

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

8th Jul 2022

Lockdown Exit

China Covid News: Shanghai Virus Outbreak Persists as Shandong Cases Jump

Shanghai reported more coronavirus cases, with concerns that persistent transmission fueling fears China's financial hub may ramp up movement restrictions, while cases flared in the eastern province of Shandong. Shanghai announced 45 new local infections for Thursday, with all detected in quarantine. This week, the city rolled out mass testing of 10 districts and parts of two others -- out of the financial hub's total of 16 -- in order to weed out transmission. Residents across all areas are already required to get tested every weekend until the end of this month following a bruising two-month lockdown.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-08/shanghai-virus-outbreak-persists-as-shandong-infections-jump>

Covid-19 vaccines for young kids could have been OK'd sooner

Until mid-June, 1 in 13 persons living in the United States — that's all children age 5 and younger — weren't eligible to get Covid-19 vaccines. On June 17, the Food and Drug Administration finally authorized the use of the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, based largely on advice from a panel of outside experts. It could have — and should have — made it possible for young children to be vaccinated much sooner.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/07/06/fda-owes-parents-explanation-modernas-delayed-covid-19-vaccine-authorization/>

Study finds growing Covid vaccine acceptance across world

Covid-19 vaccine acceptance across the world increased by about 4 per cent between 2020 and 2021, according to a new study whose findings could help improve the coverage of future immunisation drives. The research, published in Nature Communications, studied Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy globally in June 2021 in over 23,000 individuals across 23 countries. Researchers, including those from City University of New York in the US, found that more than three-quarters of respondents reported vaccine acceptance, up from 71.5 per cent the previous year.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/covid-vaccine-hesitancy-acceptance-study-b2117833.html>

Norwegian Cruise scraps COVID testing for select voyages

Passengers boarding Norwegian Cruise Line ships won't have to take COVID-19 tests from next month unless required by local law, the U.S. cruise operator said on Wednesday as the crucial summer sailing season gathers steam. Cruises setting sail from the United States, Canada or Greece's Piraeus will still require pre-cruise COVID testing, and all of the company's guests aged 12 and above have to be fully vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/norwegian-cruise-scraps-covid-testing-select-voyages-2022-07-06/>

Yorkshire nurse says scrapping special Covid sick pay for NHS staff is 'incomprehensible'

The Government's decision to cut enhanced Covid-related sick pay and special leave for NHS workers in England has been called "incomprehensible" by a Yorkshire nurse suffering with Long Covid.

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/health/yorkshire-nurse-says-scrapping-of-special-covid-leave-and-sick-pay-is-incomprehensible-3758274>

COVID-19: New wave of Omicron mutations spreading across Europe, EU Medicines

Agency warns

A new wave of Covid-19 is sweeping across Europe driven by Omicron mutations, an EU Medicines Agency official has warned. Head of vaccines at the agency, Marco Cavaleri, has said "the increase in transmission among older age groups is starting to translate into severe disease". The increase in the number of people testing positive is being driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 mutations of the Omicron variant. In April, the EMA advised people aged over 80 to get a second vaccine booster. Now, they recommend people aged between 60-79 and medically vulnerable of any age to get the booster.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-new-wave-of-omicron-mutations-spreading-across-europe-eu-medicines-agency-warns-12647721>

NHS staff criticise 'incomprehensible' scrapping of special Covid leave

Covid-related absences had been fully paid for all NHS workers, regardless of their length of service. However from July 7 staff terms and conditions in coronavirus workforce guidance will be withdrawn, meaning the immediate end to sick pay for new episodes of Covid-19 sickness, according to the Royal College of Nursing, and access to special leave for the purposes of self-isolation will also be withdrawn.

<https://www.peebleshirenews.com/news/20261462.nhs-staff-criticise-incomprehensible-scrapping-special-covid-leave/>

Beijing Rolls Out China's First Ever Covid Vaccine Mandate

The city will require live performances, entertainment venues such as movie theaters, museums and gyms, as well as training and tutoring locations, to restrict entry to people who are vaccinated, Li Ang, deputy director at the Beijing Municipal Health Commission, told reporters at a briefing Wednesday. The requirement will also apply to medical staff, people working in community service operations, home furnishing operators, express delivery providers and conference attendees. They'll need to have received a booster shot to continue as normal, Li said. There will be exemptions for people who don't qualify for vaccination.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-06/beijing-rolls-out-china-s-first-ever-covid-vaccine-mandate>

Exit Strategies

COVID and bust: China's private health system hurt by tough coronavirus controls

On March 24, a court in the central Chinese city of Fuyang announced that a \$1.5 billion hospital built just four years earlier had filed for bankruptcy because it was unable to pay its debts. For most of the last two years, the Fuyang Minsheng Hospital had been fully involved in mass coronavirus vaccination and testing programmes in the city, training almost 100 staff to perform throat swabs and setting up mobile vaccination facilities to go to schools and workplaces, at the order of city officials. The diversion of resources into what China calls its 'zero-COVID' approach to contain and eliminate the virus forced the hospital to suspend many services it relied upon for revenue, sealing its financial failure.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/covid-bust-chinas-private-health-system-hurt-by-tough-coronavirus-controls-2022-07-06/>

Macau shuts popular shopping mall in race to contain COVID outbreak

Macau shut down a popular shopping mall adjacent to MGM China's casino resort on the city's main peninsula after several COVID-19 infections were found, as authorities raced to the biggest outbreak yet in the world's biggest gambling hub. One Central shopping mall will be shut for one week, while more than a dozen other zones or buildings, have also been ordered to close, authorities said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/macau-shuts-popular-shopping-mall-race-contain-covid-outbreak-2022-07-07/>

Covid-19: Bristol hospital trust brings back mask wearing

In Bristol, a city hospital trust has re-introduced mask-wearing after a rise in the number of Covid-19

cases. North Bristol NHS Trust, which runs Southmead Hospital, says the measure applies to staff, patients and visitors in clinical areas. Two Gloucestershire Hospitals have also re-introduced masks for visitors, as have health boards that operate in Somerset and Wiltshire. The latest UK figures show an estimated 2.3 million people have the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-62070912>

Australians over 30 to be offered fourth dose of Covid vaccine

Australians over 30 will be offered a fourth dose of Covid vaccine from Monday, as health authorities battle a winter wave of Omicron cases. An additional booster shot for people aged over 50 has been “highly recommended” by Australia’s technical advisory group on immunisation, Atagi, but the federal government is still urging millions of eligible Australians who have not yet had their third dose to roll up their sleeves. Atagi has also called for greater use of face masks, warning more vaccine doses may only play a “limited” role in reducing hospital admissions and case numbers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jul/07/australians-over-30-to-be-offered-fourth-dose-of-covid-vaccine>

Hospital trusts bring face masks back after Covid cases rise

Face masks have been reintroduced at some hospitals in Derbyshire after a spike in Covid patients. Mandatory face masks were dropped in non-clinical areas at the Royal Derby and Chesterfield hospitals last month. However, they have now been brought back by the two trusts that run the hospitals. There are 111 Covid-19 patients at the Royal Derby Hospital - one in intensive care - and 44 patients with Covid at Chesterfield Royal Hospital.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-62076272>

Hong Kong Suspends Its Covid Flight Ban Policy

Hong Kong will stop banning routes for airlines that bring in too many passengers with Covid-19, suspending a policy that has been heavily criticized by businesses and travelers for snarling plans and leaving people stranded. The flight ban was one of many strict Covid-control policies that have left the Asian financial center more isolated from a world that is moving on from pandemic restrictions. Other travel-detering controls including long hotel quarantines and tough testing requirements for boarding flights will remain in place, but the suspension of the flight ban beginning Thursday removes a hurdle.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-suspends-its-covid-flight-ban-policy-11657186607?mod=hp_lead_pos13

Australia expands fourth COVID dose rollout amid fresh Omicron threat

Australia said on Thursday it would expand the rollout of the fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccines from next week as it battles a steady rise in hospital admissions fuelled by the highly transmissible new Omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5. The new subvariants have now become the dominant coronavirus strains in several countries, with pandemic experts warning they could lead to more hospitalisations and deaths because they spread more quickly than other coronavirus variants.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-seeks-expand-fourth-covid-dose-eligibility-amid-fresh-omicron-threat-2022-07-07/>

Beijing mandates COVID vaccines to enter some public spaces

The Chinese capital has issued a mandate requiring people to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination before they can enter some public spaces including gyms, museums and libraries, drawing concern from city residents over the sudden policy announcement and its impact on their daily lives. The health app that shows a person’s latest PCR test results has been updated to make it easier to also access their vaccination status, according to Li Ang, a spokesperson for Beijing’s municipal health commission.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-beijing-taiwan-government-and-politics-24c4f996714da508032e5f96a3d61a4d>

Hong Kong's Hotel Quarantine System Buckles Under China Demand

The non-resident rule has also prompted Chinese travelers to use Hong Kong as a gateway to the mainland, where international flight connections are scarce as President Xi Jinping tries to shut out the virus. Monthly mainland Chinese arrivals at Hong Kong airport jumped nearly 11,000% between April and June to 30,222 -- accounting for one-third of airport passengers last month. In that environment, travelers are struggling to book quarantine rooms, scalpers are entering the market and properties have raised their own prices. Foreign business chambers last month told the Liaison Office, Beijing's main body overseeing Hong Kong, the city must end quarantine to remain a finance hub, according to multiple people familiar with the matter.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-07/hong-kong-s-hotel-quarantine-system-buckles-under-demand-from-china-arrivals>

Partisan Exits

Medical office settles probe over asking workers for relatives' COVID status

A Florida medical practice has agreed to stop asking its employees to provide their family members' COVID-19 test results to settle an investigation by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which says the practice is illegal. The EEOC on Wednesday said Brandon Dermatology in Tampa will also review its COVID-19 policies and provide back pay or restore leave time to affected workers. The commission said that asking for employees' relatives' COVID test results violates the federal Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), which prohibits employers from asking employees medical questions about family members.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/medical-office-settles-probe-over-asking-workers-relatives-covid-status-2022-07-06/>

Scientific Viewpoint

'All-in-one' coronavirus vaccine gets backing from CEPI

A new type of vaccine - which could provide broad protection against a variety of SARS-like betacoronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2 variants - has received backing of up to \$30m from CEPI.

<https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2022/07/07/all-in-one-coronavirus-vaccine-gets-backing-from-cepi>

COVID-19 vaccination with bacterial peptide conjugated to receptor-binding domain elicits potent immune response

In a recent study published in the iScience journal, researchers assessed the efficiency of immunization with a bacterial peptide conjugated to the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) receptor-binding domain against SARS-CoV-2 infection. Overall, the study findings showed that the CPD-RBD vaccination elicited a potent immune response and also protected against the severe symptoms associated with COVID-19.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220706/COVID-19-vaccination-with-bacterial-peptide-conjugated-to-receptor-binding-domain-elicits-potent-immune-response.aspx>

Brii Bio introduces Covid-19 combination therapy in China

Brii Biosciences and TSB Therapeutics have commercially launched a long-acting neutralising antibody therapy combination, amubarvimab/romlusevimab, for Covid-19 in China. The two non-competing SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal neutralising antibodies, amubarvimab and romlusevimab are obtained from convalesced Covid-19 patients. The company developed these antibodies in partnership with Tsinghua University and the 3rd People's Hospital of Shenzhen.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/brii-bio-combination-therapy-china/>

Exothera to support process development of Turkish company's COVID-19 vaccine

Turkey based Vaccizone has chosen Belgian CDMO, Exothera, to fast-track process development of its COVID-19 vaccine for European clinical trials.

<https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2022/07/07/exothera-to-support-process-development-of-turkish-company-s-covid-19-vaccine>

COVID-19 and brain damage explained

The authors suggested that antibody-triggered cytotoxicity targeting the endothelial cells probably led to neuroinflammation, vascular leakage, platelet aggregation, and neuronal damage. Overall, the study findings illustrated that immune complexes accompanying complement activation damaging the microvasculature were the primary cause of blood-brain barrier collapse, microthromboses, perivascular inflammation, and neuronal damage in SARS-CoV-2 patients. The authors proposed that these events largely influenced the neurological symptoms found in acute COVID-19 and probably in long-COVID. Importantly, the current findings indicated the need for therapeutic modalities targeting the development of the immune complex.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220707/COVID-19-and-brain-damage-explained.aspx>

Africa CDC says it has signed MOU with Pfizer for COVID pill

Africa's top public health body said on Thursday it had signed a memorandum of understanding with Pfizer for countries on the continent to receive supplies of the Paxlovid pill to treat COVID-19. Data from a mid-to-late stage study in November last year showed the antiviral medication was nearly 90% effective in preventing hospitalisations and deaths compared to a placebo, in adults at high risk of severe illness.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/africa-cdc-says-it-has-signed-mou-with-pfizer-covid-pill-2022-07-07/>

Wastewater study technique finds virus variants sooner; many patients are using meds affected by Paxlovid

With just a very small amount of raw sewage and a new analysis technique, researchers can determine the genetic mixture of SARS-CoV-2 variants in the community and detect new variants up to 14 days before they start showing up on patients' nasal swabs, according to a new report. Tests of a new method for wastewater genomic surveillance at the University of California, San Diego campus from November 2020 to September 2021 detected the Epsilon, Alpha and Delta variants "earlier and more consistently than clinical samples, and identified multiple instances of virus spread" that were not detected with traditional monitoring, researchers reported on Thursday in Nature.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/wastewater-study-technique-finds-virus-variants-sooner-many-patients-are-using-2022-07-07/>

New Covid variants threaten China's mRNA vaccine hopes

China is making progress in efforts to develop a homegrown messenger RNA Covid-19 vaccine, but experts warn that it risks being outpaced by rapid mutations of the Omicron coronavirus variant. Beijing's refusal to approve foreign jabs, and the limited effectiveness of the more traditional inactivated vaccines available from domestic companies, mean an mRNA vaccine is widely seen as essential to any shift away from President Xi Jinping's economically costly zero-Covid policy.

<https://www.ft.com/content/1ce91ee9-5e74-40db-80ec-fc2cbe97533d>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Coronavirus: Hong Kong's daily tally surpasses 3,000 as city reveals new arrangements for travellers heading to mainland China

Hong Kong has recorded more than 3,000 new coronavirus infections, the highest daily figure since April 5, as authorities revealed plans to allow more people to travel to mainland China through a special corridor to Shenzhen. Health authorities on Thursday reported 3,028 Covid-19 cases, 172 of which were imported, and one virus-related death. The city's overall coronavirus tally currently

stands at 1,261,868 cases, with 9,407 fatalities.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/coronavirus-hong-kong-s-daily-tally-surpasses-3-000-as-city-reveals-new-arrangements-for-travellers-heading-to-mainland-china/ar-AAZj9xZ>

NZ Defence Force, medical team deployed to Niue after COVID-19 outbreak

New Zealand Defence Force said on Wednesday it had flown a team of civilian doctors, nurses and defence force personnel along with personal protective gear to tiny Pacific island Niue to help with the country's COVID-19 outbreak. Niue, a self-governing state that is in free association with New Zealand, had kept COVID out of the community having largely closed its borders in the early days of the pandemic. However, following its first quarantine-free flight on June 27 a number of passengers tested positive for COVID.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nz-defence-force-medical-team-deployed-niue-after-covid-19-outbreak-2022-07-06/>

Millions tested in Shanghai as China grapples COVID resurgence

Millions of people in Shanghai queued for a third day of mass COVID-19 testing on Thursday as authorities in several Chinese cities scrambled to stamp out new outbreaks that have rekindled worries about growth in the world's second-largest economy. Unless local officials succeed in preventing the virus from spreading, they could be compelled to invoke prolonged, major restrictions on residents' movement, under China's "dynamic zero COVID" strategy.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-back-alert-china-battles-covid-outbreaks-2022-07-07/>

Iraq sees rebound in Covid-19 infections as nation records 4,819 cases

Iraq is witnessing a noticeable rebound in the Covid-19 infections as the country's Health Ministry reported 4,819 new cases, the highest daily hike since February 8. The newly registered cases raised the nationwide caseload to 2,369,272, while the death toll from the virus rose by two to 25,249, Xinhua news agency reported, citing a statement by the ministry.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/iraq-sees-rebound-in-covid-19-infections-as-nation-records-4-819-cases-122070700085_1.html

Experts warn of new COVID-19 wave

Türkiye may face a new wave of COVID infections as the actual number of coronavirus infections is more than detected, experts have warned. As people have stopped wearing face masks while traveling on public transport or indoor spaces, it has triggered the recent spike in coronavirus cases, the experts said. Earlier this week, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca reported that the number of virus cases increased from 26,635 between June 20 and 26 to 57,113 between June 27 and July 3. Last week 25 people died from COVID-19, up from 17 fatalities due to the pandemic in the previous week.

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/experts-warn-of-new-covid-19-wave-175133>

Health experts warn Covid-19 wave to peak next week

Health experts have warned that the peak of the current wave of Covid-19 is expected next week. Professor of Immunology in DCU Christine Loscher said there are two-to-three times more positive cases than are being reported via PCR and antigen tests. She said the pattern is that subvariants have arisen every three months and that Ireland will move on from BA.4 and BA.5 variants, but it is unknown if the next variant will be mild or not. Speaking on RTÉ's Today with Claire Byrne, Prof Loscher added that there are a lot of unknowns but a decision on the vaccine strategy is a priority.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2022/0707/1308932-covid-wave/>

New West Australian COVID-19 wave expected, with cases likely to exceed 10,000, says state's Chief Health Officer

The state's Chief Health Officer has warned West Australians to expect another "significant wave" of

COVID-19 infections within the next six weeks. While it was hard to predict what the next outbreak would look like, Andy Robertson said Western Australia could expect to see daily COVID-19 cases mirror that of previous outbreaks. "In our previous peaks, we had an initial peak of around 10 [thousand], and then a further peak of around 17 [thousand], so it's probably going to be in that sort of ball park," Dr Robertson told ABC Radio Perth .

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-07/wa-to-expect-new-covid-19-wave-to-affect-thousands/101218696>

Australia's Covid hospital admissions at highest level since summer

Covid hospital admissions have reached their highest level since early February when Australia's health system faced great pressure at the end of the first Omicron wave. The surge has prompted calls from leading epidemiologists and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) for stronger mask mandates, with concerns there are double the number of infections silently spreading through the community than official figures suggest. The national total of hospital admissions reached 3,781 on Wednesday, up from 3,740 on Tuesday and 3,511 on Monday - the highest numbers have been since 8 February. The nation is recording on average 33,000 cases each day.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/07/australias-covid-hospital-admissions-at-highest-level-since-summer>

Shanghai back on alert as China battles COVID outbreaks

Millions of people in Shanghai queued for a third day of mass COVID-19 testing on Thursday as authorities in several Chinese cities scrambled to stamp out new outbreaks that have rekindled worries about growth in the world's second-largest economy. Unless local officials succeed in preventing the virus from spreading, they could be compelled to invoke prolonged, major restrictions on residents' movement, under China's "dynamic zero COVID" strategy.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-back-alert-china-battles-covid-outbreaks-2022-07-07/>

New Lockdown

Fresh COVID-19 Outbreaks Put Millions Under Lockdown in China

Article reports that tens of millions of people were under lockdown across China on Wednesday and businesses in a major tourist city were forced to close as fresh COVID-19 clusters sparked fears of wider restrictions. Chinese health authorities have reported more than 300 infections in the historic northern city of Xian, home to the Terracotta Army, with new clusters found in Shanghai, Beijing and elsewhere. The outbreaks and official response have dashed hopes that China would move away from the strict virus curbs seen earlier this year, when its hardline zero-COVID policy saw tens of millions forced to stay home for weeks.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/fresh-covid-19-outbreaks-put-millions-under-lockdown-in-china/6648113.html>

Macau locks down landmark Lisboa hotel after COVID cases found

Macau has locked down one of the city's most famous hotels, the Grand Lisboa, after more than a dozen COVID-19 cases were found there on Tuesday, with infections spreading rapidly in the world's biggest gambling hub. At least 16 other buildings across the special Chinese administrative region are also under restrictions with no one allowed to exit or enter. Authorities reported 146 new infections on Wednesday taking the total to more than 1,000 cases since mid-June. More than 14,000 people are in quarantine as the city battles to contain its biggest outbreak since the pandemic began. Macau had largely been COVID-free since an outbreak in October 2021.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/business/business-news/2022/07/06/macau-locks-down-landmark-lisboa-hotel-after-covid-cases-found>