



RiskIQ i3:

COVID-19 Weekly Update

06/18/2020



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Methodology

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Notice

In absence of a major development, RiskIQ will be suspending regular updates of the COVID-19 Weekly Update after Thursday, 06/18/2020. Thank you for your continued readership.

Notable Events in the Past Week

Beijing on Saturday reported [four new local cases](#) of COVID-19, adding to fears of a possible second wave of infections. The four cases all appear to be tied to a specific location, with three of four working at the Beijing Xinfadi Market and the other made several visits to the market. So far, only one of the new confirmed cases has been classified as severe.

As Europe moves to return to some level of normalcy, many countries in the European Union are [reopening their international borders](#) with some exceptions. Tourists from the U.S., Asia, Latin America and the Middle East will not be permitted to enter immediately, and it is not clear when such travel will be allowed.

After reporting a single-day increase of [12,881 new cases](#), India's total number of infections rose to 366,946. The country's death toll climbed by 334, putting the total tally at 12,237 dead.

[New infections continued to rise](#) in Saudi Arabia, reaching new daily highs approaching 5,000 cases and over 40 deaths a day, with the biggest increase occurring in the nation's capital.

New Zealand [announced](#) that it will be tightening border requirements and appointing the defence force to supervise quarantine facilities after two infected people were allowed to move around the country. While on mandatory quarantine after arriving from Britain on June 7th, two women were given permission to travel to visit their dying parent. Assistant Chief of Defence, Air Commodore Digby Webb will now oversee isolation facilities to ensure exit processes are properly followed.

Scientists have discovered a ["major breakthrough"](#) in treating COVID-19, reporting that dexamethasone, a cheap and widely used steroid, has shown very promising results in treating COVID-19 patients. Trial results showed dexamethasone reduced death rates by around a third among the most severely ill patients admitted to hospital. The preliminary results have yet to be peer-reviewed, but the researchers said the results suggest the drug should immediately become the standard care in patients with severe cases of the disease.

A [consensus](#) is beginning to form around how the virus spreads as the pandemic nears its sixth month. Scientists say that the virus is not commonly spread through touching contaminated surfaces or by brief outdoor encounters with others. The main vector is close-up, person-to-person interactions for extended periods. Crowded events, poorly ventilated areas, and places where people are talking loudly maximize the risk. Two other recent studies also showed that various lockdown procedures prevented millions of infections around the world.

The number of workers applying for and receiving unemployment benefits has [stabilized](#) at historically high levels, signaling that hundreds of thousands of workers are still losing their jobs

each week though the labor market is showing signs of recovery. New applications for benefits edged lower by 58,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.5 million in the week ended June 13, the Labor Department said Thursday, showing that the pace of layoffs is no longer significantly easing. At the same time, the number of Americans receiving benefits payments fell by 62,000 to 20.5 million in the week ended June 6.

Americans have [skipped more than 100 million debt payments](#), including student loans and auto loans, since the pandemic began. The number of accounts that enrolled in deferment, forbearance or some other type of relief since March 1 and remain in such a state rose to 106 million at the end of May, according to TransUnion. Student loans accounted for the largest increase, with 79 million accounts in deferment or relief status.

Several bars and restaurants in northern and central Florida [temporarily shut down](#) following reports that infected patrons had visited their establishments. This comes just a week after bars were allowed to reopen with restrictions in place. These closures are in line with a spike in new COVID-19 cases in Florida, including two consecutive days with more than 2,000 new cases in the state.

COVID-19 [waivers are increasingly being](#) used by businesses and schools as a way to protect against lawsuits in absence of blanket immunity. Despite uncertainties around if these waivers are legally binding, the thought is that they will deter individuals from pursuing legal actions. The use of waivers has faced some backlash, particularly because they may encourage businesses to reopen prematurely. On the contrary, it is also being argued that businesses should be protected and that a liability shield is needed.

Dr. Anthony Fauci suggested football teams would need to emulate plans by the NBA and MLS for a "bubble" format or [consider not playing in 2020](#). "Unless players are essentially in a bubble -- insulated from the community and they are tested nearly every day -- it would be very hard to see how football is able to be played this fall," Fauci said. "If there is a second wave, which is certainly a possibility and which would be complicated by the predictable flu season, football may not happen this year."

Digital Exploitation

According to a [new report from Microsoft](#), COVID-19-themed cyber attacks spiked to nearly a million a day during the first week of March. However, just a week later, they'd fallen off by around 30% and by April, attacks leveraging the COVID-19 crisis dropped below 100,000 per day. The report notes that pandemic-themed attacks have settled significantly, but are likely to continue as long as the virus persists.

A hacking group known as Vendetta has been posing as [Taiwan's top infection-disease official](#) in an attempt to steal sensitive data from Taiwanese users. The hackers sent meticulously written spear phishing emails to a select group of targets, which may have included Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control employees, urging recipients to get coronavirus tests. These emails contained a remote access hacking tool. Though new to the scene—Vendetta only surfaced in the last two months—the group is adept at impersonating authorities in multiple languages and have posed as agency officials in Australia, Austria, and Romania in attempts to install remote access tools on victim machines. Researchers believe they primarily target government and limited business intelligence.

Mass layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic have encouraged an [exodus of corporate data](#). Insider threat firm Code42 claims it's seen a massive spike in exfiltrated data during this time. The sheer volume of pandemic-related layoffs poses a challenge to security professionals, often compacting a year or more of typical attrition into the space of a single day. Code42's Joe Payne said his company has seen so much data moving following layoffs that it has had to adapt its technology to highlight particularly egregious behavior from more numerous and innocuous data transfers.

Public concern and confusion surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic offered an array of opportunities for scammers. A recent survey conducted by senior services company Provision Living showed that nearly a quarter of Americans have experienced an [increase in robocalls](#) since COVID-19 and 1 in 5 people have received a robocall about COVID-19. A separate survey from the legal charity Citizens Advice showed that nearly one-third of Britons have been contacted by scammers since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The results also demonstrated that certain groups are at a higher risk of being targeted by [COVID-19-related scams](#); 54% of people facing loss of income due to the pandemic and 45% of people with long-term illnesses or disabilities said they were recently targeted by scams.

One of the first national [coronavirus contact-tracing apps](#) launched in Europe has been suspended in Norway after the country's data protection authority raised concerns that the software poses a disproportionate threat to user privacy by continuously uploading people's location.

Similarly, Amnesty International is warning that [contact-tracing apps](#) worldwide are infringing on privacy, with Bahrain and Kuwait as the worst offenders. Bahrain's BeAware Bahrain app has been sharing data with a national television show called *Are you at Home?* and participation was initially mandatory. According to Amnesty, both Bahrain's app and Kuwait's Shlonik app have been actively enabling live or near-live tracking of users' locations by frequently uploading GPS coordinates to a central server.

U.S. lawmakers are promoting new bills in response to the huge spike in [cyberattacks against the financial sector](#) during the COVID-19. During a hearing on 16 June, U.S. House Financial Services subcommittee members proposed bills to help cut down on business email compromise (BEC) scams, require depository institutions (such as banks and credit unions) to develop guidance to educate customers on how to avoid financial scams, give funds to states to protect senior citizens from malicious hackers, and establish a restitution fund to help victims of coronavirus-related fraud. These proposals come on the heels of a measure introduced last week to move the Secret Service back to the Treasury Department to help address cyber financial fraud.



RiskIQ
22 Battery, 10th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
United States

End Report