COVID-19 media surveillance

26 November 2020; 20:30 weekly brief

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) remains a mayor news topic, with 85 thousand articles per day (in 70 languages, as detected by EMM/MEDISYS).

Figure 1 Media reports on Covid-19 (source: EMM/MEDISYS)

Figure 2 Geolocations mentioned in coronavirus media reports showing clusters of media reports (source: EMM/MEDISYS)

Headlines

- US: millions of Americans risk traveling over Thanksgiving despite Covid-19 warnings
- India: schools in Delhi unlikely to reopen until vaccine is available
- Brazil reports rising case numbers in 21 states with more than 45,000 new daily cases
- Vaccine developer AstraZeneca has been criticized for lack of transparency in data from clinical trials
- Spain: every region, except the Canary Islands, has seen a drop in the 14-day cumulative number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants
- France: new infections and hospitalisations decline again in France
- Germany will extend lockdown measures until 20 December and called for closure of ski stations until 10 January
- Belgium has the highest Covid-19 death rate in the world with 1,385 per 1 million residents
- Luxembourg reported 773 new cases and 6 deaths
- Bulgaria closed schools, restaurants, shopping malls and gyms until 21 December
- Greece extended its lockdown until 7 December
- Lithuania extends lockdown until 17 December as COVID-19 cases surge
- Croatia will close cafes and restaurants and ban weddings until Christmas
- Sweden: COVID-19 has dropped life expectancy in Sweden by the biggest amount since 1944, as a top official warns there is 'no signs' of herd immunity
- UK: infection rates in England are continuing to show signs of levelling off, but the picture across the UK is mixed
- Russia has reported a new single-day record of 25,487 cases
- New Zealand reported one new case in managed isolation
- South Korea reported third wave amid surge of 583 new daily cases
- China has reported results of mass testing with new cases in Shanghai and Tianjin as it seeks to prevent small outbreaks from becoming larger ones; Sinopharm has applied for regulatory approval of their vaccine for public use, but nearly 1 million people have already taken experimental shots
- Japan may call new state of emergency according to Cabinet minister leading the country's pandemic response

Twitter

The following news were found among the most mentioned/retweeted items:

- "A growing number of Americans are going hungry. 26 million now say they don't have enough to eat, as the pandemic worsens and holidays near" (washingtonpost)
- "Ga. Sen. Perdue boosts wealth with well-timed stock trades" (apnews)
- "Most coronavirus cases are spread by people without symptoms, CDC now says" (cnn)
- "Madrid is not a miracle, but a job well done" (marseillenews)
- "Denver Mayor said 'Avoid Travel' 30 Minutes before he boarded plane to visit family" (dailycaller)
- "The AstraZeneca Covid Vaccine Data Isn't Up to Snuff" (wired)
- "Italy's doctors face new threat: conspiracy theories" (politico)
- "Coronavirus vaccine hesitancy could spoil the party in 2021. People aren't in a huge rush to get their shot." (politico)

The most mentioned English sources were the New York Times, CNN, Yahoo News, AP News, and the Washington Post.

El Diario, El Universal, RT (Spanish Version), and El País, and Le Monde and Le Parisien were among the most mentioned Spanish and French sources, respectively.

Fact Check

Fact checked: health-related and anti-vax claims

- Fact checkers debunk claims that vitamins C and E, alkaline foods and warm lemon water can help prevent coronavirus infections (lupa).
- Fact checkers address messages claiming that "99% of those who got COVID-19 recovered without any vaccine" and questioning "why the government thinks that our immune system cannot fight the coronavirus", reporting that, in Mexico, where the messages started to spread, the percentage of people who have recovered from COVID-19 is 74 per cent (animalpolitico).
- Fact checkers address claims that the COVID-19 vaccine will not work because the coronavirus is constantly mutating, noting that even in the worst-case scenario where the virus mutates, vaccines with proven effectiveness have the potential to have a positive effect in stopping the spread of the disease (teyit).
- Fact checkers debunk claims that the COVID-19 vaccine contains microchips that "can control the human mind" (animalpolitico).

Fact checked: downplaying the pandemic

- Fact checkers debunk claims that the WHO has confirmed that COVID-19 is not more deadly than the flu (tjekdet).
- Fact checkers address claims that there were more suicide deaths than coronavirus deaths in the last two months, reporting that there is no evidence for this given that it takes time to formally register a suicide death and official figures on recent suicides do not yet exist (fullfact).

Joint
Research
Centre