

COVID-19 cases spike across the United States

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The United States has surged past 2 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, according to the latest data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

This figure represents over a quarter of the 7.4 million cases confirmed worldwide, and over 114,000 people have died from the disease in the United States.

The abandonment of social distancing guidelines, coinciding with the “back to work drive” initiated after the Memorial Day weekend holiday, May 24–26, has led to a dramatic spike in cases across the country.

Twelve US states—Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Michigan, Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina, Delaware and Hawaii—have all seen a 25 percent or more spike in average cases within the last week. Arizona in particular, which opened up casinos even before Las Vegas did on June 4, has seen the largest increase of any US state, with a 49 percent increase in average cases in the last seven days. Since officially reopening on May 15, the amount of patients on ventilators has increased 400 percent, with 1,412 new cases and 32 deaths reported on Thursday alone.

In Georgia, which reported 993 cases on Thursday, the most in over a month and a 37 percent increase over the previous seven-day average, Republican Governor Brian Kemp went ahead with two executive orders. The first of these removed shelter-in-place orders for persons age 65 and older. The second, effective June 16, allows gatherings of up to 50 people “if they remain six feet apart.” Guidelines for maintaining seating distance and the number of patrons per square foot are also being lifted.

Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida is similarly moving ahead with plans to reopen schools, announcing a three-step reopening process that aims to have fully open campuses by August. These plans are being made despite the fact that the state set a new

record for confirmed cases, 1,698, surpassing the previous high of 1,419 new cases set last week on June 4.

Ignoring these worrying and deadly trends, governors across the country, driven by material economic interests, are continuing to move forward with “phased re-openings” of states and businesses, forcing workers back into dangerous and socially unnecessary settings such as casinos, bars, restaurants and movie theaters.

The virus has continued to spread unchecked in giant factories and work locations, which companies and government regulators falsely claim are “safe.” Thousands of workers are affected, including immigrants, among meatpacking employees, farmers, transportation workers and Amazon and logistics workers who are deemed “essential” but treated as expendable.

Fruit-packing and agriculture workers in Yakima County, Washington, who have engaged in a series of strikes since May demanding personal protective equipment and a hazard pay increase, have continued to fall ill, putting themselves, their families and the US fruit and vegetable supply in jeopardy.

According to data gathered by Reuters, by the end of May there were 600 cases of COVID-19 among agriculture workers in the county. As of June 10, Yakima County had 4,834 known cases, the highest per capita infection rate on the West Coast.

The rising number of infections, along with absenteeism among workers not willing to needlessly risk their lives, prompted rumblings from the Trump administration last month to invoke the Defense Production Act.

Alabama set a record for the number of positive cases in a single day on Thursday, with 848 new cases, a 93 percent increase over the previous seven-day average.

The state has reported 22,474 cases and 750 deaths so far. However these numbers, as all US figures, should be considered drastic undercounts due to the lack of effective testing and reporting, as covered previously by the WSWS.

Neither big business party is entertaining the possibility of another shutdown to halt the dangerous spread.

Speaking to the *New York Times*, Dr. Howard Markel, University of Michigan professor and policy adviser during the George W. Bush administration, plainly stated what is evident from the silence of leading Democrats and Republicans: “They have made a conscious decision that we are moving on.”

From the time the World Health Organization declared that COVID-19 was a “public health emergency of international concern” on January 30, the supreme priority of the US ruling class, like all the capitalist governments of the world, was to safeguard the wealth of the oligarchy.

Far from levelling off, the pandemic is intensifying worldwide. Globally, it took 62 days, from the January 30 alert by the WHO of a global health emergency, for the virus to infect 1 million people. However, it only took 13 days for that number to double. Another million cases were added approximately every 12 days until the total reached 4 million cases in early May. Since then, the number of cases has accelerated, passing 5 million cases 11 days later, 6 million 10 days after that, and 7 million cases only 8 days after that.

Despite these staggering figures, which will lead to thousands of unnecessary and preventable deaths, there have been no calls for the implementation of another lockdown from within the political establishment. This is because while the lockdown proved to be the only effective method of slowing the spread of the virus—absent a vaccine and an effective testing and tracing program—another shutdown would cripple Wall Street earnings projections, sending stockholders’ and business executives’ portfolios into the tank.

Despite the best efforts of the US Congress to shower these parasites with unlimited sums of money through the bipartisan CARES Act, which made available trillions of dollars to corporate America, reality has now reasserted itself. On Thursday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped over 1,800 points, the worst decline in three months, as worrisome data on rising

infection rates continued to be reported.

The determination of the US government to “move on” is shared by capitalist governments around the world.

In South America, Brazil continues to lead the continent and the world in daily new confirmed cases, with 32,913 more cases reported Thursday. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, like his US counterpart Trump and UK partner Boris Johnson, has advocated infecting the whole population despite the absence of scientific evidence that antibodies gained from overcoming COVID-19 will last for any extended period of time.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, there are now over 200,000 confirmed cases. The *Washington Post* is reporting that Pierre Nkurunziza, the president of Burundi, who died on Tuesday, was the first world leader to die of COVID-19. However, government officials have stated that the cause of death was cardiac arrest.

In Pakistan, cases have surged, according to WHO officials. They have urged the entire country to resume lockdown after more than 100 deaths were reported on Tuesday. Overall, the country has over 108,000 confirmed cases and a death toll approaching 2,500, as of this writing.



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