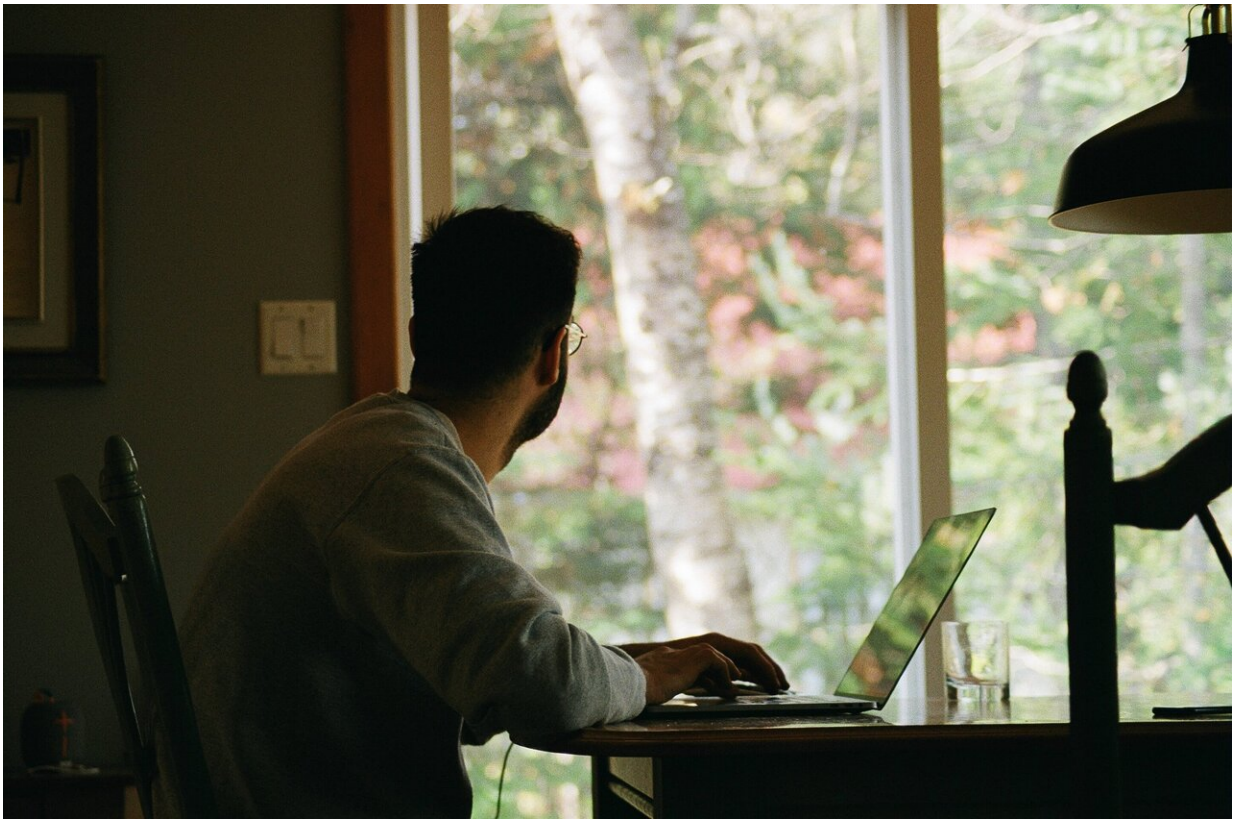


# China virus cases at six-month high despite grinding lockdowns

November 7 2022

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

China reported its highest daily COVID caseload in six months Monday, despite grinding lockdowns that have heavily disrupted manufacturing, education and day-to-day life.

Beijing over the weekend quashed hopes that its strict zero-COVID policy—in which spot lockdowns, quarantines and mass testing are employed to quash outbreaks—might be relaxed anytime soon.

But a torrent of lockdown-related scandals where residents have complained of inadequate conditions, food shortages and delayed emergency medical care have chipped away at public confidence.

The country logged more than 5,600 new COVID cases Monday—almost half in Guangdong province, a southern manufacturing hub home to major ports.

In Beijing, almost 60 new infections were discovered, causing school closures in the populous downtown district of Chaoyang. Some companies also asked their staff to work from home temporarily.

This was despite city authorities saying Monday that recent "successive outbreaks" had "basically been effectively controlled", after daily new cases reached dozens in the past week.

And in central China, a grueling lockdown at the world's biggest iPhone factory in Zhengzhou led Apple Sunday to warn that production had been "temporarily impacted" and that customers would experience delays in receiving their orders.

"The facility is currently operating at significantly reduced capacity," the California-based tech titan said in a statement.

Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn—Apple's principal subcontractor which runs the plant—revised down its quarterly earnings forecast Monday due to the lockdown.

China's National Health Commission vowed Saturday to "unswervingly"

stick to zero-COVID, dashing a major stock market rally last week on the back of unsubstantiated rumours that Beijing would imminently loosen its strict virus policy.

But a number of high-profile incidents have chipped away at the Chinese public's support for the approach.

The death by suicide of a 55-year-old woman in the locked-down city of Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, sparked widespread outcry over the weekend after authorities admitted that lockdown protocols delayed their emergency response.

The region has been in the grip of a major outbreak since late September, when a new Omicron variant was first detected.

Shortly before the woman jumped from a window, relatives had reported to community workers that she suffered from an anxiety disorder and had shown suicidal intent.

Audio of the woman's daughter begging community workers to unseal her door that had been welded shut went viral on Chinese social media, drawing attention to mental health crises exacerbated by weeks-long lockdowns.

"Who has the right to weld building gates shut? Who has the right to restrict others' freedom to live? What if there is an earthquake or fire, who is responsible afterwards?" read one comment on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

Local officials have vowed to punish community workers who forcibly seal household doors and building gates with locks, despite it being widespread practice in locked-down areas.

The incident came days after a toddler in the locked-down northwest city of Lanzhou, in neighbouring Gansu province, died of carbon monoxide poisoning after the slow response of emergency medical services delayed hospital treatment.

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