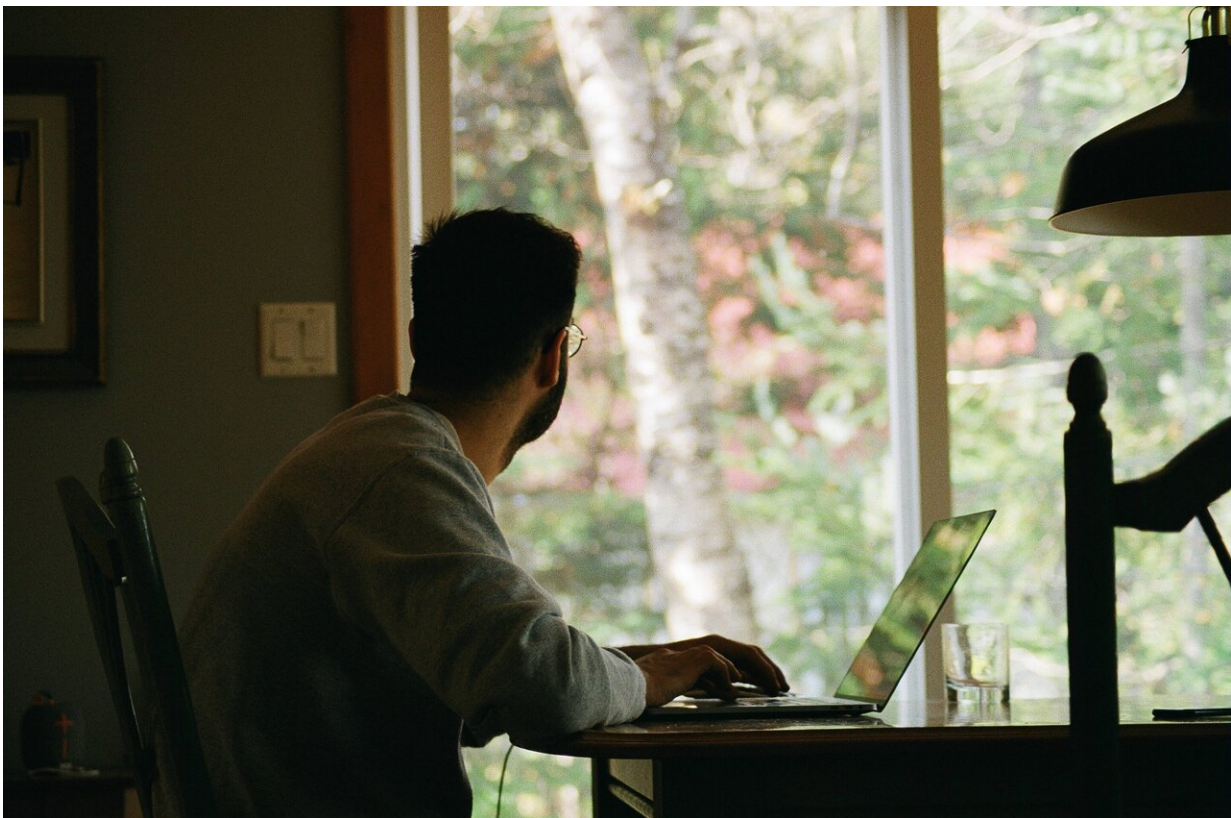


Swathes of Shanghai to be returned to lockdown in testing drive

June 10 2022



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Shanghai will impose fresh lockdowns on residents in several city districts this weekend during a mass testing drive, officials said Friday, as President Xi Jinping called for China to stick "unswervingly" to its

strict zero-COVID strategy.

China is the last major economy still pursuing a policy of stamping out all outbreaks, wielding snap lockdowns, mass testing and mandatory quarantines.

But the strategy has come under heightened scrutiny after the fast-spreading Omicron variant triggered sweeping restrictions in major cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, hammering the world's second-biggest economy.

In Shanghai, at least 15 of the city's 16 districts—totalling more than 23 million people—said they would conduct PCR tests on residents in the coming days, while six areas said they would impose lockdowns during the testing drive.

The districts that will impose some lockdowns—Minhang, Yangpu, Putuo, Fengxian, Qingpu and Changning—are home to more than eight million people.

The mass testing, announced in a series of notices released locally on Thursday and Friday, comes less than two weeks after Shanghai began stumbling out of a gruelling lockdown marked by [food shortages](#) and scattered protests.

Despite loosening many restrictions after finally containing China's worst outbreak in two years, skittish authorities have continued to impose a shifting mosaic of curbs to guard against a resurgence.

The announcement of mass testing prompted fears of a backslide from weary residents in Shanghai.

"I have an ominous feeling," wrote one user on China's Weibo social

media platform.

Another wrote that fences had started to be put up dividing their residential community into two large areas, adding that they saw panic-buying of rice and oil at the neighbourhood supermarket.

Chinese leaders have attempted to thread the needle between crushing the virus and limiting the damage of lockdowns, with President Xi on Thursday calling for "efficiently coordinating COVID-19 prevention and control with economic and [social development](#)".

But he said China's "dynamic zero-COVID approach must be unswervingly upheld", according to state news agency Xinhua.

Shifting mosaic of curbs

Experts predict that China will struggle to meet its economic growth target of around 5.5 percent this year as virus lockdowns force business shutdowns and snarl supply chains.

The World Bank has sharply slashed its 2022 growth forecast for China to 4.3 percent, warning this week that COVID disruptions could further slow recovery.

The shockwaves from China's zero-COVID policy have hit the [global economy](#) as well, especially after the [lockdown](#) in Shanghai—the country's biggest city and a major global shipping hub.

Parts of Beijing have also reimposed some restrictions after loosening work-from-home orders and allowing restaurants in the capital to reopen for indoor dining earlier this week.

Two central districts on Thursday ordered the closure of bars, nightclubs

and internet cafes, local media reported, after the capital reported a cluster of infections linked to entertainment venues.

Beijing has reported nearly a dozen recent cases connected to nightclubs, after several days of no new cases outside of restricted areas.

Officials put up fresh barriers around several residential compounds in the city overnight, including one near the Beijing's embassy district where an AFP reporter saw workers building metal fences and transporting pets out of the compound in crates.

Some companies have also asked employees to prepare to resume working from home, while others were barred from entering their offices after COVID cases or close contacts were found to have visited the buildings.

The latest Beijing outbreak drew anger on Chinese social media, with some blaming club patrons for partying, while others pointed their fingers at the city government and testing agencies.

"'Clearing' COVID seems like a joke... Otherwise where did these new cases come from?" one Weibo user asked, referring to the city's previous declaration that it had "cleared" cases outside of quarantined areas.

China reported 73 new local infections on Friday, including eight in Beijing and 11 in Shanghai, according to the National Health Commission.

© 2022 AFP

Citation: Swathes of Shanghai to be returned to lockdown in testing drive (2022, June 10) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-swathes-shanghai-lockdown.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.