

TIME



## THE CORONAVIRUS BRIEF

Thursday, October 8, 2020

[BY JEFFREY KLUGER](#)

### The Pandemic Dominated the Vice Presidential Debate

Vice President Mike Pence and California Senator Kamala Harris had an easy task ahead of them in [Wednesday's vice presidential debate](#): make it better—[more cordial, more substantive and less chaotic](#)—than their bosses' inaugural face-off last week. They cleared that very low bar.

Neither candidate [told the other to shut up](#) or hurled invectives, and discussions of actual policy—almost unthinkable in last week's debate—dominated the majority of the night. It was the coronavirus that, again and again, led the conversation—inevitable, perhaps, with the constant visual reminder of plexiglass dividers separating the two candidates.

The debate began with moderator Susan Page asking about the two campaigns' varying responses to the pandemic. Harris opened by laying out the case against the Trump Administration's handling of the coronavirus. “The American people have witnessed the greatest failure of any presidential administration in our history,” Harris said. She did not outline a specific response that she and Biden would pursue if they were to take office in January, but repeatedly hammered President Donald Trump for downplaying the virus and telling Americans it was less dangerous than it is while millions of people lost jobs and lives. “They knew and they covered it up,” she added.

Pence hit back by defending the Administration's response and said he constantly thinks about the victims of the virus, but that the White House wanted to respect the “freedom” of the American people.

“You respect the American people when you tell them the truth,” Harris replied.

When asked whether she would take a coronavirus vaccine, Harris said she would—but only if doctors and scientists approved of its release. “If the public

health professionals, if Dr. Fauci, if the doctors, tell us that we should take it, I'll be the first in line to take it, absolutely," she said, then smiled broadly. "But if Donald Trump tells us to take it, I'm not taking it."

Pence replied that Harris was undermining public trust in the vaccine. "Stop playing politics with people's lives," he said.

Mistrust of vaccines is a significant issue in America. Before becoming President, Trump [spread misinformation](#) about vaccines, but this year, he has insisted that a COVID-19 vaccine could be out by the November election. Scientists and vaccine makers say that if everything goes smoothly, [some people could get a vaccine](#) by the end of this year.

With the next presidential debate between Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden just a week away and the President still recuperating from his bout with COVID-19, the Commission on Presidential Debates announced this morning that the engagement would take place virtually, rather than in person. Biden quickly accepted the change in plans; Trump rejected it, throwing into question whether the debate would take place at all, or, with close to four weeks remaining to election day, we have already seen the last direct face-off among any of the candidates.

[Read more on the VP debate here](#) from my colleagues Abigail Abrams, Alana Abramson, Tessa Berenson and Justin Worland.

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## TODAY'S CORONAVIRUS OUTLOOK

## CASES

	total	Oct. 7	14-day change
GLOBAL	36,156,226	352,460	+6.8% ↗
U.S.	7,549,682	50,341	-4.2% ↘

## DEATHS

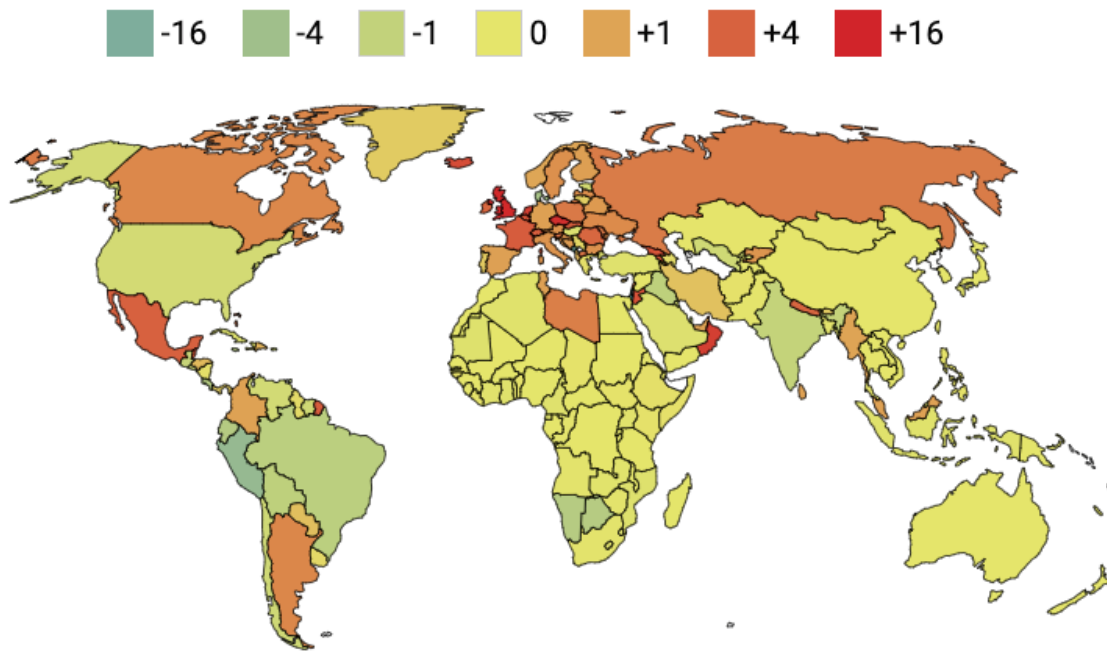
GLOBAL	1,055,683	5,955	+6.0% ↗
U.S.	211,801	915	-18.8% ↘

## RECENT SINGLE-DAY CASE RECORDS IN THE U.S.

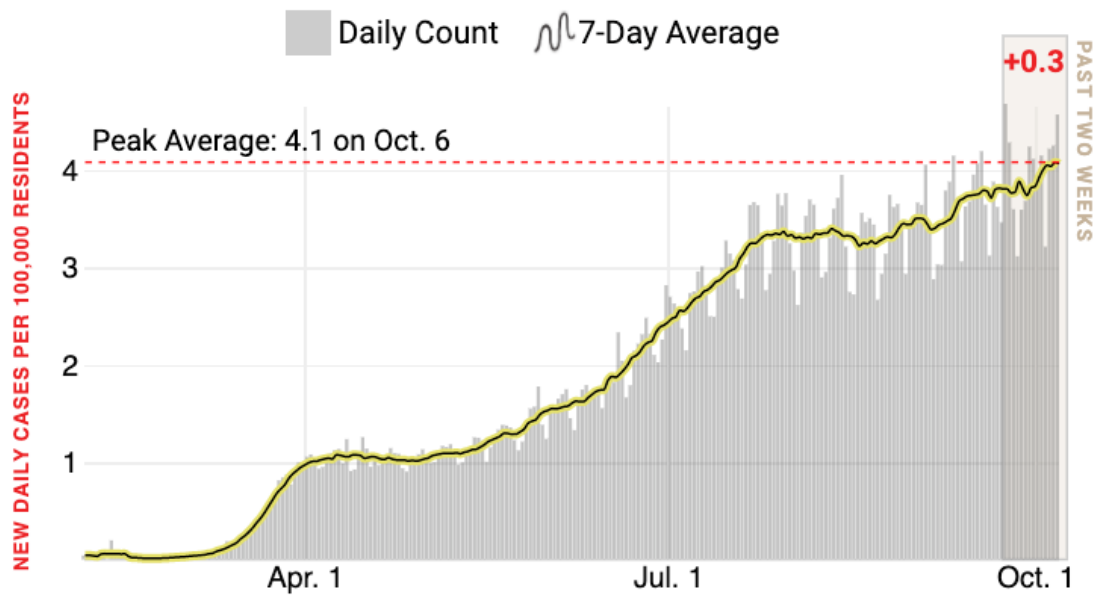
Oct. 7	KY: 2,393	MT: 716	SD: 1,030
Oct. 5	AK: 208		
Oct. 3	WI: 2,892		
Oct. 2	MO: 4,075	NE: 792	NH: 217

## The Global Situation

More than 36 million people around the world had been sickened by COVID-19 as of 1 a.m. E.T. today, and more than 1 million people have died. Here's where daily cases have risen or fallen over the last 14 days, shown in confirmed cases per 100,000 residents:



On Oct. 7, there were 352,460 new cases and 5,955 new deaths confirmed globally. Here's how the world as a whole is currently trending:



Here is every country with over 400,000 confirmed cases to date ("per cap" is number per 100,000 people):

Country	CASES		DEATHS	
	Total	Per Cap.	Total	Per Cap.
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,156,226</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>1,055,683</b>	<b>13.7</b>
United States	7,549,682	2,291	211,801	64.3
India	6,835,655	495	105,526	7.65
Brazil	5,000,694	2,353	148,228	69.7
Russia	1,242,258	851	21,755	14.9
Colombia	877,684	1,725	27,180	53.4
Argentina	840,915	1,861	22,226	49.2
Spain	835,901	1,788	32,562	69.6
Peru	832,929	2,526	32,914	99.8
Mexico	799,188	625	82,726	64.7
France	693,576	1,063	32,463	49.7
South Africa	685,155	1,155	17,248	29.1
United Kingdom	546,952	806	42,605	62.8
Iran	483,844	576	27,658	32.9
Chile	474,440	2,482	13,090	68.5

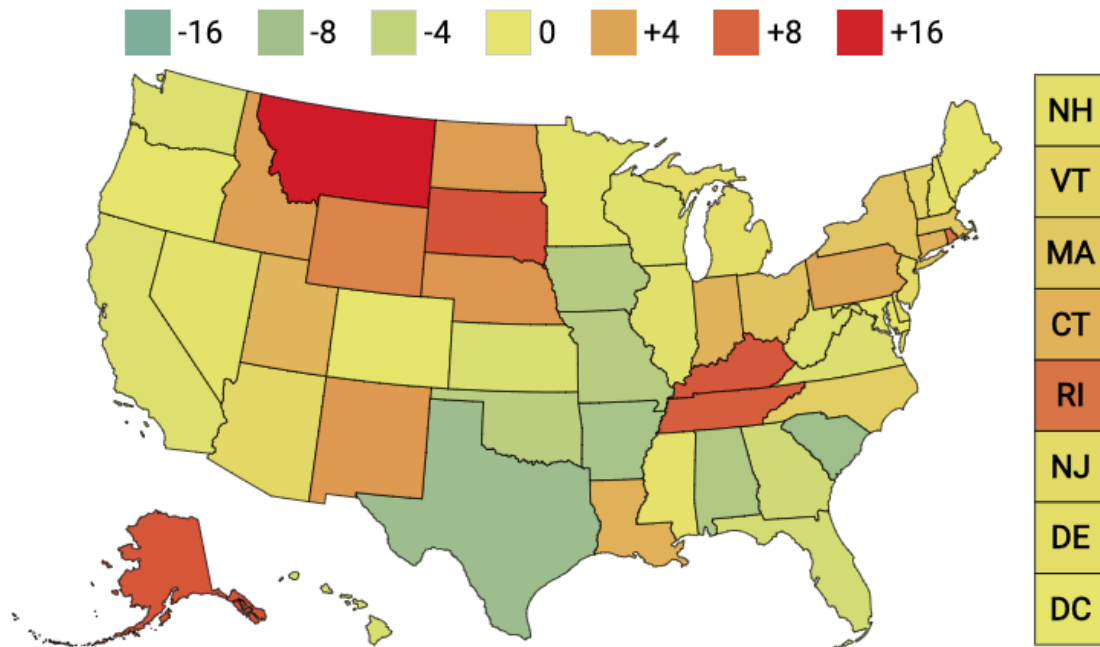
Ukraine's medical infrastructure is buckling under a new wave of coronavirus cases, even as the country tries to avoid closing its borders as it did in August, [the Associated Press reports](#). Just in the past month the nationwide infection count doubled to 234,000, reaching a new high of 4,661 cases a day during the first weekend in October. The World Health Organization has sounded the alarm, warning that infections could reach a staggering 9,000 per day. Complicating matters: patients in their 30s are increasingly coming down with severe cases of the disease, putting additional pressure on limited supplies of hospital beds, ventilators and medicine. But it is the personnel shortage that worries the nation's leaders most. "We may increase the hospital capacity and improve oxygen supply, but we could just be simply short of doctors," said Health Minister Maxim Stepanov.

Brazil just passed the 5 million-case mark, a dubious milestone that leaves it trailing only the U.S. and India in total infections. Death counts are a sobering 5,000 per week, but, [as the BBC reports](#), that's down from a recent high of 7,000. Even that modest improvement has contributed to a bump in the approval rating of President Jair Bolsonaro—that and the economic handouts that have gone to 60 million workers whose jobs are threatened by the

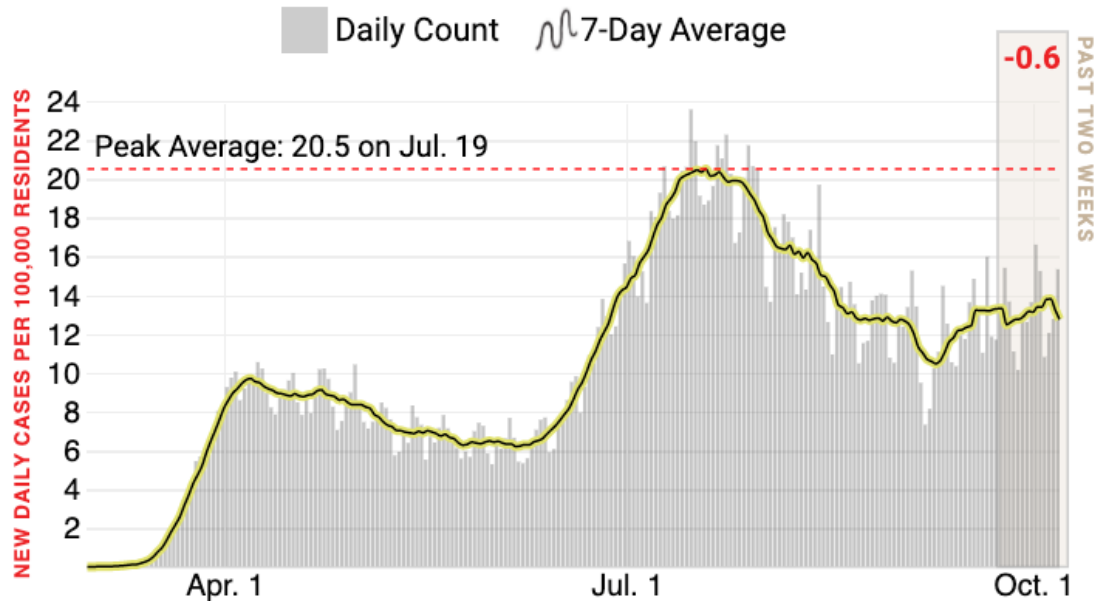
pandemic. But the country appears to be reacting prematurely to the glimmers of better news, with shops, restaurants and at least some schools reopening—steps that could send infection rates soaring again.

### The Situation in the U.S.

The U.S. had recorded more than 7.5 million coronavirus cases as of 1 a.m. E.T. today. More than 211,800 people have died. Here's where daily cases have risen or fallen over the last 14 days, shown in confirmed cases per 100,000 residents:



On Oct. 7, there were 50,341 new cases and 915 new deaths confirmed in the U.S. Here's how the country as a whole is currently trending:



Climate change and moon-landing skeptics can be maddening, but they're essentially harmless. Coronavirus skeptics are another matter—and the medical community is facing more and more of them, [according to the Associated Press](#). Not only do they shun basic safety measures, they are increasingly engaging in a form of COVID-19 theater. At Augusta University Medical Center in Georgia, for example, people have begun showing up with video cameras, looking for evidence that the pandemic is a hoax. Others have entered the hospital wearing masks made of fishnet or other porous material, engaging in what the hospital has called “malicious compliance” with masking rules. Many skeptics, said one Augusta doctor, are convinced only when they get sick themselves.

As the coronavirus goes, so may go the Republican's slim 53-47 Senate majority. [As Reuters reports](#), rising infection rates in Alaska, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina and South Carolina, all of which are seeing surprisingly competitive Senate races, could spell bad news for the GOP, whose fortunes are hitched to Americans' approval of the Trump Administration's handling of the pandemic. Adding those to states in which Democrats are optimistic of flipping seats, including Colorado, Arizona and Maine, could mean a loss of up to 10 seats, according to one unnamed—and unhappy—Republican aide. The aide called President's Trump's COVID diagnosis “the nail in the coffin” for the GOP majority.

President Trump has [touted](#) his use of an antiviral cocktail made by Regeneron with helping him recover from COVID-19—a claim that is [problematic on a number of fronts](#). For one thing, there is no indication that the President has indeed recovered, and, given the typical course of the illness, he is likely a week or more away from a return to health—assuming all goes well. For another, the

Regeneron cocktail is still very much experimental, and there is no way for the president or his doctors to know that it had any effect. What's more, the drug is not remotely available to Americans who don't happen to be the President of the United States; Trump received it only through a compassionate use exemption.

The labor market continues to struggle against the headwinds of the virus, as [The Wall Street Journal reports](#). Weekly jobless claims may be well below the staggering high of 7 million they hit in March, but they have held steady between 800,000 and 900,000 for over a month, significantly above the pre-pandemic peak of 695,000.

*All numbers unless otherwise specified are from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, and are accurate as of October 8, 1 a.m. E.T. To see larger, interactive versions of these maps and charts, [click here](#).*

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## WHAT ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW

### Trump's Bungled Messaging

The President's bout with COVID-19 afforded him a chance to re-set his pandemic messaging, earning him sympathy from voters and also a chance to empathize with individuals and families struck by the virus. But, as the *Washington Post* reports, his conduct since leaving the hospital has only alienated the very constituency he could have appealed to—from his ostentatious doffing of his mask upon returning to the White House, to his claim that the platinum care and the pharmaceutical cocktail he received is available to anyone. [Read more here](#).

### Why a Delay in a Vaccine Could be a Very Good Thing

Despite Trump's push for a coronavirus vaccine before election day, the Food and Drug Administration wants no part of any rush to release. On Oct. 6, the agency posted an industry guidance document on its website asking pharmaceutical companies to monitor study subjects for at least two months after vaccination, so they can look for side effects that may arise over time and get a better sense of the shot's efficacy. That pushes any release of a vaccine into December at the very earliest—and that will be good for public trust. [Read more here](#).



## Sweden Totters Under Pandemic

Sweden enjoys a reputation for universal health care and generous social benefits, resources that should have helped it weather the pandemic better than other wealthy nations. But in practice things are not going so well—and it's nursing homes that are having the biggest problems. The New York Times explores why, of nearly 6,000 people who have died of the coronavirus in Sweden, close to half have been nursing home residents. [Read more here.](#)

## Reporting on the Most Famous Covid-19 Patient Is Not Easy

The job of medical correspondents across broadcast and cable channels became a lot harder when the most powerful man in the world—President Trump—joining the ranks of patients, especially with his White House notably unforthcoming on the details of his case. As the AP notes, that has left on-camera doctors struggling to balance hard news, educated speculation and the ethics of commenting on the health of a patient none of them have actually examined. [Read more here.](#)

## Timeline of Denial

From the moment on Jan. 22 when President Trump announced that the coronavirus was “totally under control,” to his Feb. 27 claim that “like a miracle, it will disappear,” until his recent claims that he was cured of his own case of COVID-19, he has communicated a message that is equal parts denialism and simple misinformation. *Mother Jones* has a 10-month timeline of the President’s statements—and the ways they’ve bumped up against a hard viral reality. [Read more here.](#)

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*Thanks for reading. We hope you find the Coronavirus Brief newsletter to be a helpful tool to navigate this very complex situation, and welcome feedback at [coronavirus.brief@time.com](mailto:coronavirus.brief@time.com).*

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*Today's newsletter was written by Jeffrey Kluger and edited by Elijah Wolfson.*