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European Languages

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## ***As US daily COVID-19 cases surpass 100,000, White House makes clear that it will take no serious action***

The sixth surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations in the United States is deepening each day, driven by the highly infectious and immune-resistant Omicron BA.2 and BA.2.12.1 subvariants.

According to the BNO|Medriva Newsroom, on Wednesday the US recorded nearly 190,000 new cases, pushing the seven-day average of daily new cases to well over 100,000. According to the *New York Times*, hospitalizations now stand at 22,875, a 27 percent increase over the last 14 days. The *Times* reports that cases are now rising in 49 states, and hospitalizations are rising in 45 states, with Puerto Rico and Washington D.C. also seeing a rise in both figures.

These official figures are known to be significant undercounts due to the bipartisan, deliberate undermining of testing and data reporting at the federal and state levels since the height of the Omicron BA.1 surge in January 2022. Only four states are now reporting COVID-19 data on a daily basis, while 13 states report once per week or less frequently.

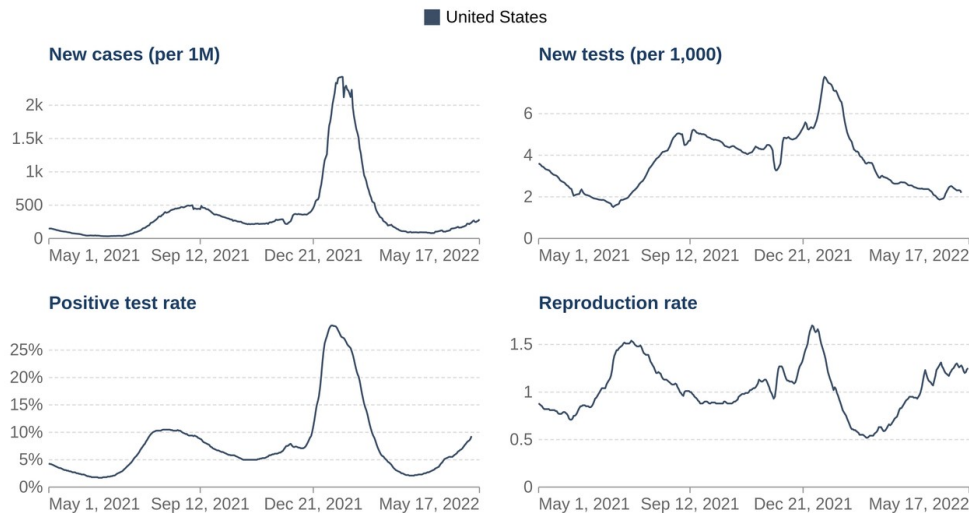
Testing has declined across the country and is near the lowest point reached last summer. At the same time, test positivity rates are climbing daily and now stand at an elevated 9.3 percent, indicating that the vast majority of infections are not being detected. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimates that the real number of daily new cases is upwards of 437,000 per day.

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## COVID-19 cases, tests, positive rate, and reproduction rate

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections. Comparisons across countries are affected by differences in testing policies and reporting methods.

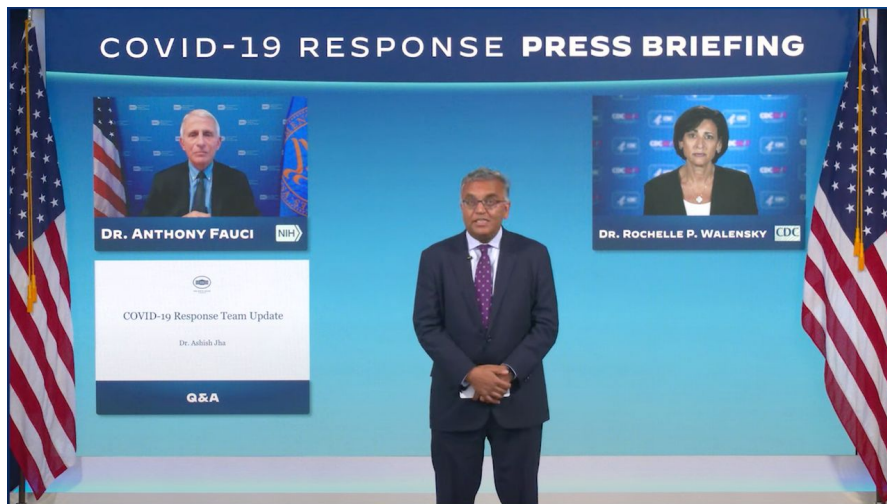


Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data, Official data collated by Our World in Data, Arroyo-Marioli F, Bullano F, Kucinskas S, Rondón-Moreno C (2021) Tracking R of COVID-19: A new real-time estimation using the Kalman filter. CC BY

In response to this escalating crisis, which has been steadily growing since early April, the only measure taken by the White House has been to give households the ability to request eight free at-home rapid tests, which only 8.5 million US households have ordered since Tuesday. Isolated from a broader strategy to use every available public health measure to identify and contain all infections, this at-home testing will do nothing to stem the growing tide of infections, hospitalizations and deaths in the US.

After a six-week hiatus, on Wednesday morning the White House COVID Response Team held a press briefing, in what amounted to criminals returning to the scene of their crime.

The three spokespeople for the Biden administration present at the briefing—Response Team Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Dr. Anthony Fauci and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky—are deeply implicated in the homicidal pandemic policies that have killed over 420,000 Americans in the past year. While Jha was not an official member of the Biden administration until last month, he has spent the past year parroting all of its unscientific policies in countless television interviews.



Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials 05/18/22. (Screenshot/YouTube)

Significantly, none of the three even mentioned the tragic milestone of 1 million deaths from COVID-19 in the US, which was finally recognized by Biden last week with perfunctory remarks. The only official commemoration of this milestone involved the lowering of flags to half-staff at government buildings, which concluded on Monday.

The press conference amounted to a mass of contradictions, lies and evasions intended to once again disarm the American population to the growing threat of COVID-19. Each of the three speakers acknowledged the presently growing wave of infections and the potential for a catastrophic surge this fall and winter but made no mention of the public health measures necessary to stop this catastrophe from unfolding.

While repeatedly referring to the “tools” supposedly being deployed by the federal government, the terms “mass testing,” “contact tracing,” “isolation,” “quarantine,” “mask mandates,” “airborne,” “aerosol,” “N95,” “lockdowns” and “school closures” were not uttered once by any of the so-called experts. Instead, they made clear that the Biden administration will maintain its bankrupt vaccine-only strategy, combined with the promotion of the antiviral treatment Paxlovid.

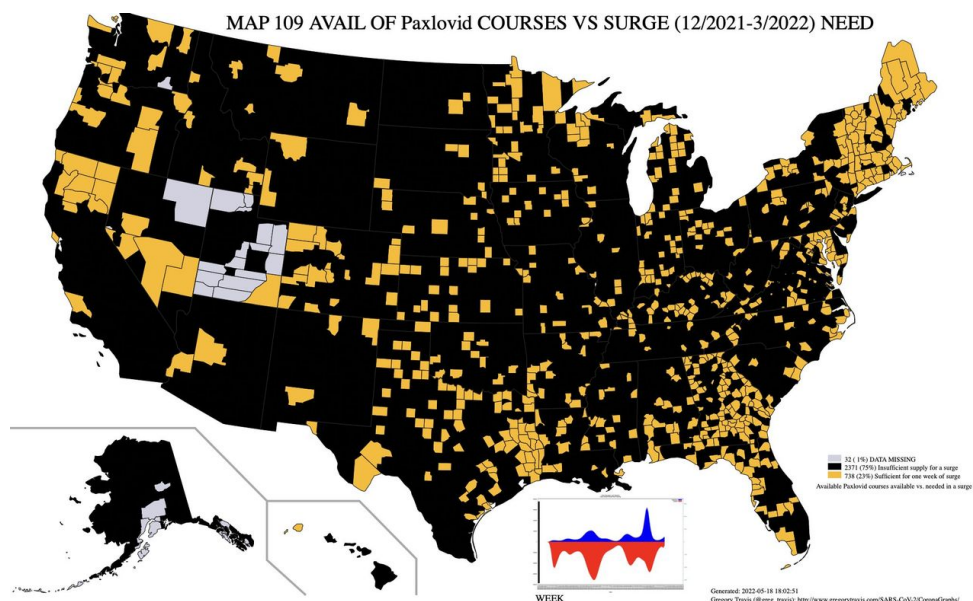
There were repeated references to masking but always in the context of the individualistic and unscientific framework of the CDC Community Levels guidelines. These politically motivated guidelines were rolled out just prior to Biden’s State of the Union address to enable him to present the pandemic as over.

Notably, the briefing was held remotely, with each of the three speakers and all reporters safely participating in separate locations. After telling the American population that large, in-person, maskless gatherings are safe, the White House COVID Response Team evidently prescribes a very different set of guidelines for themselves.

The briefing was begun by Jha, appointed in March to replace the multimillionaire Jeff Zients as the White House COVID Response Team Coordinator. Touting the latest provision of at-home rapid tests, Jha absurdly stated, “Given the spread of infections that’s happening across the country, we know use of rapid tests is a very effective way of keeping infections down. You can test yourself before you go to a large gathering, before you go visit someone vulnerable.”

Jha falsely claimed that the US has ample supplies of Paxlovid to treat patients during the current surge, saying that roughly 20,000 courses are being prescribed each day. However, the overwhelming majority of the over 100,000 Americans officially testing positive for COVID-19 each day are symptomatic and would benefit from Paxlovid but are not being provided with the treatment.

According to health care expert Gregory Travis, 75 percent of all US counties lack sufficient supply of Paxlovid for one week of the average number of infections during the three-month Omicron BA.1 surge, as shown in the map below.



Map showing availability of Paxlovid in all US counties. Orange counties have enough Paxlovid on hand to supply people's needs for one week of a surge comparable to the

average during the Omicron BA.1 surge last winter. Counties in black have inadequate supply to last even one week under such conditions. (Credit: Gregory Travis)

As he has done in media appearances in recent weeks, Jha emphasized that federal pandemic funding has completely dried up. He said, “[w]e’re in the middle of developing new vaccines, potentially bivalent vaccines,” which could protect against both Omicron and another variant. However, he stated, “without additional funding from Congress, we will not be able to buy enough vaccines for every American.”

Regarding treatments, he added, “without additional resources, we will find ourselves in the fall or winter with people getting infected and no treatments available for them because we will have run out.”

Dr. Jha remains unphased by this looming catastrophe, as he has “been spending a lot of time with our friends in Congress on making sure that we have the resources we need to continue to protect the American people.” Responding to a question about this, Jha added, “I think I’ve met with more Republicans than Democrats.”

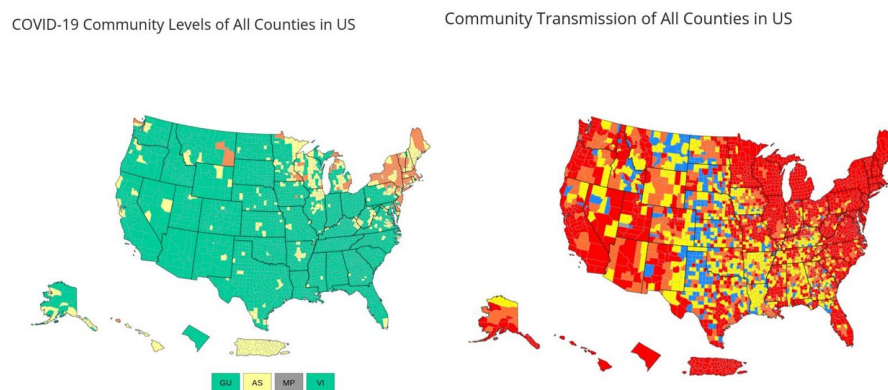
He concluded, “I remain very, very confident that Congress will step up and protect the American people.” He went on to reiterate this delusional “confidence” three more times in the course of the press briefing.

The “friends” to whom Jha is appealing and is “confident” will “protect the American people” are the increasingly fascistic Republicans who orchestrated a coup to overthrow the US Constitution on January 6, 2021, whom Biden then referred to as his “colleagues.” Dominant sections of the Republican Party, led above all by Donald Trump, have propagated far-right conspiracy theories surrounding the pandemic and mobilized fascist forces to oppose masking, vaccinations and all other public health measures.

In her remarks, Dr. Walensky highlighted the flat-lining of vaccination rates among elderly Americans, despite the Biden administration’s single-minded focus on promoting vaccines as a magic bullet to save lives. Fully 57 percent of people aged 65 and older, as well as 62 percent of those aged 50-64, received their latest vaccine over six months ago, indicating that the majority of the elderly population has waning immunity and faces a growing risk of severe infection and death from COVID-19.

Walensky then shamelessly presented the CDC’s latest Community Levels data, which claim that only 32 percent of Americans live in areas of “medium” or “high” risk from COVID-19. Based primarily on hospitalization rates and hospital capacity, this metric is totally unscientific and falsely claims that those in green counties are at “low” risk from COVID-19.

As shown below, the contrast could not be more stark between this rosy picture and that gleaned from a map using the prior calculation of risk for COVID-19 infection, which was correctly based on the metric of new cases per 100,000 residents in each county.



Maps showing the CDC Community Levels based primarily on hospitalizations (left) vs. Community Transmission based on new cases per 100,000 residents (right) (Credit: CDC)

For areas of “medium” and “high” Community Levels—where infections skyrocketed weeks ago and hospitals are now being overrun—the only advice Walensky offered was to “urge local leaders to encourage use of prevention strategies like masking in public indoor settings.” Again, no mention was made of mask mandates, which the Democrats claim lack popular support despite numerous polls showing their popularity.

When asked later about the increasingly reported phenomenon of “rebound infections” among people who take Paxlovid and whether they should self-isolate to protect others, Walensky replied, “We’ve always said in our CDC recommendations that if you have symptoms, that you should put your mask on. So we would say if your symptoms recrudescence, that we would recommend putting your mask back on.”



This amounted to a doubling down on the CDC's unscientific scrapping of isolation and quarantine protocols last December, which was directly prompted by lobbying from the airline industry.

In his comments, Dr. Fauci spoke of the evolution of new variants throughout the pandemic, highlighting the fact that each new variant has proven to be more transmissible than the last.

While presenting a graphic and data showing that the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants are more transmissible than BA.2 and BA.2.12.1 and are causing yet another surge of infections in South Africa, Fauci refrained from warning the American public that these variants could soon sweep across the US. Last week, the European CDC became the first public health agency to classify BA.4 and BA.5 as Variants of Concern.

Taken as a whole, the White House press briefing amounts to the total abrogation of the most basic duties of public health. Drs. Jha, Fauci and Walensky have once again proven to be dutiful servants of the ruling class, prioritizing the profit interests of American capitalism over the health of the population.

The refusal of the American government to do anything to address the latest surge of COVID-19 underscores the basic truth that the fight against the pandemic will only be taken forward by the working class, youth and progressive layers of the middle class, including scientists, independently of the capitalist political parties and in unity with workers throughout the world.

The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to build networks of rank-and-file committees at every factory, school and workplace, in the US and internationally, to build a mass movement fighting to stop the pandemic and save lives. Fill out the form below to get involved in this struggle.

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