standby to help with security at Dublin airport should staffing be hit by a resurgence of COVID-19 during the rest of the busy summer travel period. Ireland's main airport is one of many around Europe that has struggled to hire staff fast enough to deal with a sharp rebound in travel, although it has had relatively few issues since more than 1,000 passengers missed their flights in a single day last month

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ireland-puts-army-standby-help-dublin-airport-amid-covid-surge-2022-06-28/>

EU chief can't find texts with Pfizer chief on COVID-19 vaccine deal

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen is no longer in possession of text messages that she exchanged with Pfizer chief Albert Bourla to seal a COVID-19 vaccine deal, the Commission said in a letter published on Wednesday. In an interview in April 2021, von der Leyen revealed she had exchanged texts with Bourla for a month when they were negotiating a massive vaccine contract. But in response to a public access request by a journalist because of the importance of the deal, the Commission did not share the texts, triggering accusations of maladministration by the EU's ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly. "The Commission can confirm that the search undertaken by the President's cabinet for relevant text messages corresponding to the request for access to documents has not yielded any results," the EU justice commissioner Vera Jourova said in the letter to the ombudsman, an EU watchdog.

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/article-710702>

Which COVID-19 Vaccine Should Your Young Kid Get? That Depends, Doctors Say

COVID-19 vaccines for some of the youngest children in the U.S. are now rolling out, and parents are faced with a new question: Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech? Both of the mRNA shots—which are now authorized for kids ages 6 months and up—are effective at preventing severe illness, and they both help prevent symptomatic infections. They offer vital protection in this age group, even for kids who have already recovered from COVID-19. The vaccines “provide protection against a broader variety of variants than [a previous] infection, which generally provides protection mostly against the variant that you had,” says Dr. Alissa Kahn, a pediatric hematologist and oncologist in Paterson, N.J.

<https://time.com/6190753/covid-19-vaccine-kids-pfizer-or-moderna/>

Kids' vaccines are 'a game changer,' experts say—here's what else needs to happen to end the Covid pandemic

For months, the country has been waiting on a pandemic turning point — and it might be here, in the form of kids under age 5 becoming eligible for Covid vaccines. Just don't expect it to make Covid disappear overnight, experts say. Covid vaccines for small children are “absolutely a game changer for some families,” Andrew Noymer, an associate professor of population health and disease prevention at the University of California, Irvine, tells CNBC Make It. “[But] this isn't the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle, unfortunately.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/28/how-covid-vaccines-for-kids-under-5-can-help-end-the-pandemic-experts.html>

Defectors in Seoul send balloons carrying medicine to COVID-19-struck North Korea

A North Korean defector group in Seoul claimed on Tuesday to have launched air balloons carrying medical supplies near the inter-Korean border. The Fighters for Free North Korea, an activist group of North Korean defectors who send anti-propaganda leaflets across the border, said they flew 20 air balloons carrying 50,000 pain relief pills, 30,000 vitamin C and 20,000 N-95 masks. Dispatching unauthorized materials at the border is against the law in South Korea.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/defectors-sends-balloons-carrying-medicine-to-north-korea-defying-law-in-so>

[uth/ar-AAZ03wn](#)

China's Xi says COVID strategy is 'correct and effective'

Chinese president Xi Jinping said the ruling Communist Party's strategy to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic was "correct and effective" and should be firmly adhered to, the official news agency, Xinhua, said on Wednesday. China, with its large population, would have suffered "unimaginable consequences" had it adopted a strategy of "lying flat", the agency quoted Xi as saying during a visit on Tuesday to the central city of Wuhan where the virus was first reported.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-xi-says-covid-strategy-is-correct-effective-2022-06-29/>

Taiwan to receive first doses of Novavax COVID vaccine this week

Taiwan will take delivery of its first doses of the Novavax Inc COVID-19 vaccine this week, received under the COVAX sharing scheme, the government said on Wednesday. Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Centre said the 504,000 doses would arrive on Thursday at Taipei's main international airport. Taiwan is scheduled to receive 2.268 million doses of the Novavax vaccine in batches this year through the COVAX mechanism, it added.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/taiwan-receive-first-doses-novavax-covid-vaccine-this-week-2022-06-29/>

China removes indication of travel through COVID-hit cities on mobile app

A state-mandated Chinese mobile app that shows whether or not an individual has travelled in a city with COVID-affected areas will no longer specify such travel history, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said on Wednesday. The asterisk mark indicating an individual has travelled in a city with COVID-19 cases will no longer appear on the app as part of efforts to make domestic travel more convenient, the ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-removes-indication-travel-through-covid-hit-cities-mobile-app-2022-06-29/>

Norway recommends booster COVID shot to those aged 75 and older

Norway recommends a booster COVID-19 vaccine dose to those who are 75 years and older in response to a rising number of cases, the government said on Wednesday. Local municipalities should also plan to be able to offer a booster jab, which for most people would mean a fourth shot, to citizens from 65 years and up and to people with an underlying disease, from Sept, 1, it added.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-recommends-booster-covid-shot-those-aged-75-older-2022-06-29/>

Eli Lilly to supply additional doses of COVID antibody drug to U.S.

Eli Lilly and Co said on Wednesday it will supply additional doses of its COVID-19 antibody drug to the U.S. government in order to meet demand through late August. As per the modified supply agreement with the government, Lilly will provide an additional 150,000 doses of bebtelovimab for about \$275 million. The drug has also shown effectiveness against the Omicron variant. The FDA authorized the drug earlier this year for emergency use in patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of progression to severe disease, including hospitalization or death.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eli-lilly-supply-additional-doses-covid-antibody-drug-us-2022-06-29/>

Partisan Exits

Elmo gets coronavirus shot, sparks another Muppet feud with Ted Cruz

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) shared the clip on Twitter — and blasted the popular PBS/HBO children's show for allowing Elmo to "aggressively advocate for vaccinating children UNDER 5." He added: "You cite ZERO scientific evidence for this." The internet was quickly filled with comments on Cruz vs. Elmo, with one person tweeting: "I'm here for the right-wing meltdown because a puppet got vaccinated."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/29/ted-cruz-elmo-sesame-street-covid-vaccine/>

Covid-19: Paris court rules French govt did not stock enough masks in 2020

A Paris court ruled on Tuesday that the French government failed to sufficiently stock up on surgical masks at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and prevent the virus from spreading. The ruling came as the number of registered infections with coronavirus variants rises sharply. It wasn't immediately clear if the decision will lead to any specific sanctions for the government. Officials across France are contemplating new measures, including an indoor mask mandate in some cities, to curb the spread of the virus but keep the economy open amid the summer tourism season.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-france-paris-pandemics-05815a2e1122926a778073d6d19af32c>

Delayed public inquiry into UK's Covid-19 response opens

The delayed public inquiry into the UK's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic has been launched after Boris Johnson accepted calls to widen the terms of reference to consider its unequal impact on minority-ethnic people, on children and on mental health. The inquiry chair, Heather Hallett, and her team of 12 QCs have begun work under the terms of the Inquiries Act, which makes it an offence to destroy or tamper with evidence. She will be joined by two panellists to be appointed by Johnson, although she had argued for presiding alone. The launch of what is expected to be one of the largest public inquiries conducted in the UK comes days after campaigners for the bereaved threatened legal action against the government over the delay to the prime minister's commitment to set the inquiry up in spring 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/28/delayed-public-inquiry-into-uks-covid-19-response-opens>

Scientific Viewpoint

Doctors treat first UK patient in Covid 'super donor' blood trial

Doctors have treated the first UK patient in a reopened clinical trial that will explore whether blood plasma from "super donors" can help fight Covid in those with weakened immune systems. Super donors produce exceptionally high levels of antibodies after infection and vaccination, and there are hopes that transfusions of their blood plasma can wipe out the virus in people whose own immune systems are compromised. While two landmark trials known as Recovery and Remap-Cap found that convalescent plasma from people who recovered from Covid did not benefit other patients, a closer look at the Remap-Cap data showed that plasma with the highest levels of antibodies might help the immunosuppressed. The findings prompted doctors to reopen the plasma arm of the Remap-Cap trial to investigate specifically whether donated plasma with extremely high levels of antibodies can save the lives of people with weakened immune systems and reduce the amount of time they spend in intensive care.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/30/doctors-treat-first-uk-patient-covid-super-donor-blood-trial-antibodies>

How the UK's rising Covid cases compare to other countries

The UK is facing its fifth wave of Covid infections, experts have warned, as cases hit 1.8m in the latest weekly figures, a 23 per cent climb week-on-week. More worryingly, hospital admissions have increased 31 per cent, climbing at a higher rate than the last Omicron revival back in March.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-cases-uk-compared-country-b2112163.html>

Coronavirus vaccines should be updated for fall, FDA advisers say

It's time to update coronavirus vaccines to better match the variants currently driving the pandemic, outside experts told the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday. The independent scientists and physicians endorsed an updated omicron vaccine by a 19-2 vote. Despite the overwhelming agreement that it is time to change the vaccine, many experts said they felt frustrated and hamstrung by the need to make a decision quickly to prepare for fall with limited data.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/06/28/covid-vaccine-fall-update-booster/>

BioNTech, Pfizer to start testing universal vaccine for coronaviruses

Germany's BioNTech, Pfizer's partner in COVID-19 vaccines, said the two companies would start tests on humans of next-generation shots that protect against a wide variety of coronaviruses in the second half of the year. Their experimental work on shots that go beyond the current approach include T-cell-enhancing shots, designed to primarily protect against severe disease if the virus becomes more dangerous, and pan-coronavirus shots that protect against the broader family of viruses and its mutations.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/biontech-pfizer-starting-testing-universal-coronavirus-vaccine-h2-2022-06-29/>

S.Korea approves first domestically developed COVID vaccine

South Korea approved its first domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine, manufactured by SK bioscience Co Ltd, for general public use following positive clinical data, authorities said on Wednesday. The SKYCovione vaccine was authorised for a two-dose regimen on people aged 18 or older, with shots given four weeks apart, according to the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety. In a phase III clinical trial of 4,037 adults, SKYCovione induced neutralizing antibody responses against the SARS-CoV-2 parental strain, SK bioscience said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/skorea-approves-first-domestically-developed-covid-vaccine-2022-06-29/>

U.S. FDA advisers recommend change to COVID vaccine composition for fall

Advisers to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday recommended a change in the design of COVID-19 booster shots this fall in order to combat more recently circulating variants of the coronavirus. The FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee voted 19-2 that the next wave of COVID booster shots should include a component that targets the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-advisers-meet-discuss-design-future-covid-vaccines-2022-06-28/>

Covid: Face masks brought back at Nottinghamshire hospital sites

Face masks have been reintroduced at some Nottinghamshire hospitals just two weeks after they were dropped. Mask policy had been relaxed in all but high-risk areas of Sherwood Forest Hospitals' three sites as part of a phased return to pre-pandemic policies. But a rise in covid cases among staff and patients at King's Mill, Newark and Mansfield Community hospitals has led to the decision being reversed. Bosses said they would keep face mask and visiting requirements under review.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-61983190>

FDA advisers call for Omicron update for COVID boosters

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) outside advisory committee today recommended that new booster shot versions include an Omicron variant component, as newer subvariants expand their footprint and the nation faces an uncertain fall and winter with the virus. In its weekly update today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said the proportion of BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants increased sharply last week, mainly due to BA.5.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/06/fda-advisers-call-omicron-update-covid-boosters>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Bristol covid latest as cases spike in two areas

Bristol is not immune to this rise in covid cases, and two areas in particular are now above 400 cases per 100,000 people: Stapleton (423.8) and Downend South (512). These numbers are for the seven days ending June 23, the most recent date for which data is available, and are likely to have

increased further in the days since. Most of central Bristol is between 100 and 199 cases per 100,000 people during the same time period, while the city's suburbs and outer areas are slightly higher at between 200 and 399 cases per 100,000 people. The areas with the lowest case rates are Hengrove (98.9 per 100,000), Lawrence Weston (96.5 per 100,000), Barton Hill (83.6 per 100,000), and Lockleaze (78.5 per 100,000).

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/health/bristol-covid-latest-cases-spike-7271733>

U.S. Agrees to Pay \$3.2 Billion for More Pfizer Covid Vaccines

The Biden administration has agreed to pay \$3.2 billion for 105 million doses of Pfizer Inc.'s Covid-19 vaccine. The deal would provide supplies for the federal government's planned fall booster campaign, which administration officials are devising to blunt a potential wave in cases, possibly driven by variants of the Omicron strain now spreading across the U.S. Under the deal, the federal government would have the option to buy 195 million additional doses, the Health and Human Services Department said Wednesday. Pfizer, which developed and makes the vaccine with partner BioNTech SE, would make whatever type of vaccine federal health regulators decide should be featured in the fall campaign.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-agrees-to-pay-3-2-billion-for-more-pfizer-covid-vaccines-11656535593>

Quebec reports uptick in COVID-19 hospitalizations amid rise of new variants nationwide

Quebec's public health director Dr. Luc Boileau will be holding a news conference at 11:30 a.m. today, as the province sees an uptick in hospitalizations related to COVID-19. On Tuesday, the province reported 1,226 hospitalizations — an increase of 113 since Friday — and 36 people in intensive care. It also reported five more deaths.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/quebec-reports-uptick-in-covid-19-hospitalizations-amid-rise-of-new-variant-s-nationwide/ar-AAYZPnq>

Hong Kong daily COVID cases rise above 2000, highest since April

Hong Kong reported more than 2,000 new coronavirus infections on Wednesday, the highest since April, as daily COVID-19 cases rise ahead of celebrations to mark the city's 25th anniversary of its handover to China.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-daily-covid-cases-rise-above-2000-highest-since-april-2022-06-29/>

Scores of Glastonbury revellers test positive for COVID as experts warn of fifth wave

A number of Glastonbury Festival revellers have reported testing positive for COVID-19 in the days after the music event. An estimated 200,000 music fans flocked to Worthy Farm in east Somerset for the 37th iteration of Glastonbury last week. Crowds gathered to watch headliners Billie Eilish, Paul McCartney and Kendrick Lamar along with scores of other artists for the world's biggest outdoor festival. Following three years of cancellations due to COVID restrictions, tens of thousands of music fans did not hold back as they soaked up their favourite artists, shoulder to shoulder with other fans. But the fun was soon over after many revellers took to Twitter to report bringing COVID-19 home with them.

<https://news.sky.com/story/scores-of-glastonbury-revellers-test-positive-for-covid-as-experts-warn-of-fifth-wave-12642755>