

China's Guangzhou locks down millions in 'zero-COVID' fight

November 21 2022, by Huizhong Wu



A man adjusts his mask on the street of Beijing, Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022. China on Sunday announced its first new death from COVID-19 in nearly half a year as strict new measures are imposed in Beijing and across the country to ward against new outbreaks. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

The southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou locked down its largest

district Monday as it tries to tamp down a major COVID-19 outbreak, suspending public transit and requiring residents to present a negative test if they want to leave their homes.

The outbreak is testing China's attempt to bring a more targeted approach to its zero-COVID policies while facing multiple outbreaks driven by fast-spreading omicron variants. China is the only major country in the world still trying to curb virus transmissions through strict lockdown measures and mass testing.

Baiyun district, home to 3.7 million people in Guangzhou, also suspended in-person classes for schools and sealed off universities. The measures are meant to last until Friday, the city announced.

"The epidemic situation is severe and complex and difficult to control," deputy district head Chen Yongjun said at a news conference in Guangzhou, according to a provincial state media report.

Meanwhile in Beijing, the capital reported two more COVID-19-related deaths. On Sunday, the city [reported China's first COVID-19 death](#) in nearly six months.

Beijing officials announced at a news conference that starting Tuesday, anyone arriving from outside the city would have to stay at home for three days and test negative for three days in a row before being allowed out, state broadcaster CCTV said in an online report.



A man lowers his mask to be swabbed for a COVID-19 test on the street of Beijing, Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022. China on Sunday announced its first new death from COVID-19 in nearly half a year as strict new measures are imposed in Beijing and across the country to ward against new outbreaks. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

While critics have questioned China's COVID-19 numbers, and specifically its death toll, its intensive approach to trying to contain infections has prevented massive outbreaks and kept new daily cases lower than in many other countries.

Earlier this month, China announced that it was [relaxing some of its "zero-COVID" policies](#), such as suspending flights from airlines that had brought a certain number of passengers who tested positive. It also

cut down the time required in centralized quarantine for international arrivals from seven to five days.

The relaxation of some measures was an attempt to [make the policies](#) more "scientific and precise," Lei Haichao, the deputy director of the National Health Commission, said.

Larger cities are still holding on to some of the tested measures, though in a more fragmented manner than shutting down an entire city, which they had previously done.



Residents line up for COVID-19 tests on the street of Beijing, Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022. China on Sunday announced its first new death from COVID-19 in nearly half a year as strict new measures are imposed in Beijing and across the country to ward against new outbreaks. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Shijiazhuang, a city in northern Hebei province, is testing all residents in six districts. In Beijing's Haidian district, home to the city's tech hub and top universities, authorities announced Sunday night that in-person classes were being canceled at elementary and secondary schools.

Guangdong province, home to Guangzhou, reported the largest number of new cases Monday with 9,085 out of a total of 27,095 cases nationwide.

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