COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

20th Aug 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

One Minute Overview

1. **Record delta wave hits kids, raises fear as US schools open** - Very high infection rates in the community “are really causing our children’s hospitals to feel the squeeze,” said Dr. Buddy Creech, a Vanderbilt University infectious disease specialist who is a helping lead research on Moderna’s vaccine for children under 12. Creech said those shots probably won’t be available for several months. “I’m really worried,” said Dr. Sonja Rasmussen, a pediatrician and public health expert at the University of Florida. “It’s just so disappointing to see those numbers back up again.” While pediatric COVID-19 hospitalization rates are lower than those for adults, they have surged in recent weeks, reaching 0.41 per 100,000 children ages 0 to 17, compared with 0.31 per 100,000, the previous high set in mid-January, according to an Aug. 13 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health, calls the spike in cases among children “very worrisome.”
2. **Israel extends Covid restrictions to three-year-olds as cases surge** - Israel is now requiring anyone over the age of three to show proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test before entering many indoor spaces, as it tackles a sharp rise in infections. Restaurants, cafes, museums, libraries, gyms and pools are among the venues covered by the 'Green Pass' system. However, proof of immunity is not needed to go into shops or malls. The country's Covid-19 tsar said it was 'at war' with the virus despite its world-leading vaccination programme.
3. **WHO Africa: COVID-19 booster shots make 'mockery' of equity** - The Africa director for the World Health Organization says rich countries’ decisions to roll out COVID-19 booster shots “threaten the promise of a brighter tomorrow for Africa,” and she warns that “as some richer countries hoard vaccines, they make a mockery of vaccine equity.”
4. **To vaccinate more Americans, lean into outbreaks** - As the Delta variant surges across almost all states in the U.S. causing local outbreaks, getting more people vaccinated against the virus that causes Covid-19 should be the country’s key goal. Even though 72% of Americans age 18 and older have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine — one of the highest vaccination rates in the world — it isn’t enough. Mass vaccination campaigns peaked in April and the number of doses administered daily have slowed considerably in all 50 states. To get more Americans vaccinated, it’s time to harness the concern generated by outbreaks and focus vaccination resources on people being exposed to the virus. It’s time to really integrate vaccination efforts into systems for testing and contact tracing.
5. **'Our worst nightmare realized:' Investors, WHO slam J&J for exporting COVID shots produced in Africa** - As Africa’s COVID-19 vaccinations lagged behind the rest of the world, Aspen Pharmacare’s manufacturing facility in South Africa scored a deal to help boost production of Johnson & Johnson’s single-shot jab for the region. But it turns out that most of the J&J shots bottled and packaged at Aspen’s site are going to Europe, not Africa, The New York Times reported earlier this week. The news has since swiftly drawn the ire of health advocates and one outspoken investor group, which warned that J&J’s reputation and its “social license to operate” are now at risk. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters on Wednesday that he was “stunned” by the revelation, urging J&J to prioritize shipments to Africa instead.

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https://apnews.com/article/business-health-education-coronavirus-pandemic-71e1690faa4f260edfd29451b1ccf4a5

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58245285?at_campaign=64&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom4=4F1C5AA4-00B6-11EC-8653-BA11BECD475E&at_custom3=BBC+News&at_custom2=facebook_page&at_medium=custom7

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https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/our-worst-nightmare-realized-shareholders-slam-j-j-for-reportedly-exporting-covid-shots

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https://www.independent.co.uk/news/africa-world-health-organization-nairobi-kenya-united-states-b1905202.html

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https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/19/lean-into-outbreaks-to-vaccinate-more-americans/

Asian airlines report high vaccination uptake among crew

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Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines among those with mandates. Voluntary take-up is high at carriers in Philippines. Asia-Pacific international travel down 95% from pre-COVID levels
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-airlines-malaysia-airlines-require-covid-19-vaccines-crew-2021-08-19/

Britain records 36572 new COVID cases, 113 deaths

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Britain reported 36,572 new cases of COVID-19, government data showed on Thursday, and a further 113 people were reported as having died within 28 days of a positive test for the novel coronavirus. The data compared with 33,904 new cases on Wednesday and 111 deaths.
https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-records-36572-new-covid-cases-113-deaths-2021-08-19/

Biden, first lady to get COVID-19 booster vaccine

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U.S. President Joe Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden would receive a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to boost their immunity, as his administration announced booster shots would be offered to Americans in September. "We will get the booster shots," Biden told ABC News in a television interview that aired on Thursday.
https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-says-he-first-lady-will-get-covid-19-booster-shot-interview-2021-08-19/

WHO urges action as Indonesia mobility returns to pre-pandemic levels

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The World Health Organization has urged Indonesia to take action to stem transmission of the coronavirus, following new data showing that mobility for retail and recreation has reached pre-pandemic levels in some key regions.
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/who-urges-action-indonesia-mobility-returns-pre-pandemic-levels-2021-08-19/

Covid-19 vaccine: decline in protection against Delta variant strengthens calls for booster campaign

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Two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine seems to provide better protection initially against the Delta variant of Covid-19 when compared to the Oxford/AstraZeneca jab, but its efficacy declines faster, early research suggests. Scientists from Oxford University have said that after four to five months, the level of protection offered by both vaccines is similar, with the AstraZeneca jab maintaining its effectiveness throughout the duration. Independent experts said the findings, which have not yet been peer-reviewed, support the case for third "booster" jabs for vulnerable individuals.

https://inews.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-decline-protection-delta-variant-booster-campaign-pfizer-astrazeneca-1157114

South Africa to open up COVID-19 vaccinations to 18-35 year olds from Friday

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South Africa will open up COVID-19 vaccinations to those aged between 18 and 35 years old from Friday, the government said in a statement, as it tries to ramp up its immunisation drive. The country has recorded the most coronavirus infections and deaths on the African continent, but it has so far only fully vaccinated less than 8% of its population of 60 million.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-open-up-covid-19-vaccinations-18-35-year-olds-friday-2021-08-19/

Australians aged 16-39 can get Covid-19 Pfizer vaccine from August 30, Prime Minister announces

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All Australians will be able to get the Pfizer vaccine from August 30, PM said. The move has raise fears that many will cancel AstraZeneca appointments. Scott Morrison urged young Australians to get any vaccine they can right now. As of Thursday 28.2 per cent of Australians over 16 have been fully vaccinated

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9907511/Australians-aged-16-39-Covid-19-Pfizer-vaccine-August-30-Prime-Minister-announces.html

Over 120,000 in 12-15 age group sign up for vaccine

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Health Service Executive CEO Paul Reid has said "it's never too late" to register to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, as he urged those who have not yet received a vaccine to come forward. Speaking at today's HSE briefing, Mr Reid that uptake of vaccines has been extraordinary to date and said that the vaccination programme "gives us a gateway" to reopen society. However, the briefing also heard that there may have been incidents where unvaccinated healthcare workers have introduced Covid-19 to nursing homes and other healthcare settings.

https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0819/1241669-coronavirus-ireland/

Sydney rushes to vaccinate as Delta variant tears through suburbs

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Australian authorities have begun handing out emergency supplies of COVID-19 vaccines in the Sydney suburbs worst hit by an outbreak of the fast-moving Delta variant, as New South Wales state reported another record rise in daily cases. State Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the acceleration in inoculations on Thursday in Australia’s biggest city was providing some hope as the city battles its worst outbreak since the coronavirus pandemic began.

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/19/sydney-rushes-to-vaccinate-as-delta-variant-tears-through-suburbs

Biden calls for schools to be allowed COVID mask mandates

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US President Joe Biden continues to be at odds with governors who are outlawing school mask mandates as the country's Delta (B1617.2) surge continues, ordering the Department of Education to support schools seeking such mandates. COVID-19 hospitalizations for children, meanwhile, have hit a new record, up 30% from the nation's previous peak. Overall, the United States reported 137,815 new COVID-19 cases and 1,145 deaths yesterday, according to the Johns Hopkins COVID-19 tracker. This brings the country's total cases to 37,198,723, including 624,567 deaths.

https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/08/biden-calls-schools-be-allowed-covid-mask-mandates

Fox host Maria Bartiromo goads Trump into bashing coronavirus vaccine boosters

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It's also the day in which a Fox Business Network host tried hard to goad former president Donald Trump into questioning that effort — and succeeded. Trump, who has on a few occasions urged vaccinations but has generally avoided lifting a finger to really convince skeptical Republicans, on Wednesday pitched the booster effort as essentially a money-grab by Big Pharma. "That sounds to me like the moneymaking operation for Pfizer, okay?" Trump said. "Think of the money involved. … The whole thing is just crazy. It doesn't — you wouldn't think you would need a booster. You know, when these first came out, they were good for life."

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/08/18/trump-went-fox-promoted-vaccines-then-host-goaded-him-into-bashing-boosters/

Op-Ed: As a doctor in a COVID unit, I'm running out of compassion for the unvaccinated. Get the shot

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My patient sat at the edge of his bed gasping for air while he tried to tell me his story, pausing to catch his breath after each word. The plastic tubes delivering oxygen through his nose hardly seemed adequate to stop his chest from heaving. He looked exhausted. He had tested positive for the coronavirus 10 days ago. He was under 50, mildly hypertensive but otherwise in good health. Eight days earlier he started coughing and having severe fatigue. His doctor started him on antibiotics. It did not work. Fearing his symptoms were worsening, he started taking some hydroxychloroquine he had found on the internet. It did not work.

https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-08-17/vaccinated-covid-doctor-shot

White House decision over Johnson & Johnson's booster shots will likely take weeks

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It will be weeks before the Biden administration is expected to have enough data to guide its planning on booster doses for Americans who received Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine, say multiple people familiar with the administration's deliberations. Top federal health officials are waiting for results from studies run by the drug maker and a government-backed trial. The White House said Wednesday that Americans who received Pfizer and Moderna shots should get booster shots eight months after their second dose, and at the same time advised that Johnson & Johnson vaccine recipients would eventually also need an additional shot. Some 13.8 million Americans have received the drug maker's single-shot vaccine.

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/johnson-johnson-booster-shots-decision-white-house/

British study shows COVID-19 vaccine efficacy wanes under Delta

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A British public health study has found that protection from either of the two most commonly used COVID-19 vaccines against the now prevalent Delta variant of the coronavirus weakens within three months. It also found that those who get infected after receiving two shots of either the Pfizer-BioNTechor the AstraZeneca vaccine may be of greater risk to others than under previous variants of the coronavirus.

https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/british-study-shows-covid-19-vaccine-efficacy-wanes-under-delta-2021-08-18/

A synthetic pandemic could be far, far worse than Covid-19

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The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of the U.S.'s public health preparedness

infrastructure when faced with a moderately deadly and moderately transmissible respiratory pathogen. We cannot begin to imagine the devastation — possibly even a threat to civilization — if the country had to face a synthetic pandemic from a virus that had been intentionally engineered to spread as effectively as measles and had the virulence of filoviruses such as Ebola or Marburg.
https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/19/natural-pandemic-terrible-synthetic-one-even-worse/

Covid-19 antibody treatments work, but they're 'not the path out of this pandemic'

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Monoclonal antibodies such as those made by Regeneron and GlaxoSmithKline won't work for every Covid-19 patient; mAbs, as they are known, are only available for people age 12 and older and who aren't hospitalized or severely ill. Regeneron's therapy can also be used for some people who know they were exposed to the virus, but don't yet have a positive test. That protection doesn't last long, though, and it's not a replacement for the vaccine.
https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/health/covid-19-antibody-treatments-wellness/index.html

If you live in a state with a low vaccination rate, you're 4 times more likely to be hospitalized and more than 5 times more likely to die

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A vast majority of US residents live in an area with high Covid-19 transmission, but hospitalization and death rates are significantly higher in states with the lowest vaccination rates. In the 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates, fewer than 41% of their residents have been fully vaccinated. In the 10 states with the highest vaccination rates, more than 58% of their residents have been inoculated against coronavirus. Hospitalization rates in those bottom 10 states are nearly four times higher, and death rates are more than 5.5 times higher than in the top 10 states, according to a CNN analysis of federal data.
https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html

UK vaccine watchdog expert sceptical about booster jabs for all adults

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Prof Adam Finn, a member of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, confirmed the group would be discussing the issue on Thursday morning. Speaking to BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, Finn said: “We will be imminently deciding that there will be some people who will need a third dose, particularly people who we know are very unlikely to be well protected by those first two doses.” But he was sceptical about a general rollout of booster jabs. “We do need more evidence before we can make a firm decision on a much broader booster programme,” he said.
https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/aug/19/uk-vaccine-watchdog-expert-sceptical-about-booster-jabs-for-all-adults

Thailand to explore injecting coronavirus vaccines under skin

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Thailand is studying the possibility of injecting coronavirus vaccines under the skin to try to stretch its limited supply, a health official said on Thursday, as the country races to inoculate the public faster amid a worsening epidemic. "Our previous experience shows that intradermal injections uses 25% of a muscular injection, but triggers the same level of immunity," head of the medical science department, Supakit Sirilak told reporters.
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-explore-injecting-coronavirus-vaccines-under-skin-2021-08-19/

Chinese Covid vaccine linked to temporary facial paralysis

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https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/chinese-covid-vaccine-linked-temporary-facial-paralysis-rc25khfwn

Vaccines show declining effectiveness against infection overall but strong protection against hospitalization amid delta variant

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Three studies published Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that protection against the coronavirus given by vaccines declined in the midsummer months when the more contagious delta variant rose to dominance in the United States. At the same time, protection against hospitalization was strong for weeks after vaccination, indicating the shots will generate immune fighters that stave off the worst effects of the virus and its current variations.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/08/18/covid-vaccine-effectiveness/

Pfizer vaccine effectiveness declines quicker than AstraZeneca, says study

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The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is initially more effective against the Delta coronavirus variant than the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab, but this protection then declines at a quicker rate, new research has shown. Scientists from the University of Oxford have confirmed that the general performance of the two jabs is diminished by Delta, compared to the previously dominant Alpha variant, with vaccinated people likely to pass the virus on to others. However, two doses of either jab still provides at least the same level of protection acquired through natural infection, and there is not yet clear evidence to suggest that the vaccines are failing to keep people infected with Delta out of hospital.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/covid-vaccine-delta-pfizer-astrazeneca-b1904782.html

Covid Vaccines Are Less Effective Against Delta, Large Study Finds

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Covid-19 vaccines are less effective against the delta variant, according to results in the U.K. from one of the largest real-world studies into the efficacy of the shots. Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE's messenger RNA vaccine lost effectiveness in the first 90 days after full vaccination, though that shot and the one made by AstraZeneca Plc still staved off a majority of Covid infections. When vaccinated people did get infected with delta, they were shown to have similar levels of virus in their bodies as those who hadn't had shots. This suggests that vaccinating large portions of a population might not protect those who don't get inoculated, casting doubt on the idea of achieving herd immunity.
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-18/covid-vaccines-are-less-effective-against-delta-in-u-k-study

Oregon hospitals near breaking point as COVID-19 surges

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Just 41 intensive care unit beds were available in Oregon on Wednesday as COVID-19 cases continue to climb and hospitals near capacity in a state that was once viewed as a pandemic success story. Oregon, which earlier had among the lowest cases per capita, is now shattering its COVID-19 hospitalization records day after day. Oregon — like Florida Arkansas and Louisiana — has had more people in the hospital with COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic. As of Wednesday, 850 coronavirus patients were hospitalized in Oregon — surpassing the state's record, which was set the previous day. Before this month, the hospitalization record was 622 in November, during a winter surge and when vaccines were not yet available

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/oregon-kate-brown-icu-portland-florida-b1904994.html

S.Korea COVID-19 count ticks up as authorities consider tougher distancing

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South Korea reported more than 2,000 new coronavirus cases for the second time on Thursday as it struggles to subdue a wave of outbreaks during the summer holidays, driven by the more contagious Delta variant. South Korea has managed to tackle outbreaks since its epidemic began early last year thanks to intensive testing and tracing but it is now facing persistent spikes in infections and vaccine shortages.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-covid-19-count-ticks-up-authorities-consider-tougher-distancing-2021-08-19/

Texas health officials warn of full ICUs as state grapples with worsening Covid-19 surge

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The latest surge in Covid-19 hospitalizations this summer is having a deepening effect in Texas, a state that has seen its leadership rebuke steps such as mandatory mask wearing, yet now faces hospitals stretched to capacity with sick patients. And amid both the crises at health care facilities as well as court battles raging over the legality of safety measures in schools, recent news of Gov. Greg Abbott's positive test for Covid-19 has punctuated messaging from health officials that Texans need to remain vigilant during the pandemic. The state's Department of State Health Services said Texas is in "one of its worst fights" it has faced with Covid-19, and mortuary trailers were requested this month as a preparatory maneuver.

https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/19/us/texas-covid-icu-beds-mask-mandate/index.html

New Zealand says it has solved Covid outbreak 'puzzle'

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New Zealand has reported a breakthrough in tracing the source of a Covid-19 outbreak that plunged the nation into lockdown, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern saying it should help "stamp out" the virus. Health officials have been trying to determine how an Auckland man contracted the coronavirus this week, ending a six-month run of no community cases in New Zealand. Tests showed the man had a version of the Delta strain found in Australia, and Ms Ardern said investigations narrowed down the origin to a person who arrived from Sydney on 7 August.

https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0819/1241622-new-zealand/

Gulf Coast’s beloved ‘Redneck Riviera’ now a virus hotspot

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Tourists and servers alike dance atop tables and in the aisles at one restaurant on the “Redneck Riviera,” a beloved stretch of towns along the northern Gulf Coast where beaches, bars and stores are packed. Yet just a few miles away, a hospital is running out of critical care beds, its rooms full of unvaccinated people fighting for their lives. On maps that show virus “hot spots” in red, this part of the U.S. coast is glowing like a bad sunburn. And a summer of booming tourism that followed the lockdowns and travel restrictions of 2020 is making the turn toward fall with only a few signs of slowing down.

https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-health-coronavirus-pandemic-c341a0e0ab5e9ecc3b3eedc855f33513

Ethnic health care systems strained in Myanmar amid pandemic

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When February’s military takeover of Myanmar led to the collapse of the central health care system, independent ethnic organizations that had operated for decades on the Southeast Asian country’s borders stepped in. They provided basic medical services, treated COVID-19-patients and

occasionally even tended to injuries from armed skirmishes. But a fierce new wave of coronavirus cases, and myriad other challenges — closed borders, shrinking support from international donors, and a crackdown on aid by the military, which has been accused of hoarding medical supplies for its own use — are stretching their abilities to the limit.
https://apnews.com/article/business-science-health-pandemics-coronavirus-pandemic-f1d039c5bba8a33ba9f4330072e5381e

First COVID case reported in Tokyo 2020 Paralympic village

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A first coronavirus case has been detected in the Paralympics village, days before the Games open, organisers say as Japan battles a record wave of infections. The case discovered on Thursday involves a Games-related member of staff who is not resident in Japan, according to organisers, who did not give further details.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/19/first-covid-case-tokyo-2020-paralympics-japan

Covid-19: How Kerala kept itself above water in India's devastating second wave

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India is one of the worst hit countries in the pandemic, but one state has fared comparatively well. Kamala Thiagarajan asks what Kerala did differently. India’s first confirmed case of covid-19 was detected in the southern state of Kerala on 27 January 2020. Despite being one of the worst affected states—with over three million recorded cases, a quarter of infections in India—Kerala has the lowest covid death rate in the country at 0.4%, less than a third of the national average of 1.3%. As of 8 August, Kerala had 17 654 recorded deaths.
https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2005