

## COVID-19 infections soar in US

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18 October 2020

The United States reported more than 70,000 coronavirus cases on Friday, making it the highest single-day increase since late July. The seven-day national average of daily cases has also increased by 8,000 in the last week. The massive spike in cases is an indication that the US ruling elite's policy of reopening businesses and schools is already resulting in the surge predicted by public health experts for the fall and winter.

More than 900 people died on Friday in the US due to COVID-19. Total US deaths approached 220,000 on Sunday, with total confirmed cases surpassing 8.1 million, according to Johns Hopkins University data. The global death toll stands at more than 1.1 million, with close to 40 million cases. The US, Brazil and India account for more than half of all deaths worldwide.

Midwestern and other states are experiencing a resurgence of coronavirus cases. Wyoming, Minnesota, Wisconsin, West Virginia, North Dakota, Indiana, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado all reached records on Friday for single-day case increases. As of Saturday afternoon, Indiana and Ohio had already topped their previous records.

States with large rural areas are also experiencing their highest-ever rates of infection. Wyoming, Idaho, West Virginia, Nebraska, Iowa, Utah, Alaska and Oklahoma have recorded more cases in a seven-day period than in any previous week.

As average daily infections top 60,000, hospitalizations nationwide are up more than 30 percent from just four weeks ago. In New Mexico, hospitalizations have more than doubled in the last three weeks. Governor Lujan Grisham said of the state's crisis, "Doesn't matter if you don't believe in it. The virus is real and it continues to spread, wreaking havoc on New Mexicans' lives."

The ripple effect on the Midwest from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally this summer is still being assessed.

The event held every August in South Dakota, drawing about half a million people, had already been linked to COVID-19 cases throughout the Midwest, including at least 35 in Minnesota.

Now a new report from the *Washington Post* says that more than 330 COVID-19 cases and at least one death have been directly linked to the Sturgis rally, though "experts say that tally represents just the tip of the iceberg" and that the rally likely "played a role in the outbreak now consuming the Upper Midwest."

Wisconsin is struggling with one of the worst outbreaks of the virus in the country. Nearly 4,000 new coronavirus cases were reported in the state on Friday alone, and officials have been forced to open a field hospital in the northeastern part of the state to deal with the outbreak. The number of people hospitalized due to COVID-19 has tripled in Wisconsin in the past month and nearly 1,600 people in the state have died from it.

Despite these devastating conditions, President Trump made Wisconsin his second campaign stop on Saturday, following a rally in Muskegon, Michigan, where he led chants of "Lock her up," referring to Gretchen Whitmer, the target of a fascistic plot to kidnap and execute the Democratic governor earlier this month.

Trump's rally at the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport in Janesville packed in several thousand people. Only about a third of his supporters wore masks and attendees were required to ride to the event in crowded shuttle buses to and from a parking lot a few miles away. In his rambling 93-minute speech, the president denounced Wisconsin's Democratic governor, Tony Evers, for attempting to hold back the reopening of schools and businesses.

"We're doing great, we're doing really well. I wish you'd have a Republican governor because frankly, you got to open your state up," Trump said. "You got to open it up." He added without substantiation,

“We’re rounding the corner. We have unbelievable vaccines coming out real soon.”

On Sunday, Trump held a rally in Carson City, Nevada, where masks and social distancing were also scarce.

Despite the warnings of health experts on the impending rise in cases and deaths in the coming months, Trump and his coterie have doubled down on their homicidal practice of holding rallies that endanger the health and lives of his deluded supporters and pose the very real threat of becoming super-spreader events that increase infections of the deadly virus.

The president has sidelined the advice of health experts on the White House Coronavirus Task Force, holding meetings of the body at best just once a week. Dr. Anthony Fauci, a member of the task force and an infectious disease expert, has cautioned against indoor gatherings of people outside their households for the upcoming holidays, which would serve to heighten the rate of infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

Scott Gottlieb, former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commissioner, on CBS’s “Face the Nation” on Sunday pointed to the deadly implications of the Trump administration’s embrace of the policy of “herd immunity,” in which the virus is allowed to spread unabated, potentially leading to millions of cases and deaths.

“It’ll take the FDA two to four weeks to turn that [vaccine] application around,” Gottlieb said. “Then it will take us another two to four weeks to get the initial tranche of people, the most vulnerable who are indicated for the vaccine, vaccinated. Then they need to get a second dose and that happens in the next three to four weeks. And then it takes two weeks for the immunity really to kick in.”

“So, you’re looking at a situation where the first tranche of people to get vaccinated really won’t be protected from the vaccine probably till February and maybe March. And so that’s a long way off,” he said. “And it’s probably likely to be the biggest wave that we endure without the benefit of a vaccinated population. So, we’re going to have to rely on those mitigation steps.”

But it is precisely these mitigation steps—social distancing, limiting gatherings, the wearing of masks—that the Trump administration vocally opposes. In this effort, Trump has brought onto the task force

neuroradiologist Scott Atlas, an avowed supporter of “herd immunity,” which advocates allowing the coronavirus to spread uncontrolled until an adequate number of people are infected and are supposedly then immune.

The World Health Organization has condemned this policy as “unethical.” One health expert, William Haseltine of ACCESS Health International, has correctly said, “Herd immunity is another word for mass murder.” Health experts have argued that this policy would result in 2–6 million deaths in the US alone, per year.

The Great Barrington Declaration, supported by Atlas, calls for supposedly less vulnerable people to go to work, engage in team sports and participate in normal activities as if the virus was not a deadly threat.

In a tweet posted on Saturday, which was later taken down by Twitter, Atlas wrote, “Masks work? NO,” linking to antiscientific statements from the American Institute of Economic Research that argues against the effectiveness of masks, among other claims.

Despite certain criticisms of the Trump administration’s reckless policy of holding mass rallies, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden does not oppose the president’s drive to reopen the economy. He opposes reverting to any form of lockdowns and is openly pushing for the reopening of businesses, schools and college campuses, and has pledged more funds to do so.

The vast majority of Americans, on the other hand, face the prospect of economic devastation as the two big-business parties have allowed stimulus and unemployment benefits to expire, threatening a fall and winter of evictions, utility shutoffs, hunger, disease and preventable death.



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