

States retreat as confirmed virus cases hit all-time high

June 26 2020, by Paul J. Weber and Michelle R. Smith



Hugo, 3, has his temperature taken by a teacher as he arrives at Cobi kindergarten in Barcelona, Spain, Friday, June 26, 2020. Spain's cabinet will extend the furlough schemes adopted during the coronavirus lockdown that brought the economy to a standstill until the end of September. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Texas and Florida reversed course and clamped down on bars again Friday in the nation's biggest retreat yet as the number of confirmed coronavirus infections per day in the U.S. surged to an all-time high of 40,000.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott ordered all bars closed, while Florida banned alcohol at such establishments. The two states joined the small but growing list of those that are either backtracking or putting any further reopenings of their economies on hold because of a comeback by the virus, mostly in the South and West.

Health experts have said a disturbingly large number of cases are being seen among young people who are going out again, often without wearing masks or observing other social-distancing rules.

"It is clear that the rise in cases is largely driven by certain types of activities, including Texans congregating in bars," Abbott said.

Abbott had pursued up to now one of the most aggressive reopening schedules of any governor. The Republican not only resisted calls to order the wearing of masks but also refused until last week to let local governments take such measures.

"The doctors told us at the time, and told anyone who would listen, this will be a disaster. And it has been," said Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, a Democrat who is the county's top official. "Once again, the governor is slow to act. He is now being forced to do the things that we've been demanding that he do for the last month and a half."



Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey speaks about the latest coronavirus data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)

Stocks fell sharply on Wall Street again over the surging case numbers. The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 730 points, or nearly 3%.

Texas reported more than 17,000 new cases in the past three days, with a record high of nearly 6,000 on Thursday. In Florida, under GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis, the agency that regulates bars acted after the daily number of new cases neared 9,000, almost doubling the record set just two days earlier.

Colleen Corbett, a 30-year-old bartender at two places in Tampa, said

that she was disappointed and worried about being unemployed again but that the restrictions are the right move. Most customers, she said, were not wearing masks.

"It was like they forgot there was a pandemic or just stopped caring," she said.

A number of the hardest-hit states, including Arizona and Arkansas, have Republican governors who have resisted mask-wearing requirements and have largely echoed President Donald Trump's desire to reopen the economy quickly amid warnings the virus could come storming back.



Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey pauses as he speaks about the latest coronavirus data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP

Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)

The White House coronavirus task force, led by Vice President Pence, held its first briefing in nearly two months, and Pence gave assurances that the U.S. is "in a much better place" than it was two months ago.

He said the country has more medical supplies on hand, a smaller share of patients are being hospitalized, and deaths are much lower than they were in the spring.

The count of new confirmed infections, provided by Johns Hopkins University, eclipsed the previous high of 36,400, set on April 24, during one of the deadliest stretches. Newly reported cases per day have risen on average about 60 percent over the past two weeks, according to an Associated Press analysis.

While the rise partly reflects expanded testing, experts say there is ample evidence the scourge is making a comeback, including rising deaths and hospitalizations in parts of the country and higher percentages of tests coming back positive for the virus.



A staff member of a cinema sprays disinfectant at the cinema hall to prepare for reopening on July 1 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Friday, June 26, 2020. Malaysia entered the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) after three months of coronavirus restrictions. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

At the task force briefing, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, urged people to mind their responsibility to others: "A risk for you is not just isolated to you."

Deaths from the coronavirus in the U.S. are running at about 600 per day, down from a peak of around 2,200 in mid-April. Some experts have expressed doubt that deaths will return to that level, because of advances in treatment and prevention and because younger adults are more likely than older ones to survive.

The virus is blamed for about 125,000 deaths and 2.4 million confirmed infections nationwide, by Johns Hopkins' count. But health officials believe the true number of infections is about 10 times higher.

Worldwide, the virus has claimed close to a half-million lives, according to Johns Hopkins.

Louisiana reported its second one-day spike of more than 1,300 cases this week. The increasing numbers led Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards this week to suspend further easing of restrictions. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey did the same in Arizona, which has been seeing more than 3,000 cases a day. And Nevada's governor ordered the wearing of face masks in Las Vegas casinos and other public places.



A health worker takes a swab test of a woman during a free medical checkup in Dharavi, one of Asia's biggest slums, in Mumbai, India, Friday, June 26, 2020.

India is the fourth hardest-hit country by the pandemic in the world after the U.S., Russia and Brazil. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



Liverpool supporters celebrate as they gather outside of Anfield Stadium in Liverpool, England, Thursday, June 25, 2020 after Liverpool clinched the English Premier League title. Liverpool took the title after Manchester City failed to beat Chelsea on Wednesday evening. (AP photo/Jon Super)



Funeral home workers wait their turn to pick up a body of a client who died from COVID-19, outside Almenara public hospital in Lima, Peru, Thursday, June 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



People watch a movie from inside their cars at a drive-in installed in the Palmeiras soccer stadium amid the coronavirus outbreak in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Thursday, June 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)



Police officers stand at a road block in front of a big apartment complex where dozens of COVID-19 cases have been registered among a community of Bulgarian farm workers, in Mondragone, in the southern Italian region of Campania, Friday, June 26, 2020. The governor of the region is insisting that the farm workers should stay inside for 15 days, not even emerging for food, and that the national civil protection agency should deliver them groceries. (AP Photo/Riccardo De Luca)



Liverpool supporters celebrate as they gather outside of Anfield Stadium in Liverpool, England, Friday, June 26, 2020 after Liverpool clinched the English Premier League title. Liverpool took the title after Manchester City failed to beat Chelsea on Wednesday evening. (AP photo/Jon Super)



A woman wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus exercises at Lumpini park in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, June 26, 2020. Daily life in the capital resumes to normal as the government continues to ease restrictions related to running business and activities that were imposed weeks ago to combat the spread of COVID-19. Thailand reported no local transmissions of the coronavirus in the past 4 weeks. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



Commuters, some wearing protective face masks, ride a bus amid the new coronavirus pandemic in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Thursday, June 25, 2020. Authorities say buses can operate with people standing, but limited to 2 commuters per meter square, and marks on the floor will have to be painted in order to help people to keep their distance. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)



A woman wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus practices Tai Chi at Lumpini park in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, June 26, 2020. Daily life in the capital resumes to normal as the government continues to ease restrictions related to running business and activities that were imposed weeks ago to combat the spread of COVID-19. Thailand reported no local transmissions of the coronavirus in the past 4 weeks. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



Members of the media wait to be escorted to a briefing room to hear Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey speak about the latest Arizona coronavirus data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)



Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey speaks about the latest coronavirus data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)



Civil protection and army officers stand at a road block in front of an apartment complex where dozens of COVID-19 cases have been registered among a community of Bulgarian farm workers, in Mondragone, in the southern Italian region of Campania, Friday, June 26, 2020. The governor of the region is insisting that the farm workers should stay inside for 15 days, not even emerging for food, and that the national civil protection agency should deliver them groceries. (AP Photo/Riccardo De Luca)



Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey speaks about the latest coronavirus testing and percentage of positive test results data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)

In addition to closing bars again, Abbott scaled back restaurant capacity in Texas, shut down rafting operations and said any outdoor gatherings of more than 100 people will need approval from the local government.

DeSantis has been lifting restrictions more slowly than a task force recommended, but has allowed theme parks to reopen, encouraged professional sports to come to Florida and pushed for the GOP convention to be held in the Sunshine State.

In a reversal of fortune, New York said it is offering equipment and other help to Arizona, Texas and Florida, noting that other states came to

New York's aid when it was in the throes of the deadliest outbreak in the nation this spring.

"We will never forget that graciousness, and we will repay it any way we can," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Elsewhere around the world, China moved closer to containing a fresh outbreak in Beijing. Another record daily increase in India pushed the caseload in the world's second most populous nation toward half a million. And other countries with big populations like Indonesia, Pakistan and Mexico grappled with large numbers of infections and strained health care systems.

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Citation: States retreat as confirmed virus cases hit all-time high (2020, June 26) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-virus-cases-high.html>

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