

# Earlier lockdowns would have saved thousands of American lives, model shows

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Nearly 36,000 American lives would have been spared if strict social

distancing measures had been enacted across the country just one week earlier than they were, new estimates suggest.

And if those measures had been imposed two weeks before most people started staying home, about 54,000 COVID-19 deaths would have been avoided by early May, Columbia University disease models show, *The New York Times* reported. The U.S. [coronavirus](#) death toll stretched past 93,000 on Thursday, with more than 1.5 million cases.

"It's a big, big difference," Jeffrey Shaman, an epidemiologist at Columbia and leader of the modeling team, told *Times*. "That small moment in time, catching it in that growth phase, is incredibly critical in reducing the number of deaths."

On the economic front, another round of weekly jobless claims delivered more bad news: 2.4 million filed for unemployment, bringing the total jobless number for the past nine weeks to more than 38 million.

Meanwhile, all 50 states have started reopening their economies, more than two months after the new coronavirus first forced America into lockdown.

States in the Northeast and on the West Coast, as well as Democratic-led states in the Midwest, have moved more slowly toward reopening, the *Times* reported. But a number of states in the South opened earlier and more expansively, albeit with social distancing restrictions in place, the newspaper said.

Luckily, new data shows the number of new coronavirus cases in the country has begun to drop.

According to the *Times*, in New York state case counts have dropped over the last month, and they have also plunged in hard-hit

Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Some states, including Vermont, Hawaii and Alaska, are seeing hardly any new cases at all, the newspaper said.

According to a *Times* tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Thursday are: New York with nearly 359,000; New Jersey with over 150,000; Illinois with over 100,000; Massachusetts with nearly 89,000; and California with more than 86,000.

## **Testing issues continue**

Of course, testing will be key to further efforts to control the spread of the new coronavirus. But only about 3% of the population has been tested.

Meanwhile, a survey from the *Washington Post* reveals another dilemma: Though tests for the virus are finally becoming widely available, too few people are lining up to get them.

The poll of governors' offices and state health departments found at least a dozen states where testing capacity outstrips the supply of patients.

Why aren't more people getting tested? "Well, that's the million-dollar question," Utah Health Department spokesman Tom Hudachko told the *Post*. "It could be simply that people don't want to be tested. It could be that people feel like they don't need to be tested. It could be that people are so mildly symptomatic that they're just not concerned that having a positive lab result would actually change their course in any meaningful way."

And a new report finds that millions more Americans are venturing out in public.

From March 20, when states began urging people to stay home, to April 30, when many states started easing those restrictions, 43.8% of U.S. residents stayed home, a *Times* analysis showed.

But last week, only 36.1% of Americans stayed home.

## **Serious illness in kids**

Meanwhile, troubling news has emerged from New York City: More than 145 children have contracted a new, serious inflammatory syndrome that seems to be linked to COVID-19 infection, *NBC New York* reported.

The CDC has confirmed the link, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said this week, adding that the city will work under the CDC's latest definition of what it now calls multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children.

"The CDC has confirmed a link to COVID-19. This is important, we assumed it, but they have done additional research to 100 percent confirm it and released a national standard definition," de Blasio told *NBC New York*.

The syndrome affects blood vessels and organs, and has symptoms similar to Kawasaki disease and toxic shock.

A small number of cases have been reported in other states, including New Jersey, California, Louisiana and Mississippi, the *Times* reported. At least 50 cases have been reported in European countries.

As New York City officials grappled with how to track and treat this new condition, an Italian study published in *The Lancet* medical journal described similar cases that cropped up in that country.

Between Feb. 18 and April 20, there were 10 cases of young children hospitalized with the inflammatory condition in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. In the five years leading up to the middle of February, only 19 children in that region had ever been diagnosed with the condition.

All 10 children survived, but they had more severe symptoms than those diagnosed with Kawasaki disease in the previous five years.

## **Americans still nervous about reopening**

Across the country, reopening plans proceed, with all [states](#) relaxing social distancing measures by Memorial Day weekend, *CNN* reported. But polling shows that most Americans fear that reopening will trigger a second wave of infections.

Of the 1,056 adults surveyed between May 14 and May 18, 83% said they're at least somewhat concerned that easing restrictions in will result in a new surge of infections, with 54% saying they're very or extremely concerned, according to the *Associated Press*-NORAC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

With reopening, it's essential for people to return to self-quarantine if they are exposed to the virus, about 80% of respondents said.

About 6 in 10 said widespread testing for the coronavirus is necessary to resume public activities, along with requiring people to stay six feet apart in most places and to wear face masks when they're near others outside their homes.

Nearly half of the respondents said it's crucial for a vaccine to be available before public life resumes, while another third said that's important, but not essential.

## Nations grapple with pandemic

In Asia, where the coronavirus first struck, several countries are finally returning to a new normal.

In China, public officials are testing all 11 million residents in the city of Wuhan this week in the hopes they can extinguish any remaining cases of coronavirus in the pandemic's original epicenter, the *Post* reported.

But a small cluster of cases in the northeastern province of Jilin has prompted officials to employ many of the strict lockdown measures that were used in Wuhan, the *Times* reported.

Meanwhile, South Korea began a phased reopening of schools on Wednesday, starting with the oldest students. Some 450,000 third-year students returned to their high schools under a set of strict social distancing guidelines, the *Post* reported.

Elsewhere, the situation remains challenging. On Thursday, the United Kingdom's coronavirus death count neared 36,000, the second highest in the world, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Britain has now surpassed Italy, Spain and France for COVID-19 deaths in Europe.

Brazil looks like it might become the next hotspot in the coronavirus pandemic. By Thursday, the South American country had reported nearly 19,000 deaths and over 291,000 confirmed infections, according to the Hopkins tally.

On Tuesday, President Donald Trump said he is considering a ban on all travel from Brazil, which recorded its highest single-day death toll on Tuesday and now has the third-highest numbers of cases in the world, the *Post* reported.

Cases are also spiking wildly in Russia: As of Thursday, that country reported the world's second-highest number of COVID-19 cases, the Hopkins tally showed. Russia now has more than 317,500 cases. Only the United States has more cases.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 5 million on Thursday, with more than 328,400 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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