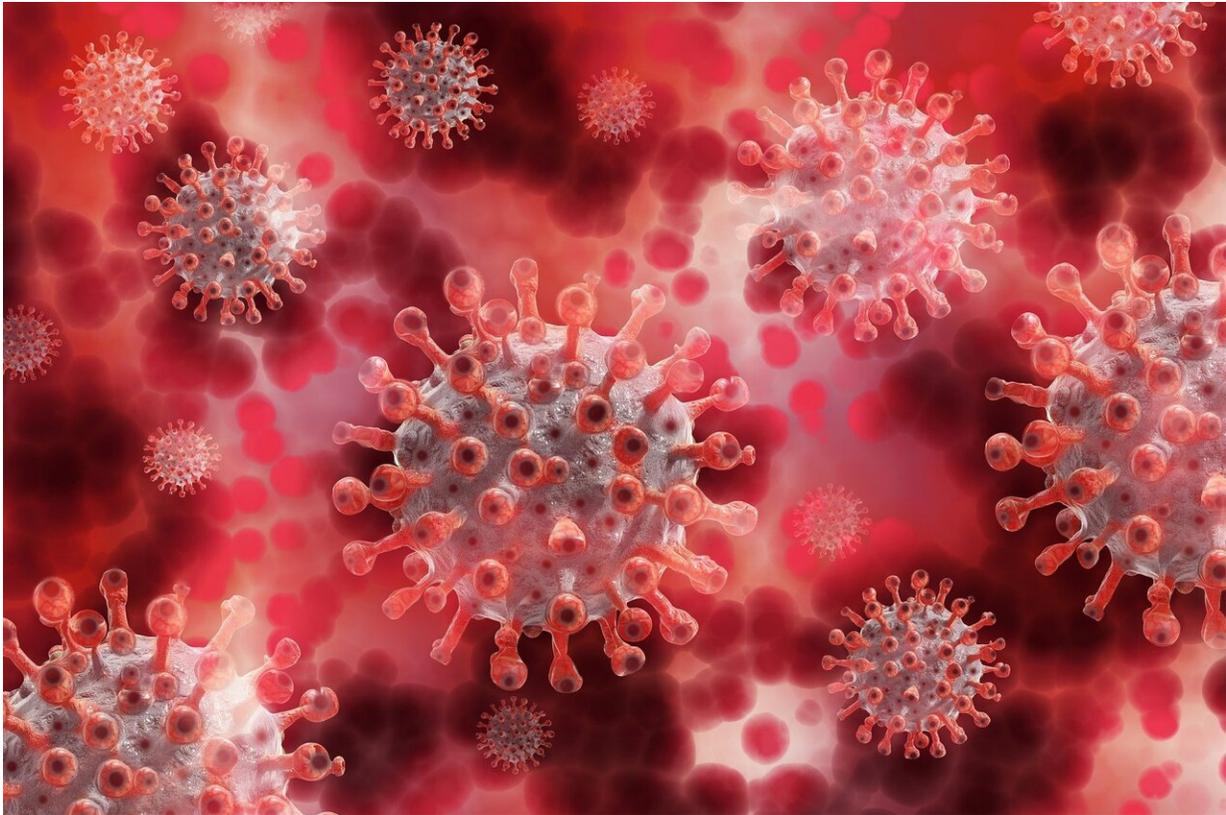


US tops 2.5mn virus cases as infections surge

June 28 2020



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The United States has surpassed 2.5 million coronavirus cases, as efforts to reopen the world's economic powerhouse were dramatically set back by a surge of new infections in states such as Florida.

Infections are also up in some other parts of the world that have

reopened, and the public health realities pushed global Pride celebrations largely online Saturday, 50 years after the first march for LGBT rights in New York.

The US leads the world in COVID-19 cases by far, accounting for well over a third of the global total of nearly 9.9 million since the virus emerged late last year in China.

On Saturday alone the US recorded more than 43,000 new cases, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. US deaths now exceed 125,000, approximately one-fourth the world total of over 495,000.

The tension between reopening battered economies—efforts pushed in the US by President Donald Trump—and public health is a source of debate in nearly every country.

In Iran, which has struggled to curb its outbreak even as it gradually lifted restrictions from April, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said "something must be done" to prevent [coronavirus](#) causing economic issues.

"But in the case of negligence and significant spread of the disease, economic problems will increase, too," he said.

The EU on Saturday pushed back a decision on a list of "safe countries" from which travellers can visit Europe—a list which could exclude the US.

Meanwhile stars including Coldplay, Miley Cyrus and Jennifer Hudson lent support to a European Commission-led drive that raised 6.15 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) to support vaccine research and help make it available to [poorer countries](#).

Some of those countries are still far from reaching their peak in infections, authorities say.

In the Middle East, the governor of Bethlehem announced that the Palestinian city would temporarily close due to rising infections.

While in India, densely populated cities have been particularly hard hit. The country set a daily record Saturday with 18,500 new cases and 385 deaths. Total infections are at 509,000, with more than 15,600 deaths.

The disease also continues to rampage through Latin America, with Peru surpassing 9,000 deaths in total on Saturday.

Brazil—the second hardest-hit country in the world after the US—recorded 990 deaths on Saturday, the highest in the world that day, while Mexico recorded the second highest, 719.

'Explosion' in Florida

In Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis has conceded there has been an "explosion" in new cases.

On Saturday the "Sunshine State" notched 9,585 cases in 24 hours, a new daily record.

The average age of people infected has dropped sharply—to 33 from 65 two months ago. Young people frustrated by months of confinement have poured back to the state's beaches, boardwalks and bars, often without masks and seemingly unconcerned about social distancing.

Miami announced beaches will close over the July 4 holiday weekend. Bars are also closing.

Georgia, Nevada and South Carolina also reported new daily record cases on Saturday, while Arizona broke its record for hospitalizations.

With Trump struggling to lift his re-election bid off the ground ahead of November, the campaign confirmed that events featuring Vice President Mike Pence in Arizona and Florida next week have been postponed "out of an abundance of caution."

Trump had faced a backlash after insisting on a rally in Oklahoma despite virus concerns one week ago.

In California, Governor Gavin Newsom ordered some areas to reinstate stay-at-home orders, while San Francisco announced a "pause" in its reopening.

Texas also shut down its bars. Governor Greg Abbott, another Republican who resisted lockdowns, said Friday that if he could "go back and redo anything, it probably would have been to slow down the opening of bars."

Texas was among the first US states to reopen.

Global Pride

Fifty years on from the first Gay Pride march, the LGBT community and their supporters took many of their events online Saturday for Global Pride, a 24-hour online event broadcast live.

There were some small marches, such as in Mexico City, where some 200 people defied quarantine to progress along Reforma, the city's main avenue.

The virus has also thrown world sports into turmoil. Pakistan's cricket

board announced Saturday it would leave 10 players off its tour of England on Sunday after they tested positive.

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