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Southern DAILY

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Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group

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Monday June 29 2020 | www.today-america.com | Southern News Group

New pandemic lockdowns in Texas, Florida rattle business owners

HOUSTON/MIAMI (Reuters) - Bar and restaurant owners in Texas and Florida were fuming on Friday after state officials abruptly slapped new restrictions on their businesses due to a spike in new COVID-19 cases.

FILE PHOTO: Agents from the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission check that bars are maintaining social distancing protocols to help slow the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Austin, Texas, U.S. May 22, 2020. REUTERS/Nuri Vallbona
Owners warned the sudden reversals, just weeks after accelerated reopenings, will drive some out of business.

"You can't turn a bar into an UberEats," said Jeff Kaplan, co-owner of Houston's Axelrad Beer Garden. He said businesses could not stay afloat relying on the new rules that provide to-go sales but not alcohol consumption on the premises.

Houston officials advised residents to stay home, and Texas ordered doctors to end elective surgeries as new coronavirus cases set records on three consecutive days. Florida reported nearly 9,000 new infections on Friday, also a record high.

Houston restaurant owner Peter Mitchell said his revenue has been running a third of normal and fell further as virus cases soared in the region.

"It'll be a close call as to whether we stay open," he said.



"I wish we had tougher restrictions for another month when we did the 25% occupancy (phase)," said Mitchell. He said his business never has exceeded 25% occupancy, but noted that no regulators have ever checked.

Florida owners also complained that counties and cities in the state had inconsistent operating rules. "The level of ambiguity that we've run into every step of the way has been really challenging," said Will Thompson, owner

of Miami's Jaguar Sun. "It comes back to the lack of clarity from officials."

Anthony Wegmann, who ran four bars and restaurants in Texas, closed two after a landlord would not grant a reprieve on rent. "There's no way a business can pay 100% of their bills on 25% of their revenue," he said. Some are willing to accept the loss of business for the public good. "It was a little unexpected," said Sara Murray, manager of the Cheers Pub in Friendswood, Texas. "In the end we all have to do what we have to do to keep everyone safe.

Some U.S. food suppliers forego China contracts over coronavirus curbs, trade group says

CHICAGO (Reuters) - Chinese demands that overseas suppliers guarantee their food shipments are free of the novel coronavirus are causing some shippers to forego the China trade, an industry group representing U.S. produce growers said on Friday.

Western Growers, which represents companies that produce half of U.S. fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, confirmed that many of its members had received such requests from Chinese authorities.

"It's changing how some of our growers are reacting to the marketplace," said Dennis Nuxoll, the trade group's vice president of federal government affairs. "Some of them are not going to export."

Nuxoll declined to say which companies were backing away from shipments to China.

Western Growers complained this week to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Trade Representative over the issue, and the government said it would take it up, Nuxoll said.

The USDA and USTR did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a statement on Wednesday, the USDA and U.S. Food and Drug Administration said: "Efforts by some countries to restrict global food exports related to COVID-19 transmission are not consistent with the known science of transmission."

China, where the coronavirus pandemic originated, is trying to prevent any possibility of new infections coming from imported goods as it takes aggressive measures to contain a

recent spike linked to a wholesale food market in Beijing.

Global meat exporters like JBS SA (JBSS3.SA), along with some U.S. produce suppliers, have agreed to sign declarations ensuring the safety of their shipments. Others that export produce and soybeans have scoffed.

Produce exporters are nervous that Chinese authorities could reject perishable goods, making the shipments a total loss, Nuxoll said.

"We are aware that the Trump Administration has objected to China's actions and request that the administration continue to pressure the Chinese government until it reverses this ill-timed and scientifically indefensible trade barrier," said Dave Puglia, Western Growers' president and chief executive.



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‘The government is failing us’: Laid-off Americans struggle in coronavirus crisis

(Reuters) - For Claudia Alejandra, unemployment has become a full-time job.

Claudia Alejandra, 37, furloughed from her job at the makeup counter at Macy's amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), poses for a portrait near a lake in Orlando, Florida, U.S., March 6, 2020. REUTERS/Kevin Kolczynski

Since losing her position at the makeup counter at the Macy's department store in Orlando, Florida, on March 28, Alejandra spends her days trying to secure the unemployment benefits that should have arrived weeks ago, sometimes placing more than 100 calls a day.

The online application, a 10-hour ordeal of error messages, ended with a notice that her identity could not be verified. If she's lucky, she'll reach a representative who will say there's nothing they can do to help. Otherwise, it's a busy signal, or an hours-long wait on hold, followed by a sudden hang-up.

Alejandra, 37, cashed out her retirement fund — \$800, a year's worth of savings — to make the monthly payments on her 2010 Mazda, but doesn't know how she'll pay the rent for her studio apartment or her phone bill. Longer-term goals — a promotion, a family, a house of her own — seem even more elusive.

Alejandra's experience is similar to that of more than two dozen Americans thrown out of work during the coronavirus pandemic who Reuters interviewed over the past week.

While U.S. government guidelines say jobless workers who qualify for assistance should get payments within three weeks of applying, many — like Alejandra — are waiting twice that long. Increasingly desperate, some are lining up at food banks or bargaining with landlords to postpone bills. Most fill their days seeking answers from overwhelmed state bureaucracies.

Alejandra has not heard anything from the state —



though she has gotten a fundraising email from Republican Senator Rick Scott, who set up the current unemployment system during his tenure as governor. "I feel like the government is failing us," she said in a telephone interview. Florida has overhauled and expanded the computer system and brought in 2,000 agents to field calls, and plans an investigation of the system's failings, Governor Ron DeSantis said at a Monday news conference. People who applied in March and haven't gotten payments yet likely have not provided all of the required information or might not

be eligible, he said. "You've started to see a really significant volume of payments going out, and it's really taken a major overhaul behind the scenes," he said. His office did not respond to an email with detailed questions on the situation. In the past six weeks, states have struggled to process over 33 million jobless claims, more than they typically see in a year. That figure does not capture those who have been unable to even file a claim due to bureaucratic hurdles — up to 14 million more, according to an Econom-

ic Policy Institute study released last week. The Reuters interviews across four states — Florida, Michigan, Arizona and Minnesota — revealed a wide disparity in whether or when people received payments depending on where they live. In Minnesota, where state employees field queries on social media platforms as well as by phone, six out of seven jobless people said they were getting benefits — sometimes more than they were earning before.

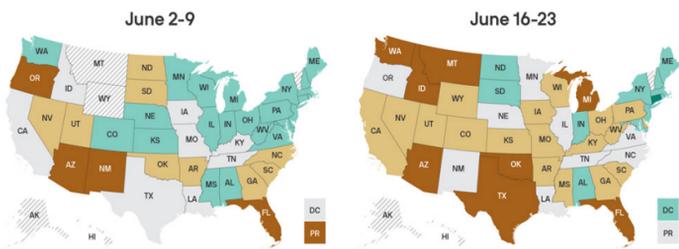
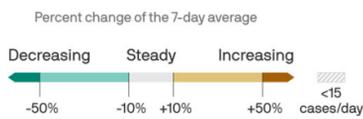
Stay Home!

BUSINESS

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The COVID-19 Pandemic Is Getting Dramatically Worse In Almost Every Corner Of The U.S. The Coronavirus Surge Is Real, And It's Everywhere

Change in new COVID-19 cases



(Graphic/Sam Baker, Andrew Witherspoon; Data: The COVID Tracking Project, state health departments; Map: Andrew Witherspoon, Sara Wise, Danielle Alberti/Axios)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The big picture: The U.S. today is getting closer to the worst-case scenario envisioned in the spring — a nationwide crisis, made worse by a vacuum of political leadership, threatening to overwhelm hospitals and spread out of control. Nationwide, cases are up 30% compared to the beginning of this month, and dramatically worsening outbreaks in several states are beginning to strain hospital capacity — the same concern that prompted the nationwide lockdown in the first place. This is by far the grimmest map in the eight weeks since we began tracking the change in new cases in every state.

By the numbers: Over half the country -- 26 states -- have seen their coronavirus caseloads increase over the past week. New cases are up 77% in Arizona, 75% in Michigan, 70% in Texas and 66% in Florida. California, which has seen steady increases for weeks, recorded a 47% jump in new infections over the past week. These steep increases come after weeks of steady

climbing cases or back-and-forth results across the South, Midwest and West Coast. Only the New York region and parts of New England — the earliest hotspots — have consistently managed to get their caseloads down throughout May and June.

Increased testing does not explain away these numbers. Other data points make clear that we're seeing a worsening outbreak, not simply getting better data. Seven states, including Arizona, have set records for the number of people hospitalized with coronavirus, and the percentage of all tests that come back positive is also increasing. The whole point of the national lockdown was to buy time to improve testing and give infection levels a chance to level off without overwhelming hospitals. That worked in New York, but as other parts of the country begin to see their outbreaks intensify later, the same risks are back at the forefront.

What's next: Younger people are making up a greater share of all cases, and tend to be less susceptible to serious injury or

death, so hopefully this spike in new cases won't be followed by an equivalent spike in deaths. But it's too early to say that for sure.

Weekly Coronavirus Dashboard

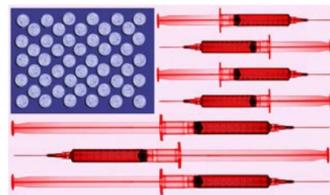


Illustration: Annelise Capossela/Axios

- 1. Global:** Total confirmed cases as of 4 p.m. ET: 9,506,788 — Total deaths: 484,406 — Total recoveries — 4,786,056 — Map.
- 2. U.S.:** Total confirmed cases as of 4 p.m. ET: 2,407,167 — Total deaths: 122,370 — Total recoveries: 656,161 — Total tested: 28,567,355 — Map.
- 3. Public health:** New guidance shows young people with obesity and other health conditions are at risk — CDC says there could be 10 times more U.S. coronavirus cases than reported.
- 4. Science:** Face masks can help control coronavirus spread.
- 5. 2020 election:** Biden says Trump is "worried about looking bad" with COVID tests.
- 6. Sports:** Kentucky Derby rescheduled for September, will allow audience.

Related
Coronavirus Q&A: masks, lending books and self-isolating



Illustration: Aida Amer/Axios

As the coronavirus continues to spread throughout the U.S., a big priority is an-

swering readers' questions about the pandemic — how it spreads, who's at risk, and what you can do to stay safe.

Q: What are the best practices for reusing and cleaning face masks?

- **For cloth masks:** The CDC advises laundering the masks in a washing machine with detergent.

- The University of Utah advises going a step further and recommends washing masks in water that's at least 160°F with soap or detergent. It also recommends soaking cloth masks for 5 minutes in a solution of 2 tablespoons of bleach per quart of water.

- **For N95 masks:** The FDA does not recommend the reuse of N95 masks by the general public. It advises that the general public use cloth masks and keep N95s available for health care professionals.

Q: What is the best way to keep up with specialist appointments like physical therapy?

- Surgeon General Jerome Adams advises postponing elective surgeries to avoid stressing the hospital system and possibly exposing patients to the virus.

- The American Physical Therapy Association recommends rescheduling non-urgent in-person care. It's worth noting that many physical therapists are utilizing tele-health and video conferencing to work with their patients.

- Communicate with your health care provider about possible alternatives and the best way to move forward.



Q: How long should I self-isolate after testing positive?

- The CDC published guidelines for how and when to discontinue isolation after testing positive. The signs for recovery include: 3 days without fever and without the use of fever-reducing medicines, improvement of respiratory symptoms, and the passage of 7 days since the symptoms first appeared.

- The CDC site also notes that you can request a test to confirm recovery, but they may be limited.

- Those who tested positive for the virus but don't have symptoms should isolate for at least 7 days after their first positive diagnostic test. **Your doctor** can provide the best guidance for your specific health concerns.

Q: Can I microwave or freeze my food to kill the virus on the packages? The FDA says there's no evidence of food packaging or food itself being associated with coronavirus transmission. The CDC states that coronaviruses generally "survive for shorter periods at higher temperatures and higher humidity than in cooler or dryer environments," but there isn't any direct data to support a temperature-based cutoff for the virus.



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Editor's Choice



People hold up portraits of transgender women during a Black Trans Lives Matter rally in Brooklyn, New York City, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Stephanie Keith



People participate in a Black Trans Lives Matter rally in Brooklyn, New York City, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Stephanie Keith



Demonstrators make their way down Colfax Avenue during the Pride Liberation March, an event highlighting the Black Lives Matter movement within the LGBTQ community in Denver, Colorado, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Kevin Mohatt



Demonstrators pass the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception waving a rainbow colored flag during the Pride Liberation March, an event highlighting the Black Lives Matter movement within the LGBTQ community in Denver, Colorado, June 14, 2020. MORE



Zim Gagne raises her fist at the Pride Liberation March, an event highlighting the Black Lives Matter movement within the LGBTQ community in Denver, Colorado, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Kevin Mohatt



A large crowd gathers in Cheeseman Park for the Pride Liberation March, an event highlighting the Black Lives Matter movement within the LGBTQ community in Denver, Colorado, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Kevin Mohatt



A participant raises his fist against police officer during an All Black Lives Matter march, organized by Black LGBTQ+ leaders, in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, June 14, 2020. REUTERS/Ringo Chiu



A man is injured after being hit in the head by an object at a protest near the Minneapolis Police third precinct after a white police officer was caught on a bystander's video pressing his knee into the neck of African-American man George Floyd

COVID-19 Breaking News--
Which U.S. Media Outlets Led In Early Coverage Of The Coronavirus?



Extensive analysis of major news organizations reveals some surprising findings when it comes to who covered COVID-19 from the outset — and who didn't.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

CHICAGO — Rewind back to January or February of this year and the coronavirus seemed like an obscure outbreak impacting China. Americans didn't pay much mind to it because it didn't effect their lives — but also because the media hype was rather tepid. We all know how the following months played out, and now we're left wondering how we were all so unprepared for what happened in March.

Researchers are working to better understand how the coronavirus crept up on Americans like a waking nightmare. To that end, marketing firm Digital Third Coast performed an in-depth analysis of online COVID-19 news coverage between January 6th and March 6th. The study, *Waking Up to Covid-19: An Analysis of American Media Coverage*, uses The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, an online tool that captures

snapshots of web pages as they appeared on any given prior date. The report examines 18 of the nation's biggest online news sources to see how quickly and seriously they started to cover COVID-19 in the beginning of the year. For each news source, coronavirus-related headlines clearly visible at first glance on their homepages were counted across the aforementioned time-period.



An Early report on "China's Mystery"

"Virus Outbreak" in Bloomberg News. Early birds

Right off the bat, the results of the analysis make one thing very clear: financial news sources were the first to pick up on COVID-19. It's believed this is because these outlets knew the virus would absolutely devastate the global economy. Bloomberg News takes the gold for early coverage of the virus. The organization beat out any other news source between January and March, displaying 49 articles on COVID-19 prominently. After that, The Washington Post comes in second (32 stories), followed by Reuters (31) and The Wall Street Journal (31). In fact, by the end of January, Bloomberg, The WSJ, and Reuters account for an unbelievable 46% of all coronavirus U.S. online news articles readily displayed on homepages. Where was everyone else? For reference, within the examined time period, ABC News displayed 23 COVID-19 stories on the top portion of their homepage; the New York Times had 21; CBS News 18; NBC News 17; and BuzzFeed published just one.

To be clear, these numbers are not the total amount of COVID-19 articles published by these sources. These are the number of articles that appear "above the fold." That means the headlines sit among the top stories and easily readable without having to scroll down from the homepage.



Not all news rooms placed "news value" on the "virus outbreak in China" at the time.

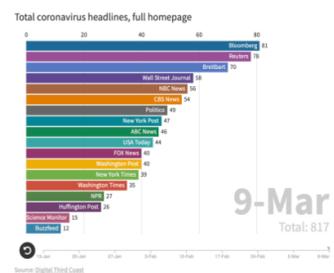
Bloomberg, Reuters tops in COVID-19 news coverage

Now that we've covered above the fold stories, what about lead stories? When investigators looked into how many news outlets displayed a COVID-19

post as the top story on their home page, Reuters and Bloomberg again led the pack with six top stories each. Next came ABC News (5), The NY Times (5), and The Wall Street Journal (4). It's also worth mentioning that the NY Times and ABC News clearly recognized what was coming. Both outlets had four straight weeks of COVID-19 lead stories heading into the middle of March 2020.

Finally, investigators also counted the total number of coronavirus articles available on news platforms' homepages. So, even if the article sits buried at the bottom of the page, it counts for this analysis.

Once again, Bloomberg and Reuters claim first and second on the list, with 81 and 78 stories respectively. The third place spot goes to Breitbart News with 70 COVID-19 stories. After that comes the Wall Street Journal (58), NBC News (56), and CBS News (54). Perhaps surprisingly, the Washington Post and NY Times have only about half the number of stories as the leaders. BuzzFeed remains in last, with just 12 articles.



So why do some major news outlets like CNN or the Associated Press not appear in the study? The authors say some websites restrict the Internet Archive from using their content.

The team behind the project admits that not all organizations operate the same, so some may have had more opportunities to display COVID-19 news on the front page. Additionally, the world of news media is a fast paced one, and it's certainly understandable that at the time the coronavirus probably didn't initially pose as a big deal. Still, all things con-

sidered, these results suggest that outlets should be more diligent about emerging health crises in the future. (Courtesy studyfinds.org)



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