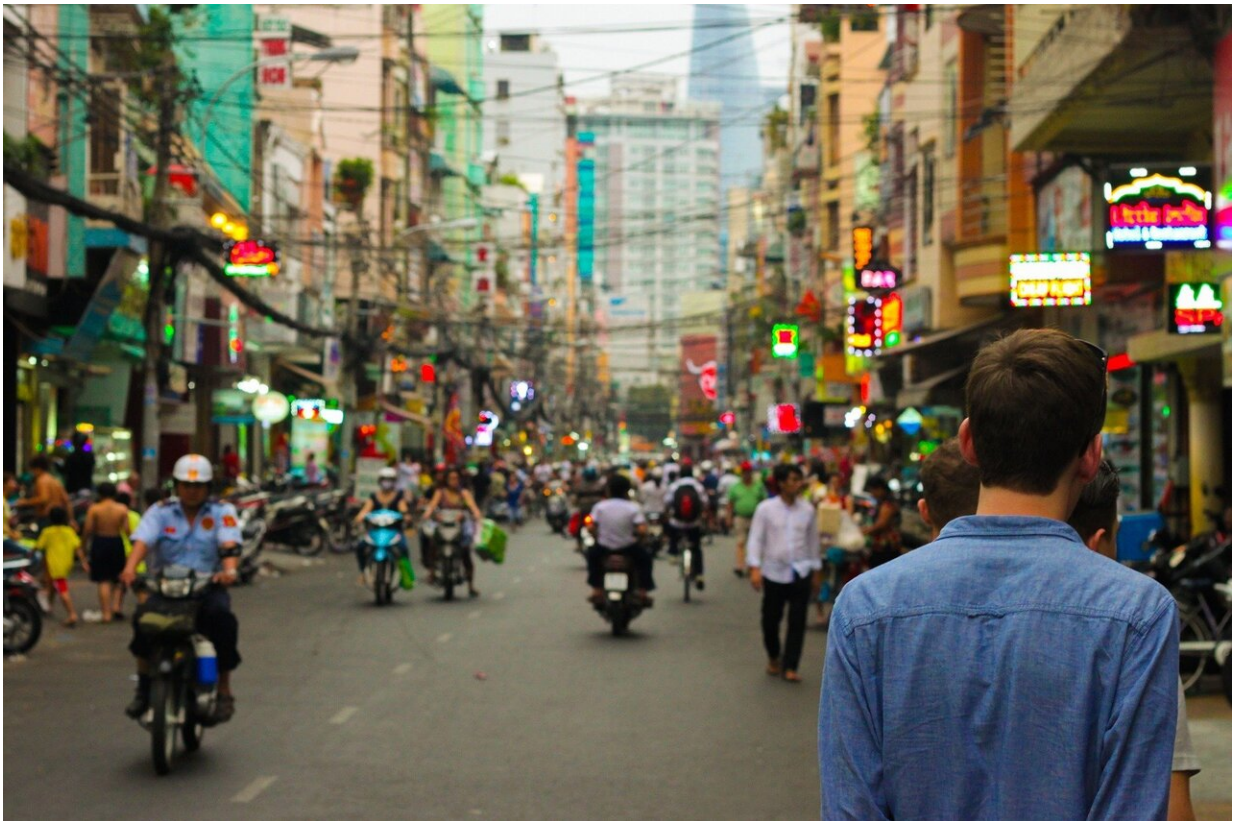


# China to stop publishing daily Covid figures: NHC

December 25 2022

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China will no longer publish daily figures for COVID-19 cases and deaths, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Sunday, ending a practice that began in early 2020.

Cities across China are struggling with surging virus cases, resulting in pharmacy shelves stripped bare and overflowing hospitals and crematoriums, after Beijing suddenly dismantled its zero-COVID regime earlier this month.

The decision to scrap the daily virus count comes amid concerns that the country's blooming wave of infections is not being accurately reflected in official statistics.

Beijing last week admitted the scale of the outbreak has become "impossible" to track following the end of mandatory mass testing.

Last week, China also narrowed the criteria by which COVID-19 fatalities were counted—a move experts said would suppress the number of fatalities attributable to the virus.

The NHC did not offer an explanation for its decision to stop releasing daily COVID data.

"From today, we will no longer publish daily information on the epidemic," the NHC said.

"The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will publish information about the outbreak for reference and research purposes," the NHC said, without specifying the type or frequency of information to be published.

## **'Can you talk about it?'**

On Chinese social media, some users responded to the NHC's decision with cynicism, pointing to the increasing discrepancy between official statistics and infections within their families and social circles.

"Finally, they are waking up and realising they can't fool people anymore," wrote one user on the social network Weibo.

Another user said, "This was the best and biggest fake statistics manufacturing office in the country."

Under China's new definition of COVID deaths, only those who die of [respiratory failure](#)—and not pre-existing conditions exacerbated by the virus—are counted.

Only six COVID deaths have been reported since Beijing unwound most of its restrictions.

But crematorium workers interviewed by AFP have reported an unusually high influx of bodies, while hospitals have said they are tallying multiple fatalities per day, as wards fill up with elderly patients and they are forced to fill atriums with beds.

"Are there crematorium workers here? Are you overloaded? Can you talk about it?" another Weibo user wrote.

China's censors and mouthpieces have been working overtime to spin the decision to scrap strict travel curbs, quarantines and snap lockdowns as a victory, even as cases soar.

While state media has largely refrained from reporting the grimmer side of the exit plan, they have, to some extent, said hospitals are under stress from an influx of patients and a shortage of anti-fever drugs.

In a rare acknowledgement this week, a senior health official in the eastern city of Qingdao was quoted by the media as saying half a million people are being infected daily.

Health authorities in Zhejiang, a coastal province of around 65 million people south of Shanghai, said the number of daily infections now exceeded the one million mark.

And in Beijing, "a large number of infected people" were reported on Saturday.

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