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The Covid Resilience Ranking The Best and Worst Places to Be as Covid Reopening Gathers Pace

27 October 2021

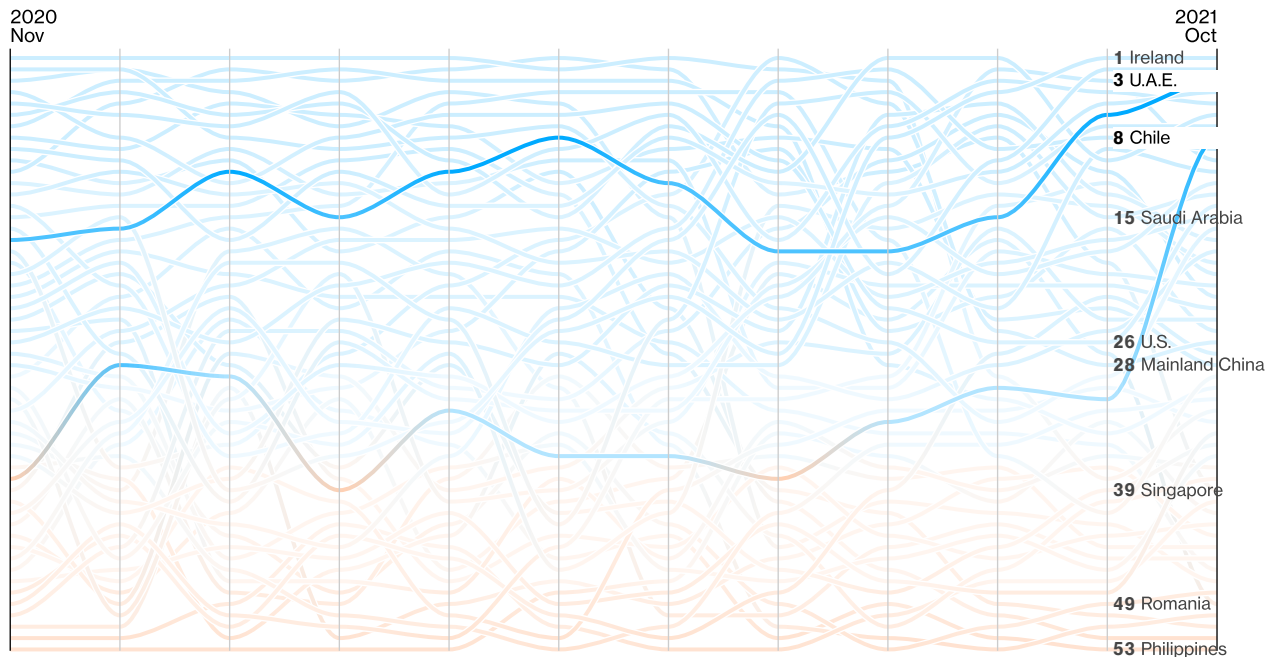
Reopening is gathering pace across the world, with deaths set to fall to an almost one-year low in October. Yet those that have embraced travel, open borders and a sense of normalcy to become the best places to be in the pandemic are about to face their greatest test yet.

European nations continue to dominate the top rungs of Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking this month, joined by the United Arab Emirates and Chile, which vault into the top 10 by deploying similar strategies that grant the vaccinated more freedoms.

Ireland remains No. 1 for a second month, even as cases rise. Having fully vaccinated more than 90% of adults and weakened the link between infection and deaths, the country is reopening cautiously, allowing bars and restaurants to resume normal opening hours for inoculated customers. Hospitalizations are at about a quarter of what they were in a January outbreak. It also benefited from a jump in gross domestic product thanks to the success of multinationals operating there, though that may mask a lackluster domestic economy.

Joining the Top

Shifts over time in the Covid Resilience Ranking



Close behind are Spain and the UAE, which round out the top three. One of the worst hit at the start of the pandemic, Spain saw cases, positive testing rates, and fatalities

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year, though the country may face fresh risks from hosting its months-long Expo in Dubai.



The U.S. climbed two spots to No. 26 in October, but may come under further pressure unless it can re-energize a plateauing vaccination drive and move beyond a relatively high death toll from delta. The U.K., meanwhile, slid 9 places to 25th amid rising cases.

Southeast Asian countries continue to rank lowest, with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines in the bottom six for the third month. While the region’s outbreak may have peaked and vaccination has progressed, especially in Malaysia, many of these export-reliant economies are still reeling from delta’s hit. That’s spurring these nations to chart clearer paths to reopening, though it’ll take time for them to catch up to Europe and the U.S.

Covid Resilience Ranking



REOPENING PROGRESS	COVID STATUS ▾	QUALITY OF LIFE ▾
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RANK	CHANGE	ECONOMY	BLOOMBERG RESILIENCE SCORE	PEOPLE COVERED BY VACCINES	LOCKDOWN SEVERITY	FLIGHT CAPACITY	VACCINATED TRAVEL ROUTES
1	-	Ireland	75.1	73.8%	42	-44.2%	396
2	-	Spain	74.6	76.7%	41	-24.4%	397
3	▲3	U.A.E.	74.6	97.3%	39	-39.6%	398
4	▲1	Denmark	74.3	76.1%	24	-37.6%	306.5
5	▼1	Finland	74.2	72.6%	24	-59.3%	396
6	▲4	Norway	73.1	73.9%	20	-27.2%	195
7	-	France	71.5	75.5%	67	-34.5%	397
8	▲23	Chile	71.4	92.4%	32	-21.5%	274
9	▼1	Switzerland	71.3	64.2%	46	-37.4%	396
10	▼7	Netherlands	71.3	69.3%	42	-31%	397
11	▼2	Canada	70.6	77.6%	68	-41%	398.5
12	▲6	Sweden	70	69.4%	19	-47.7%	214
13	▲2	Germany	69.1	66.7%	45	-42.6%	397
14	▲12	South Korea	68.6	74.7%	47	-44.4%	162.5
15	▲2	Saudi Arabia	68.5	66.5%	57	-26%	388
16	▲13	Japan	68.4	73.3%	47	-49%	198
17	▼4	Austria	67.8	64.2%	60	-38.5%	391
18	▲7	Portugal	67.6	78.6%	44	-24.2%	220
19	▼5	Turkey	67.5	69.4%	55	-12.8%	386.5
20	▼8	Czech Republic	66.9	56.7%	35	-56%	396

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The Covid Resilience Ranking is a monthly snapshot of where the virus is being handled the most effectively with the least social and economic upheaval. Compiled using 12 data indicators that span virus containment, quality of healthcare, vaccination coverage, overall mortality and progress toward restarting travel, the Ranking captures which of the world's biggest 53 economies are responding best—and worst—to the same once-in-a-generation threat.

Europe's success will be put to the test as vaccines face their first real Covid winter. While the region's pioneering strategies of longer dose intervals and largely limiting quarantine-free entry to immunized people kept fatalities low even as delta spread, places like the U.K., Belgium and Ireland are already seeing a worrying uptick in cases as the weather cools.

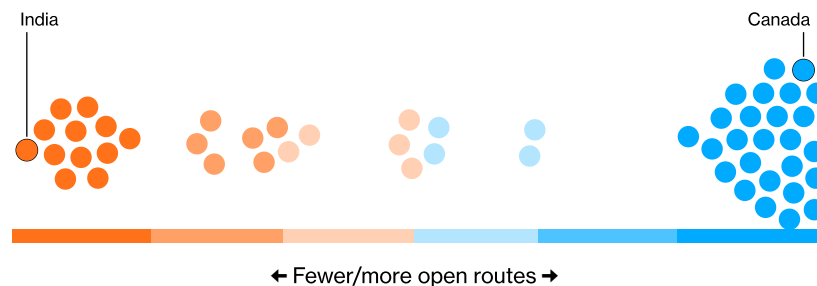
Among the rising stars, Chile's stunning turnaround—from the lower half of the Ranking to top eight within a month—reflects the overall recovery of South America, once the worst-hit region in the world. The country has inoculated millions of people with booster shots, relaxed domestic restrictions and reopened borders to all vaccinated foreign tourists with a five-day quarantine. It will further ease quarantine for travelers in November.

World's Toughest Travel Curbs Finally Fall to Reopening Urge

Meanwhile, the gulf between mainland China and Hong Kong and the rest of the world's major economies on reopening is widening, pushing them down to No. 28 and No. 21 respectively. Beijing is steadfastly holding onto a zero-tolerance strategy that requires strict border restrictions, though it's battling virus flareups more frequently now, putting pressure on its economy. Former Covid Zero adherent Australia throws open its borders next month, after ending lockdowns in its biggest cities in October. It rises four places to No. 30.

Vaccinated Travel Routes

Which places are the most open to international travel?



India's rank stays unchanged at No. 45 this month, remaining one of the most closed off places to international visitors. The country will resume tourism and other short-term visits fully in mid-November, as Covid cases continue to wane and vaccination tops a billion doses.

Listen to our Prognosis podcast series on the pandemic: Breakthrough

Can booster campaigns by the richest nations fend off another wave as winter looms and the holiday season approaches? And at what cost to global vaccine equality? Or will cold weather favor balmier regions like the Middle East, Latin America and parts of Asia, helping them gain ground?

These questions will be the focus of the Ranking as we move into November.

Jump to section [Notable Movers](#) [Opening Up](#) [The Two-Track Pandemic](#) [Covid Lessons](#) [What Next?](#) [Back to the Ranking](#) [↑](#)

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- Iran rises 14 places after the country lifted visa restrictions for travelers to revive its economy. Daily vaccination rates picked up momentum in October, amid falling cases and deaths.
- Japan jumps 13 places as the government removed a state of emergency and eased restrictions with cases falling to the lowest in over a year.
- South Korea and New Zealand gain 12 and six spots respectively, as vaccination rates rise sharply and easing outbreaks in some areas allow them to relax some of their stringent social-gathering and containment curbs.
- Israel moves up 12 notches as the early leader in inoculation saw a decline in cases and fatalities in recent weeks after it handed out millions of booster shots widely, allowing restaurants and shops to fill up with customers again.
- Saudi Arabia edges up two spots to No. 15 as the nation allowed people to be mask-free in some outdoor areas, and removed capacity limits for indoor gatherings if attendees are fully vaccinated. It is starting a six-month-long entertainment extravaganza of concerts, sporting events and festivals.



Medical personnel help a Covid-19 patient in Bucharest, on Oct. 7. Photographer: Daniel Mihailescu/AFP/Getty Images


And down:

- Romania plunges 22 places into the bottom five, after the second-least vaccinated European Union member saw the highest number of cases and deaths since the start of the pandemic, prompting a plea to the WHO and EU for help and tightened Covid curbs.
- Singapore falls 20 spots—the most it's dropped in the Ranking's history—amid record daily cases and deaths that made authorities to reimpose then extend some domestic curbs. Still, the city is pressing ahead with vaccinated travel routes to

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- Belgium and the U.K. slip 11 and nine notches respectively as both nations grapple with rising cases and fatalities. But the U.K. continued to ease border curbs for vaccinated tourists in October. Prime Minister Boris Johnson predicted a difficult winter as Covid puts additional pressure on the medical system, with hospitalizations and death rates on the rise.
- Mexico falls eight spots with its vaccine rollout stagnated, bringing the risk of new waves and variants.

Opening Up



Medical workers at a residential community where residents are under lockdown in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China on Oct. 23. Photographer: Liu Wenhua/China News Service/Getty Images

To capture which of the 53 economies are nailing reopening—an aspect of pandemic management that’s become key—we zero in on their progress on vaccination, the severity of the lockdowns and restrictions in place, plus two metrics tracking travel that were introduced in June. They form a gauge that assesses how far each place is from pre-Covid levels of normalcy.

[Read about the methodology behind the Covid Resilience Ranking](#)

Despite this focus on reopening, indicators that have always been part of the Resilience Ranking remain, with all 12 datapoints equally weighted. The Covid Status tab includes two death-related indicators: the case-fatality rate over the past three months and a measure of overall mortality through the whole pandemic. This means the U.S. having the highest recorded death toll globally still contributes to its current score.

The scores of the top-ranked places generally reflect a best-case scenario of high

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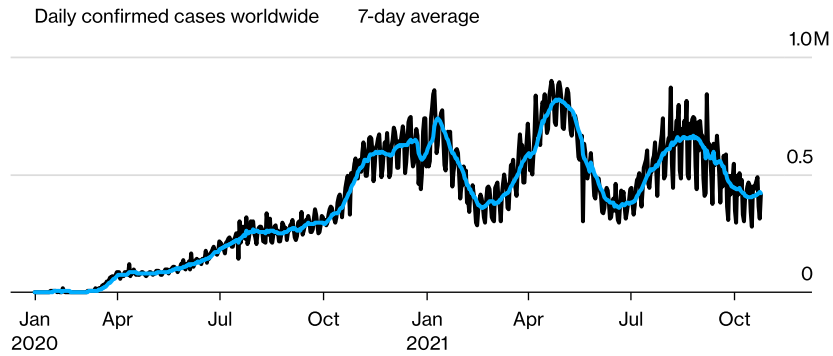
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Ireland remains No. 1 thanks to one of the world’s best vaccination rates, signs for a rapid economic rebound and the government’s decision to loosen both domestic restrictions as well as travel quarantine rules. Meanwhile, weekly Covid fatalities hover in the double digits.

Still, the country has been burnt on reopening before, easing curbs prematurely late last year which triggered a surge in cases. With daily cases currently at their highest level since January, Ireland’s continued success will depend on widespread vaccination severing the link between easing curbs and virus spread. The Irish government will widen a booster shot program to all over-60s from next month.

Brace for More Covid Surges

The pandemic has been through three waves — with no end in sight



Source: Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg

Overall, European economies score most highly on the Vaccinated Travel Routes indicator as they’ve moved the quickest to allow quarantine-free entry for inoculated visitors. In October, Canada jumped to the top of this metric, as it started allowing all vaccinated travelers to enter quarantine-free regardless of citizenship. The U.S. plans to apply vaccine requirements for international visitors from early November.

Economies that have largely kept their borders open through much of the pandemic, like Egypt and Mexico, also score highly, though travelers from these countries may be barred from entry elsewhere given their persistent outbreaks and lower vaccination rates.

Parts of the Asia-Pacific that relied on eliminating Covid and keeping it out—meaning their overall mortality rates are vastly lower—score poorly on reopening. The lower risk of being infected initially damped demand for vaccines in some places, until delta got in through strict border curbs, prompting places like New Zealand and Australia to speed up their rollouts. Both are now planning to ease border restrictions in an abandonment of their previous “Covid Zero” strategies.

Despite fully inoculating more than 1 billion people, China’s international borders remain effectively closed. Small virus flareups have seen localized travel restrictions, but the country still scores well on Flight Capacity because of its large internal market and bustling domestic travel.

Elsewhere, staying closed off is no longer an option. From Indonesia to Thailand, authorities have announced a flurry of plans to welcome vaccinated travelers by relaxing or scrapping quarantine requirements for holiday destinations like Bangkok and Bali. The Philippines, ranked last for a second month, has lifted lockdowns in the capital, while also allowing some foreign travelers to enter without quarantine, but continues to lag significantly on shots. Vietnam resumed domestic flights.

The numbers provided by aviation data specialist OAG do reward larger economies

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The Two-Track Pandemic

Vaccination is where places like Europe—and until recently, the U.S.—are making up for their missteps in containing Covid. Their positions in the Ranking improved in early summer as investment in research and a focus on fast rollouts proved pivotal, though the U.S. has since lost substantial ground as hesitation stalls inoculation. Operation Warp Speed saw some \$18 billion plowed into developing some of the most effective Covid vaccines now being administered around the world.



A man gets his second dose of the Pfizer shot at a mobile vaccine clinic in Colorado on Oct. 14. Photographer: RJ Sangosti/MediaNews Group/The Denver Post/Getty Images

Economies that moved early to secure and roll out shots have the advantage of being mostly inoculated with mRNA vaccines, which appear to not just prevent a person from developing Covid, but lower their chances of contracting and transmitting it as well. But with most shots proving somewhat less effective against delta and evidence emerging that immunity wanes six months after inoculation, vaccination leaders like Israel saw record surges again and have moved the fastest on boosters to drive down the cases.

In places where the majority are inoculated, the link between infection numbers and deaths is weakening, and policy makers are reframing the way they view Covid cases.

Handling the Covid Era


Reopening and winter waves are reshaping the best places to be in Covid

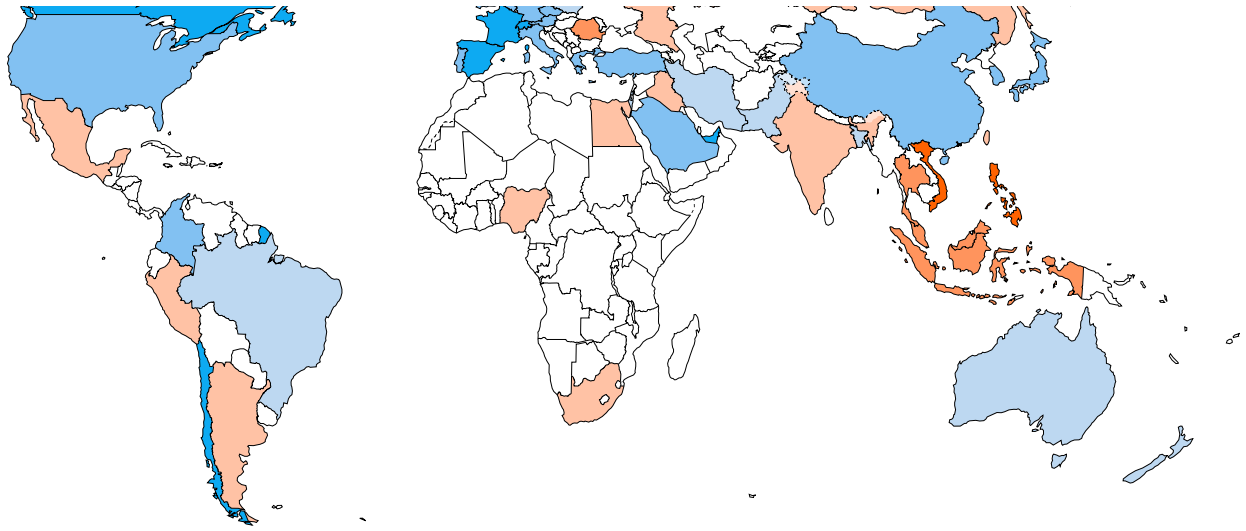
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Note: A higher Covid Resilience Score indicates a better outcome

“The vaccines will help us keep the pandemic under control, but we need to continue to live with the virus, just as we live with other infectious diseases,” said Bent Høie, health minister in Norway, one of the most consistent top performers over the Ranking’s 12 editions. “It is impossible to fully eradicate the risk.”

Still, many members of the developing world are yet to even start inoculating in a meaningful way, with countries lacking the purchasing power to forge deals that could push them higher up the queue. Covax, the WHO-backed effort to help poorer nations procure doses, started distributing shots at the end of February but has faced a supply shortfall that’s seen many places run out of vaccines entirely.

The WHO has called for a temporary moratorium on booster shots to help shift supplies to developing countries.

In September, President Joe Biden called on other countries to help vastly expand the production and availability of Covid vaccines and treatments, donating another 500 million doses to nearly double the U.S.’ pledge.

After hoarding supplies in the first half of the year, the U.S. has donated more vaccine than any other country, according to UNICEF data. China, while only donating 87 million doses, has exported about a billion of its homegrown shots via mostly bilateral deals with places like Brazil, Indonesia and Chile.


Covid Lessons

While merely a snapshot in time amid a fast-moving crisis, Bloomberg’s Covid Resilience Ranking has helped crystallize some longer-term lessons from the pandemic.

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An empty street in Auckland as the city remains at Covid-19 Alert Level 3, on Oct. 15. Photographer: Hannah Peters/Getty Images

A constant of the consistently high-ranked economies has been a widespread degree of government trust and societal compliance. New Zealand—a stalwart of the top three before the arrival of delta sent it into one of the world’s strictest lockdowns—emphasized communication from the start, with a four-level alert system that gives citizens a clear picture of how and why the authorities will act as an outbreak evolves.

Investment in public health infrastructure also matters. Undervalued in many places before 2020, systems for contact tracing, effective testing and health education bolstered the countries that have performed consistently well in the Ranking, helping socialize hand-washing and the wearing of face masks. This was key to avoiding economically crippling lockdowns in the first year, before vaccines were available.

Though wealthy nations that bet on vaccination are now seeing that strategy pay off, their failure to check the coronavirus leaves a deep scar, with more than 730,000 people dead from Covid in the U.S. and some survivors grappling with debilitating after-effects. It also meant the world missed out on an opportunity to eliminate the virus.


The arrival of vaccines, which have helped curb fatalities, has been a silver lining, and highlighted the importance of funding healthcare research and development.

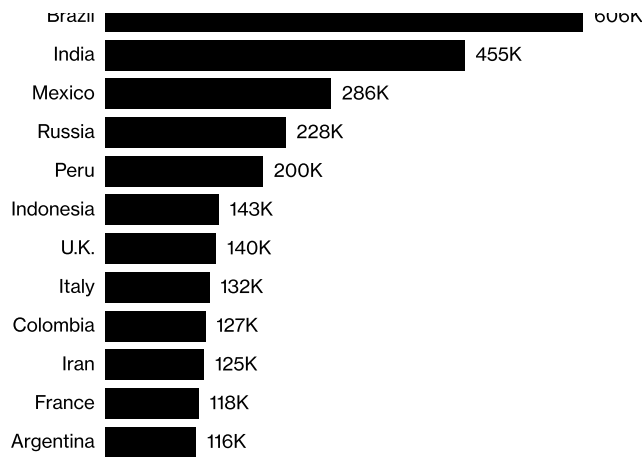
Norway is one of the only places of the 53 to have combined success in the initial stage of the pandemic with reopening. It’s consistently been in the top 15, first relying on social cohesion for people to comply with social distancing measures, and implementing strict border restrictions. Later, it procured a sizable supply of vaccines early with the EU. And now it’s cautiously opening up.

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Source: Johns Hopkins University, as of Oct. 26. Figures are rounded.

What Next?

Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking provides a snapshot of how the pandemic is playing out in 53 major economies right now. By layering in metrics on reopening and the revival of global travel from mid-2021, we also give a window into how these economies' fortunes may shift in the future as places exit the pandemic at different speeds.

It's not a final verdict—it never could be, given the imperfections in virus and vaccine data and the fast pace of this crisis. Circumstance and pure luck also play a role, but are hard to quantify.


Beyond delta, new variants of concern are also a threat: scientists fear mutations that can overcome existing shots and drive a new phase of the pandemic.



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A health professional helps a Covid-19 patient exercise at a hospital in Peru, on Oct. 19. Photographer: Ernesto Benavides/AFP/Getty Images

Still, having endured more than a year and half of fighting Covid-19, governments and populations now have a better understanding of the pathogen and how to mitigate the damage it inflicts.

Experts say the next six months will be key, with risks high as the weather cools in the U.S. and Europe and schools resume.

As the data shift, the Ranking will change too—we'll continue to update the picture every month, as it evolves.

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Data Reference

See more on the [methodology](#) →

People Covered by Vaccines

[Bloomberg's Covid vaccine tracker](#)

Data as of Oct. 26, 2 p.m. HKT

Lockdown Severity

[Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#)

Latest available data as of Oct. 26

Flight Capacity

[OAG](#)

Latest available data as of Oct. 26, over the past four weeks

Vaccinated Travel Routes

[Sherpa](#), Bloomberg News

Latest available data as of Oct. 26

1-Month Cases Per 100K

[Johns Hopkins University](#)

Data as of Oct. 26, 2 p.m. HKT, over the past month

3-Month Case Fatality Rate

[Johns Hopkins University](#)

Data as of Oct. 26, 2 p.m. HKT, over the past three months

Total Deaths Per 1M

[Johns Hopkins University](#)

Data as of Oct. 26, 2 p.m. HKT, since the beginning of the pandemic

Positive Test Rate

[Our World in Data](#)

Latest available data as of Oct. 26 in the past month, based on 7-day rolling average

Community Mobility

[Google LLC](#), [Bloomberg Economics](#)

Latest available data as of Oct. 26, averaged over the past month

2021 GDP Growth Forecast

Bloomberg surveys, [International Monetary Fund](#)

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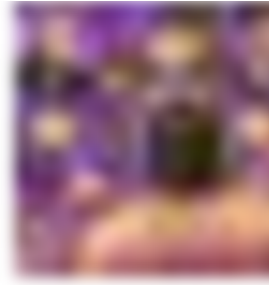
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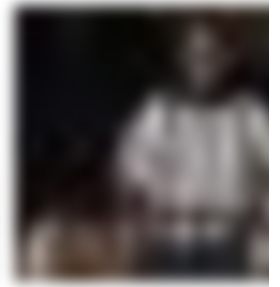
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