

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 19th Apr 2022

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **COVID-shaming pits neighbour against neighbour in locked-down Shanghai**

The tensions of lockdown have exposed divisions among Shanghai residents, pitting young against old, locals against outsiders, and above all, COVID-negative against COVID-positive people. Shanghai's 25 million people, most of whom live in apartment blocks, have forged new communal bonds during the city's coronavirus outbreak, through barter and group buying and setting up food-sharing stations. But with no end in sight to a lockdown that for some has lasted four weeks, frustrations are also mounting behind the shuttered gates of the city's tower blocks, often playing out within WeChat message groups

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/covid-shaming-pits-neighbour-against-neighbour-locked-down-shanghai-2022-04-18/>

#### **China Covid-19 Lockdowns Spread Beyond Shanghai to Other Cities**

Localized Covid-19 lockdowns are proliferating across China, suggesting Shanghai's struggle to contain the virus might be the prelude to a broader battle that threatens to hobble the world's second-largest economy. Chinese health authorities on Thursday reported more than 29,000 new infections, the highest daily tally since the pandemic began in the central city of Wuhan more than two years ago. Strict measures appear to be working in China's far Northeast, where local officials are declaring victory following an extended lockdown. Yet localized lockdowns are being newly imposed, expanded or extended elsewhere in the country, including the northern industrial city of Taiyuan, and the southern megacities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-covid-19-lockdowns-spread-beyond-shanghai-to-other-cities-11649949817>

#### **Hong Kong confirms it will ease COVID restrictions from April 21**

Hong Kong confirmed on Thursday it will ease some of the world's most stringent COVID-19 restrictions, allowing beauty parlours, cinemas and gyms to reopen from April 21 as infections in the global financial hub hover below 2,000 per day. The Chinese-ruled city has been hit by a fifth wave of coronavirus since early this year that has battered business and led to more than 8,600 deaths, many in the past two months, although cases have dropped in recent days. Coronavirus restrictions have battered business and helped fuel a net outflow of around 70,000 people in February and March, up from nearly 17,000 in December, raising concerns over the city's status as a global financial centre

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-confirms-it-will-ease-covid-restrictions-april-21-2022-04-14/>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **Mask Mandate Overturned for Planes, Public Transportation by Florida Judge**

A federal judge overturned the U.S. government mask mandate on airplanes, trains and other public transportation, dealing a blow to the Biden administration as fights continue nationwide over policies tied to the Covid-19 pandemic. U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle in Tampa, Florida, vacated the mask requirement nationwide and directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to reverse the policy put in place in February 2021. The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by the Health Freedom Defense Fund. Mizelle, an appointee of former president Donald Trump, ruled that the CDC had incorrectly described the mask mandate as a form of "sanitation" to justify its authority in the matter.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-18/mask-mandate-for-planes-trains-overturned-by-florida-judge>

### **WHO warns coronavirus is far from settling into endemic situation**

COVID-19 is far from becoming an endemic disease and could still trigger large outbreaks around the globe, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. WHO Health Emergencies Programme Director Michael Ryan said on Thursday that it was wrong to think that if COVID-19 settles down and becomes endemic, it will mean the end of the problem. "I certainly do not believe we've reached anything close to an endemic situation with this virus," Ryan told a question-and-answer session on the WHO's social media channels. "That is not an endemic disease yet," he said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/14/coronavirus-far-from-becoming-endemic-says-who>

### **Pfizer, Moderna, J&J See Respiratory Virus RSV as Next Vaccine Target**

After Covid-19, vaccine makers' next big target is a respiratory virus that kills up to 500 children a year nationwide and has been among the leading causes of U.S. hospitalizations for decades. The respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, infects nearly everyone at some point, causing mild, cold-like symptoms for most people. But it can lead to serious health problems such as difficulty breathing and pneumonia for infants and older adults. The virus has for decades eluded efforts to develop a vaccine, including a major setback in the 1960s when an experimental shot harmed some children in testing. RSV is one of the last remaining childhood diseases without an approved vaccine.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-moderna-j-j-see-respiratory-virus-rsv-as-next-vaccine-target-11650015001>

## **Community Activities**

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### **Latino Mortality Rate Spiked 48% in Los Angeles During Covid**

The death rate of Latinos in Los Angeles rose dramatically more than any other ethnic group during the Covid-19 pandemic. Between 2019 and 2021, the percentage rate of deaths for any reason for Latinos spiked 48%, data from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health show. Just under half of the city's population is of Hispanic or Latino descent, according to Census data. While all ethnic groups suffered more than usual deaths during the first year of the pandemic, only the Latino population saw the trend continue the following year. The overall two year mortality-rate for Black people increased 23% and 22% for Asian people, consistent with the broader county statistics. The overall mortality rate for White residents rose by 7% in the two-year span. Black residents in Los Angeles, who comprise just under 9% of the population, still have the highest death rate of any group.

[https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-14/latino-mortality-rate-spiked-48-in-los-angeles-during-covid?srn\\_d=premium-europe](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-14/latino-mortality-rate-spiked-48-in-los-angeles-during-covid?srn_d=premium-europe)

### **WHO: COVID cases, deaths in Africa drop to lowest levels yet**

The number of coronavirus cases and deaths in Africa have dropped to their lowest levels since the pandemic began, marking the longest decline yet seen in the disease, according to the World Health Organization. In a statement on Thursday, the U.N. health agency said COVID-19 infections due to the omicron surge had "tanked" from a peak of more than 308,000 weekly cases to fewer than 20,000 last week. Cases and deaths fell by 29% and 37% respectively in the last week; deaths decreased to 239 from the previous week. "This low level of infection has not been seen since April 2020 in the early stages of the pandemic in Africa," WHO said, noting that no country in the region is currently seeing an increase of COVID-19 cases.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-world-organization-united-nations-africa-b940d5737327c90200dcefff8132513e>

### **U.S. CDC lifts COVID 'Do Not Travel' recommendations on about 90 countries**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Monday it had dropped its "Do Not Travel" COVID-19 recommendations for about 90 international destinations. Last week, the CDC

said it was revising its travel recommendations and said it would its reserve Level 4 travel health notices "for special circumstances, such as rapidly escalating case trajectory or extremely high case counts." The countries and other regions dropped to "Level 3: High," which still discourages travel by unvaccinated Americans, include the United Kingdom, France, Israel, Turkey, Australia, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Spain and Russia.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-cdc-lifts-covid-do-not-travel-recommendations-about-90-countries-2022-04-18/>

### **Officials Adopt New Message on Covid-19 Behaviors: It's Your Call**

In the latest phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, federal and local officials are telling people to decide for themselves how best to protect against the virus. Health officials are leaving it up to people to assess if they need booster shots, whether to wear a mask and how long to isolate after a positive test. Businesses, schools and other entities are scaling back specific guidelines as they prepare for a return to normal. The question of when older adults should get a second vaccine booster is the latest example of the government shifting decisions from broad-based community outreach to personal choice.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/officials-adopt-new-message-on-covid-19-behaviors-its-your-call-11650200403>

### **Guatemala: As COVID misinformation spreads, vaccine doses expire**

On a recent afternoon, the COVID-19 vaccination centre in the heart of the Indigenous Mayan town of Santiago Atitlan was quiet. The health centre had a vaccine supply, but demand was low. The lack of coordination of a Guatemalan government-led campaign to overcome vaccine hesitancy has resulted in the expiration of millions of doses across the country this year, critics have said, as more than half of the population remains unvaccinated. According to Juan Manuel Ramirez, an evangelical preacher in Santiago Atitlan, some community members have taken the vaccine, knowing it helps to protect against severe disease. But others have subscribed to conspiracy theories about its potential dangers. "There are other people who also have other types of thoughts, such as that the vaccine comes with a chip," he told Al Jazeera. "Because of that, there is uncertainty, and therefore they have not been vaccinated. Earlier this month, approximately 1.5 million doses of the Moderna vaccine donated by the United States expired. In March, the same fate befell nearly three million doses of the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine, worth more than \$33m. And by the end of June, more than two million doses of the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines will also expire.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/14/guatemala-as-covid-misinformation-spreads-vaccine-doses-expire>

## **Working Remotely**

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### **Research finds remote work could be key to Britain's 'Levelling Up' plan**

Remote work could enable over 13 million Brits to seize the opportunity to live and work outside the major cities, helping to spread economic opportunity across the UK, according to research by ClickUp. The research found that 45% of the UK workforce believe working remotely from wherever they'd like on a permanent basis is a realistic option. More than half (53%) of Brits believe that living in a major city is important to their career advancement – however if they had the same career prospects living elsewhere as they do now, only 15% of people would choose to continue living in the city.

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/employability/research-finds-remote-work-could-be-key-to-britains-levelling-up-plan/>

### **The workers taking on new 'super commutes'**

Super-commuters aren't a new phenomenon. In sprawling countries like the US, for example, some workers, mainly senior executives, have been commuting long distances for years. But the pandemic has increased this phenomenon, as more people shift to an employment model that combines remote work and occasional visits to the office. Could this new form of commuting be the future, as workers embrace hybrid, and build lives further away from urban hubs?

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220413-the-workers-taking-on-new-super-commutes>

## **4 people on how their company's switch to work-from-anywhere spurred them to move around the world**

While some companies continue to debate remote and hybrid work for their teams, others are embracing a more flexible work-from-anywhere approach. Atlassian, an Australia-based software company with employees around the world, introduced its own "Team Anywhere" policy in August 2020, which allows its 7,388 employees to relocate to another city or country where the company has an established presence and accommodating time zone. Almost two years later, nearly 300 employees have moved to a new country, and hundreds more have relocated within their own country, the company says.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/17/4-atlassian-workers-share-how-work-from-anywhere-spurred-them-to-move.html>

## **Strong support for hybrid model allowing work from home, poll shows**

There is a strong appetite among workers who began working from home during Covid to continue with a mixture of working from home and the office, the latest Irish Times/Ipsos poll has found. The findings suggest that for many people the pandemic has changed their working habits permanently. Of the 61 per cent of respondents to the poll who said they were currently working, almost four in 10 (38 per cent) said they had begun working from home during the pandemic.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/strong-support-for-hybrid-model-allowing-work-from-home-poll-shows-1.4853896>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **"We must show the same sense of urgency to abolish digital poverty for teachers as we do for children.": Tackling the Digital Divide**

The pandemic shone a spotlight on the number of children with limited digital access, and indeed a number of worthwhile schemes sprung up over the pandemic to provide children with devices to get them online. However, in the admirable efforts to improve digital access, one crucial group was neglected – teachers. Recent research from the Digital Poverty Alliance highlighted that 47% of teachers in the UK have struggled with digital connectivity. Many of them must share their home device with others in their household or simply do not have access to a device once they leave work. And when teachers cannot fully engage with technology, their pupils are directly affected, whether connecting remotely or engaging with digital learning in class.

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/exclusive/we-must-show-the-same-sense-of-urgency-to-abolish-digital-poverty-for-teachers-as-we-do-for-children-tackling-the-digital-divide/>

### **Pandemic Learning Was Tough On Everyone. Bilingual Students Faced Additional Challenges**

As with other problems that long dogged the education system, the pandemic exposed the lack of resources along with barriers that English-learning students face in receiving an equitable education, says Leslie Villegas, a senior policy analyst at New America's Education Policy Program. She was part of a research duo that interviewed 20 English-language education leaders across the US to learn how they and students managed during virtual schooling. Their new report found that the sudden shift to remote instruction—and all its limitations—had a "disproportionate impact" on students who were learning English.

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-04-13-pandemic-learning-was-tough-on-everyone-bilingual-students-faced-additional-challenges>

## **Public Policies**

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### **UK's Johnson shredded ministerial code with lockdown breaches, constitutional expert says**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has thrust Britain into a constitutional crisis by breaking the law he set for pandemic restrictions, effectively "shredding the ministerial code", the country's leading

constitutional expert said on Sunday. Peter Hennessy, a historian and member of the upper house of parliament, said Johnson had become "the great debaser in modern times of decency in public and political life" after he was fined by police for attending a social gathering in Downing Street while lockdown restrictions were in place.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-johnson-shredded-ministerial-code-with-lockdown-breaches-constitutional-2022-04-17/>

### **'Last few tweaks' being made to COVID IP waiver deal -WTO chief**

The head of the World Trade Organization told Reuters on Thursday that negotiations on an intellectual property deal for COVID-19 vaccines were ongoing between the four parties, saying they were seeking to agree on the proposal's final terms. Since the draft compromise emerged in the media a month ago, pressure from civil society groups has been rising for the parties - the United States, the European Union, India and South Africa - to walk away from the deal. Other public figures have also criticised it such as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, saying it is too narrowly focused on vaccines

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/last-few-tweaks-being-made-covid-ip-waiver-deal-wto-chief-2022-04-14/>

### **FDA authorizes 1st breath test for COVID-19 infection**

The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday issued an emergency use authorization for what it said is the first device that can detect COVID-19 in breath samples. The InspectIR COVID-19 Breathalyzer is about the size of a piece of carry-on luggage, the FDA said, and can be used in doctor's offices, hospitals and mobile testing sites. The test, which can provide results in less than three minutes, must be carried out under the supervision of a licensed health care provider. Dr. Jeff Shuren, director of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, called the device "yet another example of the rapid innovation occurring with diagnostic tests for COVID-19."

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-technology-health-business-e4b53926558a4e2e9af9856170ee703c>

### **UK clears 6th COVID shot despite canceling deal for doses**

British authorities have authorized a coronavirus vaccine for adults made by French drugmaker Valneva, despite the government's decision last year to cancel an order for at least 100 million doses. The U.K. is the first country to authorize Valneva's vaccine, which is also under review by the European Medicines Agency. Britain's medicines regulator said Thursday that the two-dose vaccine is intended for adults ages 18 to 50, with the second dose given about a month after the first. The Valneva vaccine is made with the decades-old technology used to manufacture shots for flu and polio. It is the sixth COVID-19 vaccine the U.K. has cleared and the only one that utilizes a "killed" virus; scientists grow the coronavirus in a lab and then inactivate the virus so it cannot replicate or infect cells.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-europe-07f8724f211dbeec96e7d93caa9a959b>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **Small Businesses Object to Rerouting of Covid-19 Aid**

Small-business owners are bristling over a congressional proposal that would redirect unspent money from Covid-19 programs to provide \$10 billion for the federal government's pandemic health response, including vaccines and therapeutics. At issue is about \$5 billion that Congress allocated for three small-business aid programs but which hasn't yet been spent. Some lawmakers want to repurpose those existing funds for healthcare, rather than allocate new money, because they are increasingly focused on reining in the federal deficit and spending amid a surge in inflation, which is at a 40-year high. The debate underscores the struggle to fulfill requests made by the Biden administration to address pandemic needs, while also accommodating Republican demands to not spend new money.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/small-businesses-object-to-clawback-of-covid-19-aid-11650274203>

### **Australia's Pandemic-Era Ban on Cruise Ships Comes to an End**

Australia's two-year long ban on cruise ships expires on Sunday, another step toward the rehabilitation of tourism from the damage wrought by the pandemic. The ban on foreign cruise ships -- imposed in March 2020 after a Covid outbreak aboard the Ruby Princess spilled into Sydney once the vessel docked -- cost the Australian economy more than A\$10 billion (\$7.4 billion), the Cruise Lines International Association estimates. Operators "are preparing for a carefully managed resumption of operations in a sector that previously supported more than 18,000 Australian jobs," the association said in a statement ahead of the ban's expiry.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-17/australia-s-pandemic-era-ban-on-cruise-ships-comes-to-an-end>

### **Bangladesh, Nepal celebrate new years after pandemic pause**

After a two-year break, thousands of people in Bangladesh and Nepal on Thursday celebrated their respective new years with colorful processions and musical soirees as the coronavirus pandemic eased and life swung back to normal. In Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, people clad in the traditional red attire ushered in the Bengali year 1429. They marched, sang and danced at a prominent arts college on the Dhaka University campus and in historic Ramna Park. Similar processions were organized in other parts of Dhaka and elsewhere in the country, but the celebration was subdued as the Muslim-majority Bangladesh was also observing the fasting month of Ramadan amid scorching heat.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-nepal-ramadan-dhaka-a8ec149eb468d328cb3fa994b585fb19>

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **Study shows 99% on Indonesia's most populous island have COVID antibodies**

Almost all residents of Indonesia's most populous island of Java have antibodies against COVID-19, owing to a combination of prior infection and vaccination against the virus, a government-commissioned survey showed. The March study of 2,100 people, conducted on Java, home to 150 million people, and Bali, Indonesia's top tourism destination, revealed 99.2% of people had COVID antibodies, a 6 percentage point increase from a December survey. Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist at the University of Indonesia, which conducted the survey with the health ministry, on Monday told Reuters the antibody levels in the latest survey were higher due to a wider booster shot rollout, as recipients had stronger protection.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/study-shows-99-indonesias-most-populous-island-have-covid-antibodies-2022-04-18/>

### **The case for testing Pfizer's Paxlovid for treating long COVID**

Reports of two patients who found relief from long COVID after taking Pfizer Inc's antiviral Paxlovid, including a researcher who tested it on herself, provide intriguing evidence for clinical trials to help those suffering from the debilitating condition, experts and advocates say. The researcher said her chronic fatigue symptoms, which "felt like a truck hit me," are gone after taking the two-drug oral therapy. Long COVID is a looming health crisis, estimated to affect up to 30% of people infected with the coronavirus.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/case-testing-pfizers-paxlovid-treating-long-covid-2022-04-18/>

### **Omicron-specific Sinopharm, Sinovac COVID vaccine candidates cleared for clinical trial**

COVID-19 vaccine candidates developed by a Sinopharm subsidiary and Sinovac Biotech (SVA.O) to target the Omicron variant were approved for clinical trials in Hong Kong, the companies said on Saturday. Scientists worldwide are racing to study upgraded injections against Omicron, as data indicated that antibodies elicited by vaccines based on older strains show weaker activity to

neutralise the highly transmissible variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-specific-sinopharm-covid-vaccine-candidates-cleared-clinical-trial-2022-04-16/>

### **Pfizer Says Covid-19 Booster in Children Ages 5 to 11 Sparked Immune Response Against Omicron**

A booster dose of the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE Inc. generated a strong immune response in children 5 to 11 years old, an encouraging sign for youngsters to maintain protection against the virus. The companies said Thursday that a late-stage study of a booster found the extra shot significantly increased antibody levels against the Omicron variant. The shot also raised antibody supply against the initial strain the vaccines were designed to fight. The booster shot was found to be safe and well-tolerated among the children in the study, the companies said. The results haven't been peer-reviewed by independent experts or published in a medical journal. Separate studies have found that adults who receive a third dose of mRNA vaccines are less likely to become infected, or to develop severe disease, than those who got two doses.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-says-covid-19-booster-sparked-immune-response-against-omicron-in-children-ages-5-to-11-11649933284>

### **Fourth shot protects against severe Omicron outcomes; COVID may increase risk of rare eye blood clots**

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Fourth vaccine dose protects vs Omicron for at least a month. A fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech provided significant added protection against severe disease, hospitalization and death for at least a month in older individuals, according to a study from Israel conducted when the Omicron variant was dominant. The estimated effectiveness of the fourth dose during days 7 to 30 after it was administered compared with a third dose given at least fourth months earlier was 45% against infection, 55% for symptomatic disease.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/fourth-shot-protects-against-severe-omicron-outcomes-covid-may-increase-risk-2022-04-14/>