

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

2nd Sep 2022

Lockdown Exit

Hong Kong's Lee Gets Nod for Reverse Quarantine Into China

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee has secured China's support for a "reverse quarantine" program to boost travel into the mainland, after two years of strict Covid curbs thwarted cross-border ties. The city leader said at a Thursday news briefing that officials from neighboring Guangdong province had backed his plan for travelers to first isolate in Hong Kong and then enter China quarantine-free during a virtual meeting. "The main purpose is to first of all alleviate the burden of hotels in the mainland," he said. "The second goal of this proposal is to ensure that we will have a system to allow a regular flow of people from Hong Kong into Shenzhen."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-01/hong-kong-gets-nod-for-reverse-quarantine-into-china-scmp-says>

China Locks Down Megacity Chengdu as Covid Zero Rolls On

The Chinese metropolis of Chengdu locked down its 21 million residents to contain a Covid-19 outbreak, a seismic move in the country's vast Western region that has largely been untouched by the virus. The capital of Sichuan province, Chengdu is the biggest city to shut down since Shanghai's bruising two-month lockdown earlier this year. The move -- which will upend the lives of millions of people and businesses, with repercussions for China's economy and beyond -- shows the country's commitment to the Covid Zero approach espoused by President Xi Jinping, despite the disruption it's causing.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-01/china-locks-down-western-megacity-chengdu-as-covid-zero-rolls-on>

Hong Kong Officials Target End to Hotel Quarantine in November

Hong Kong is targeting an end to hotel quarantine in November, ahead of a summit of global bankers and an international rugby competition, even as a resurgence in Covid-19 cases prompts health officials to push back on the plan, according to people familiar with the debate. Chief Executive John Lee is leaning toward scrapping hotel quarantine before the November events to signal Hong Kong is back in business, despite the objections of some in his administration, the people said. Health Secretary Lo Chung-mau is among those who want to tighten restrictions as cases surge, one person added, on the hope that suppressing cases will lead to the reopening of the mainland border.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-01/hong-kong-officials-target-end-to-hotel-quarantine-in-november>

China's Chengdu to conduct mass COVID testing, lockdowns as cases climb

Chengdu locks down during four-day citywide testing. Shenzhen has districts with over 15 mln residents and this will hit business. Most curbs in big Chinese cities are intended for a few days according to the Zero Covid plan.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-chengdu-conduct-mass-covid-testing-lockdowns-cases-climb-2022-09-01/>

Nine million foreigners visited Spain in July, near pre-pandemic levels

More than twice as many tourists visited Spain in July than in the same month last year, a number only slightly below pre-pandemic levels, National Statistics Institute data showed on Thursday. The

9.1 million visitors in July spent close to 12 billion euros (\$12 billion), more than twice as much as in 2021. Tourism earnings are a significant component of Spain's gross domestic product. Before COVID-19 put a halt to international travel in 2020, Spain received a record number of foreign tourists in 2019, with 9.9 million visiting in July of that year.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nine-million-foreigners-visited-spain-july-near-pre-pandemic-levels-2022-09-01/>

COVID-19 took a unique toll on undocumented immigrants

Imelda fled sexual violence at the hands of drug cartels in rural Puebla, about two hours outside of Mexico City, and arrived in New York City in 2013. She had no health insurance, barely spoke English, and as an undocumented immigrant, she avoided situations that required revealing her identity. So in March 2020, even as the city became the national epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, Imelda, who asked that her surname not be used due to risk of deportation, resisted going to the hospital for her escalating fever and fatigue. "When the symptoms began, I wanted to go," Imelda says, but her fears outweighed her desire for treatment. Since arriving in the U.S. Imelda had visited a hospital only once, for the birth of her second daughter. But in addition to worries about revealing her immigration status, she was afraid of incurring medical bills that exceeded what she earned cleaning houses.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/covid-19-took-a-unique-toll-on-undocumented-immigrants>

UK downgrades Covid-19 alert level amid falling cases

The UK's Covid-19 alert level has been downgraded to level 2, meaning the virus is in "general circulation" but healthcare pressures and transmission are "declining or stable". The chief medical officers of the UK nations and the national medical director of the NHS in England have jointly recommended that the Covid alert level be moved down from level 3 amid falling cases. They said the Covid-19 wave of the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5 was "subsiding". Rates of Covid have decreased as have the number of severe cases needing hospital care, they added. However, they said further Covid surges were "likely" as they urged people to take up the offer of vaccination. The autumn booster campaign is due to start within days.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/31/uk-downgrades-covid-19-alert-level-falling-cases>

Ontario's top doctor drops COVID-19 isolation requirements, expands booster eligibility to kids 5 to 11

Ontario is dropping the mandatory five-day isolation period for those who test positive for COVID-19, the province's top doctor announced Wednesday. The move is part of the province's broader plan to prepare for the fall respiratory illness season, and comes just as Ontario wastewater data is showing a slight uptick in the amount of COVID-19 in the province. Dr. Kieran Moore said the COVID-19 pandemic has moved out of a "crisis phase" and become something that will require long-term management. The seventh wave has crested, he said, but the virus "remains in the community" and Public Health Ontario expects to see an increase in transmission as more people gather inside during the cooler fall months.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/kieran-moore-flu-season-covid-2022-1.6567840>

Canada's Ontario allows masked people with asymptomatic COVID in public

Canada's most populous province, Ontario, said on Wednesday that residents can come out of isolation with a mask as soon as 24 hours after their COVID-19 symptoms dissipate, under a strategy to homogenize guidance for all respiratory illnesses. Asymptomatic COVID-positive residents, as well as those who come in contact with an infected person, can go to work or school but they must wear a face mask for 10 days, the Ontario government said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadas-ontario-allows-masked-people-with-asymptomatic-covid-public-2022-08-31/>

U.S. plans to move COVID vaccines, treatments to private markets in 2023

The U.S. government expects its supply of COVID-19 vaccines and antiviral treatments to run out over the next year and is preparing for them to be sold via the commercial market, the Department of Health and Human Services said on Tuesday. President Joe Biden's administration expects to run out of federal funding for buying and distributing COVID-19 vaccines by January, although it has already bought over 170 million doses for a booster campaign later this year, according to a blog post written by Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Dawn O'Connell.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-plans-move-covid-vaccines-treatments-private-markets-2023-2022-08-30/>

Exit Strategies

Serious Covid case numbers declining

Small waves of new Covid-19 cases are being seen locally and globally but the number of severely ill patients and fatalities is not rising, according to the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration. The number of severely ill patients and fatalities is stable worldwide and has been declining steadily in Thailand, CCSA spokeswoman Sumanee Watcharasin said on Thursday.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2381895/serious-covid-case-numbers-declining>

Covid: All you need to know about Wales' autumn Coronavirus booster and flu vaccine programme

Wales' autumn Covid-19 vaccination programme will start to be rolled out across Wales from Thursday (September 1). Care home residents and staff will be the first to receive the vaccine in an attempt to protect the country's most vulnerable ahead of the winter months. Everyone who is eligible for the autumn booster will be invited for a vaccination by their health boards. Similarly to earlier in the pandemic, invitations will be issued in order of vulnerability, with everyone eligible being offered a booster vaccine by December.

<https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2022-09-01/all-you-need-to-know-about-wales-autumn-covid-booster-programme>

Covid-19 booster vaccines offered to healthcare staff and those with health conditions

Healthcare workers and people aged 12 to 49 with long term health conditions have been invited to make an appointment for their second Covid-19 booster jab by the Health Service Executive (HSE). HSE chief clinical officer Dr Colm Henry said appointments are available from Thursday. "We know that those who have long-term health conditions are at greater risk from serious illness from Covid-19," he said. "Getting a second booster vaccine now will help protect these people, particularly as we come in to the autumn. We are now also calling healthcare workers for their next Covid-19 booster.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/health/2022/09/01/covid-19-booster-vaccines-offered-to-healthcare-staff-and-those-with-health-conditions/>

Hong Kong vaccine pass scheme to include 5-11 age group, official confirms

Details of new policy to be announced next week, Dr Chuang Shuk-kwan of the Centre for Health Protection says. Top minister will reveal a major NGO will join the government's effort to boost inoculation rate among the elderly,

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3190952/coronavirus-5-11-age-group-set-be-included-hong-kong-vaccine>

Covid-19 booster vaccination roll-out starts in Wales

The autumn Covid-19 booster roll-out has started in Wales as care home residents and staff become the first in line to get their next jab. The vaccine has been made available to all those eligible from September 1 as the Welsh Government looks to keep Covid rates down for the coming winter. Care home residents, frontline health and social care workers and all those aged over 50, will be called for

a vaccination by their health boards. Invitations will be issued in order of vulnerability, with everyone eligible being offered a booster vaccine by the end of the year. The vaccines will be administered in a variety of settings including GP surgeries and vaccination centres

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-booster-vaccination-roll-24897240>

CDC's vaccine advisory committee scheduled to vote on new COVID-19 booster shots Thursday

The CDC's vaccine advisory committee is scheduled to vote on new COVID-19 booster shots Thursday. The FDA authorized Pfizer and Moderna's updated boosters Wednesday

<https://news.yahoo.com/cdcs-vaccine-advisory-committee-scheduled-111524446.html>

Covid-19 booster available in NI in mid-September

Covid-19 booster vaccination programme in Northern Ireland is due to start on Monday 19 September. Care home residents and staff will be among the first to be offered the vaccine.. Many of those receiving the latest booster will get a new vaccine from Moderna,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-62749795>

Queensland in 'new stage' of COVID-19 pandemic, changes to vaccine mandate, reliance on health directives and reporting flagged

Daily reporting of COVID statistics will be wound back from this weekend. A blanket COVID-19 vaccine mandate direction for private health care workers will be lifted National cabinet has agreed people who test positive for COVID will only be required to isolate for five days from September 9.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-01/queensland-covid19-management-vaccine-mandate-reporting/101277360>

Hong Kong leader proposes 'reverse quarantine' for China travel

Hong Kong hopes to introduce "reverse quarantine" for people going to mainland China as the financial hub seeks to open up to the neighbouring technology city of Shenzhen after months of restrictions, the city leader said on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-leader-proposes-reverse-quarantine-china-travel-2022-09-01/>

Macau plans to gradually reopen the city to foreign travelers

Macau is planning to gradually reopen the city to foreign travellers from certain countries who meet its COVID-19 criteria, its government said on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/macau-plans-gradually-reopen-city-foreign-travelers-2022-09-01/>

Germany to start Omicron-adapted COVID vaccinations next week - minister

Germany can next week start using COVID-19 vaccines which have been adapted for the Omicron variant and got approval for use in the European Union on Thursday, Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said. He said approval of the BA.1 vaccine was a quantum leap in the fight against the pandemic as vaccines were now available that work well against all previously known virus variants. "From next week, vaccinations can begin with the new doses. Now is the optimal time to close the gaps in vaccination for the autumn," he said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-start-omicron-adapted-covid-vaccinations-next-week-minister-2022-09-01/>

Partisan Exits

Covid: Pregnant women targeted with false vaccine claims

Inaccurate messages shared by thousands claimed that pregnant or breastfeeding women were now recommended not to take the vaccine. In fact, the NHS says the vaccine is both safe and strongly recommended for this group.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-62739554?at_campaign=64&at_medium=custom7&at_custom2=twitter&at_custom3=Regional+BBC+South&at_custom1=link&at_custom4=695914BA-29DD-11ED-B284-C5380EDC252D

UK's COVID-19 inquiry starts work - EURACTIV.com

The public inquiry into the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has started its work in a process that will lead to key government ministers, officials and scientific advisors giving evidence in public. The inquiry will begin to take evidence from witnesses, which are likely to include former health minister Matt Hancock and outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson, early next year. The latest stage of the inquiry's investigations, known as Module 2, will focus on decisions and announcements made by the UK government between early January and late March 2020 at the start of the pandemic. The Johnson government earned a mixed report card during the pandemic. After being slow to introduce lockdown measures to curb the spread of the first wave of the virus and struggling with shortages of ventilators and personal protective equipment, leading to one of Europe's highest death tolls, the government then earned praise for the speed of its vaccine rollout programme.

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/uks-covid-19-inquiry-starts-work/

Covid inquiry 'must spend significant time examining lockdown impact on children'

The Covid inquiry has failed to confirm whether it will examine the closure of schools when it considers the decisions taken by the Government in the early stages of the pandemic. On Wednesday, the inquiry opened its second phase of investigations, which will explore decisions taken by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, as well as the advice from officials and experts. There will be a particular focus on the first months of 2020 until the first lockdown was imposed in late March. It will later examine decisions taken throughout 2020 until Feb 2022. In a document setting out the provisional scope for module two, the inquiry said it will examine the Government's initial strategies for community testing. It will also look at the decisions behind national lockdowns, local and regional restrictions, circuit breakers, social distancing, working from home and the use of face masks.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/covid-inquiry-must-spend-significant-time-examining-lockdown-impact-on-children/ar-AA11kcWo>

Scientific Viewpoint

Covid-19 Boosters Targeting Omicron Reviewed by CDC Advisers

Immunization experts advising the federal government recommended newly authorized Covid-19 booster shots, the next step toward making the reformulated doses widely available. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted 13 to 1 in two votes on Thursday that anyone who was already eligible for a booster should now get the reformulated shots, which target both the original virus and Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-boosters-targeting-omicron-to-be-reviewed-by-cdc-advisers-11662024602>

White House Warns of Pandemics Worse Than Covid as Health Overhauls Begin

White House health officials warned that new pandemics could prove more serious than Covid-19 in a report that reviews efforts to prepare for the "high likelihood" of future serious outbreaks. While the Biden administration has pushed repeatedly for funding to combat that sort of threat, Congress has yet to allocate more money. In the meantime, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is embarking on a reorganization based on lessons learned during Covid, and another government office is being given new powers to help coordinate responses to health emergencies. "As staggering as the losses of the last nearly three years have been, COVID-19 was a moderate pandemic," Biden administration officials from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Covid-19 Response Team said in the report. "The US government must seize the moment to transform its scientific capabilities in preparation for the increasing frequency of biological threats on the horizon."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-01/white-house-warns-of-pandemics-worse-than-covid-as-health-overhauls-begin>

EU drug agency recommends approval of Covid vaccine boosters for Omicron

The European Union's drug regulator on Thursday backed two separate Covid-19 vaccine boosters updated to target the Omicron variant and developed by Moderna and the team of Pfizer and BioNTech. Europe is preparing to roll out shots ahead of an anticipated rise in infections this winter. The new so-called bivalent shots combat the BA.1 version of Omicron and the original virus first detected in China. The recommendation is to authorise the vaccines for people aged 12 years and above who have received at least primary vaccination against Covid-19, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said.

<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220901-eu-regulator-approves-first-covid-booster-shots-targeting-omicron-variant>

Vaxart Shares Positive Top-line Data From Mid-Stage Oral Pill COVID-19 Vaccine Study

Vaxart announced positive top-line data from the first part of a planned two-part Phase 2 study of its Wuhan S-only oral pill COVID-19 vaccine candidate, VXA-CoV2-1.1-S. The top-line data readout exhibited that the trial met its primary safety and secondary immunogenicity endpoints.

<https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/vaxart-shares-positive-top-line-data-from-mid-stage-oral-pill-covid-19-vaccine-study-1031719399>

Covid-19 death rates aren't falling much further. Why?

Deaths from Covid-19 are at some of their lowest rates in the United States since the start of the pandemic, but they're still alarmingly high, according to some health officials. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported this week that, on average, close to 400 people are dying of the disease every day. The total number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths is trending downward, albeit at an agonizingly slow pace. And as summer gives way to fall, federal health officials are bracing for another spike in cases. The good news is that it's unlikely the Covid-19 surge expected this fall will rack up tolls anywhere near those last year or the year before, given how much immunity is now present throughout the population. More than 79 percent of Americans have had at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, 67 percent have had two, and 33 percent have had three.

<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/23316450/covid-19-death-rate-vaccine-booster-elderly>

FDA authorizes Moderna and Pfizer's updated COVID-19 booster shots

The US regulator has granted emergency authorization for Pfizer-BioNTech's and Moderna's Covid booster shots that target the highly contagious BA.5 omicron subvariant.

<https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2022/09/01/FDA-authorizes-Moderna-and-Pfizer-s-updated-COVID-19-booster-shots>

S.Africa's Aspen, India's Serum Institute sign vaccines deal for Africa

Deal to utilise Aspen's near-idle COVID vaccine production lines. Production under deal will not start before 12 months. Aspen expecting orders for more vaccines from GAVI, UNICEF. Its full-year profit jumps 31%, revenue up 2%

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/safricas-aspen-indias-serum-institute-sign-vaccines-deal-africa-2022-08-31/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

NZ to review COVID-19 settings this month

New Zealand won't be rushed into ditching its remaining COVID-19 restrictions as Australia opts to loosen pandemic rules. This week, Australian leaders agreed to cut isolation requirements from seven days to five for all but workers in high-risk settings, while also ditching masks on domestic flights.

<https://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/7886449/nz-to-review-covid-19-settings-this-month/?cs=5>

WHO: New COVID cases, deaths keep falling nearly everywhere

The number of new coronavirus cases and deaths reported globally continued to fall nearly everywhere in the world in what the World Health Organization described as a “welcome decline” at a media briefing on Wednesday

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/who-ap-geneva-food-and-drug-administration-britain-b2156836.html>

Chengdu locks down 21.2 million people as Chinese cities battle Covid-19

One of China’s biggest cities, Chengdu, announced a lockdown of its 21.2 million residents as it launched four days of citywide Covid-19 testing, as some of country’s most populous and economically important urban centers battle outbreaks. All residents in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, were ordered to stay largely at home from 6 p.m. on Thursday, with households allowed to send one person per day to shop for necessities, the city government said in a statement.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/09/01/chengdu-locks-down-21point2-million-people-as-chinese-cities-battle-covid-19.html>

Hong Kong COVID cases hit 10586 amid concerns over tighter restrictions

Hong Kong reported 10,586 new COVID-19 infections on Thursday as a rise in daily cases triggers concerns that authorities will tighten COVID-19 restrictions just as the government has gradually relaxed some of the world's most stringent measures. Government advisers have said the recent rise in infections was expected and dismissed the need for tighter restrictions, according to local media.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-covid-cases-hit-10586-amid-concerns-over-tighter-restrictions-2022-09-01/>

New Lockdown

China’s Major Cities Edge Into Covid-19 Lockdowns Ahead of Party Congress

Chinese cities tightened measures to halt Covid-19 flare-ups, threatening further damage to the country’s embattled economy ahead of a Communist Party congress to decide the nation’s top leadership. Chengdu ordered its 21 million residents to stay at home from 6 p.m. local time on Thursday, according to a statement from the city’s government. Authorities will conduct citywide Covid-19 tests through Sunday, with one person in each household allowed to leave home once a day to buy groceries, with proof of a negative Covid-19 test. They gave no date for when the measures would end.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-major-cities-edge-into-covid-19-lockdowns-ahead-of-party-congress-11662033592>

Chengdu locks down 21.2 million as Chinese cities battle COVID

The southwestern Chinese metropolis of Chengdu announced a lockdown of its 21.2 million residents as it launched four days of citywide COVID-19 testing, as some of the country's most populous and economically important cities battle outbreaks. Residents of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, were ordered to stay home from 6 p.m. on Thursday, with households allowed to send one person per day to shop for necessities, the city government said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-chengdu-conduct-mass-covid-testing-lockdowns-cases-climb-2022-09-01/>