
The New York Times
The Morning

February 11, 2021



By [David Leonhardt](#)

Good morning. We offer our latest report card on the virus — and a wrap-up of the impeachment trial’s second day.



Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., is serving as a mass vaccination facility. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

The pandemic is in retreat

The number of new coronavirus cases [continues to plummet](#), as does the number of Americans hospitalized with symptoms. Deaths have also begun to decline. And the number of daily vaccination shots [has nearly tripled over the last month](#).

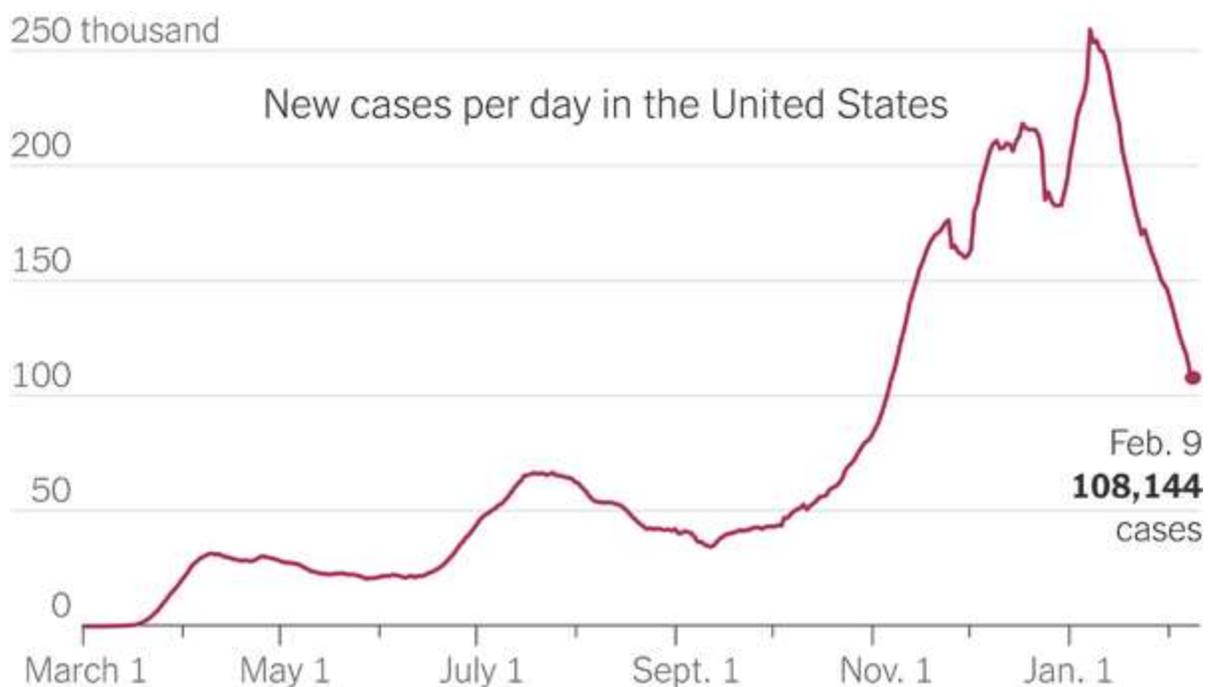
It's been a long time since the virus news was as encouraging as it is right now.

The overall situation is still bad. The virus is spreading more rapidly in the U.S. [than in almost any other large country](#), and more than 2,500 Americans are dying daily. Newly contagious variants may create future outbreaks. For now, though, things are getting better — and a combination of vaccinations, mask wearing and social distancing has the potential to sustain the recent progress.

Here is The Morning's latest virus report card, with help from five charts — and with an emphasis on what will shape the next few weeks.

The drop is real

The recent decline in new virus cases is larger than any of last year's declines:

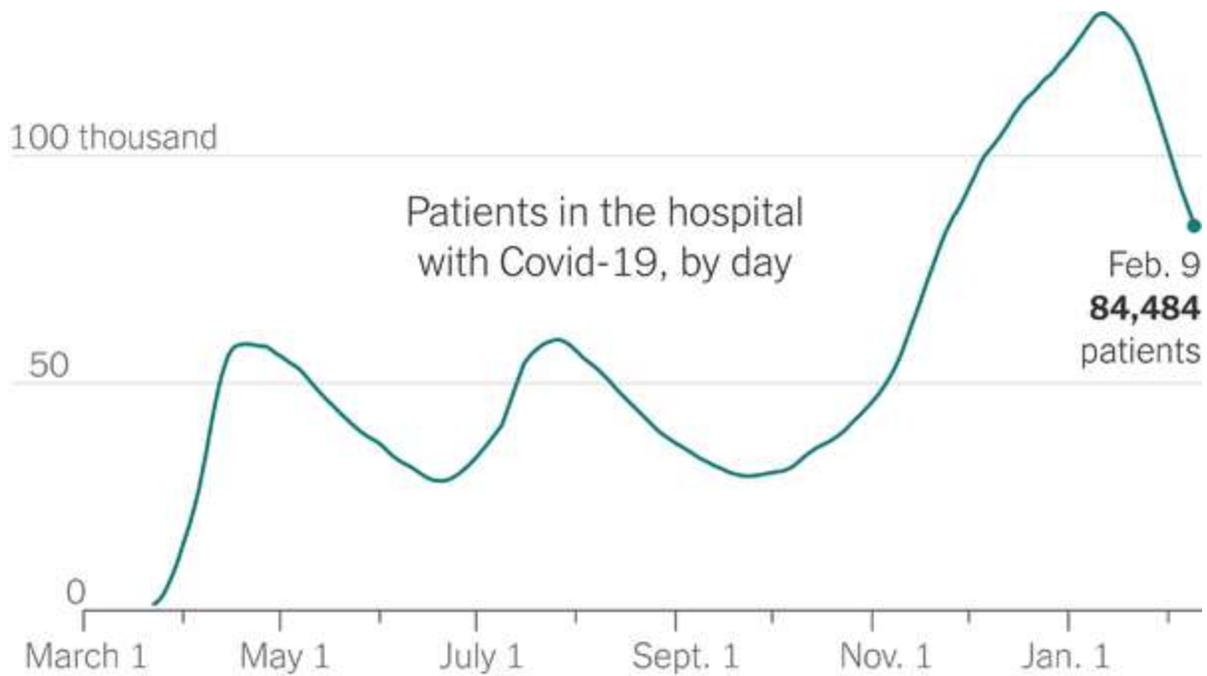


Graph shows 7-day rolling averages.

By The New York Times | Sources: State and local health agencies and hospitals

Since reaching a peak on Jan. 8 — related to holiday gatherings — the number of confirmed new daily cases has fallen by almost 60 percent. The decline in actual cases is probably somewhat smaller, because [the volume of testing](#) has also fallen over the last few weeks. Fewer tests lead to fewer reported cases.

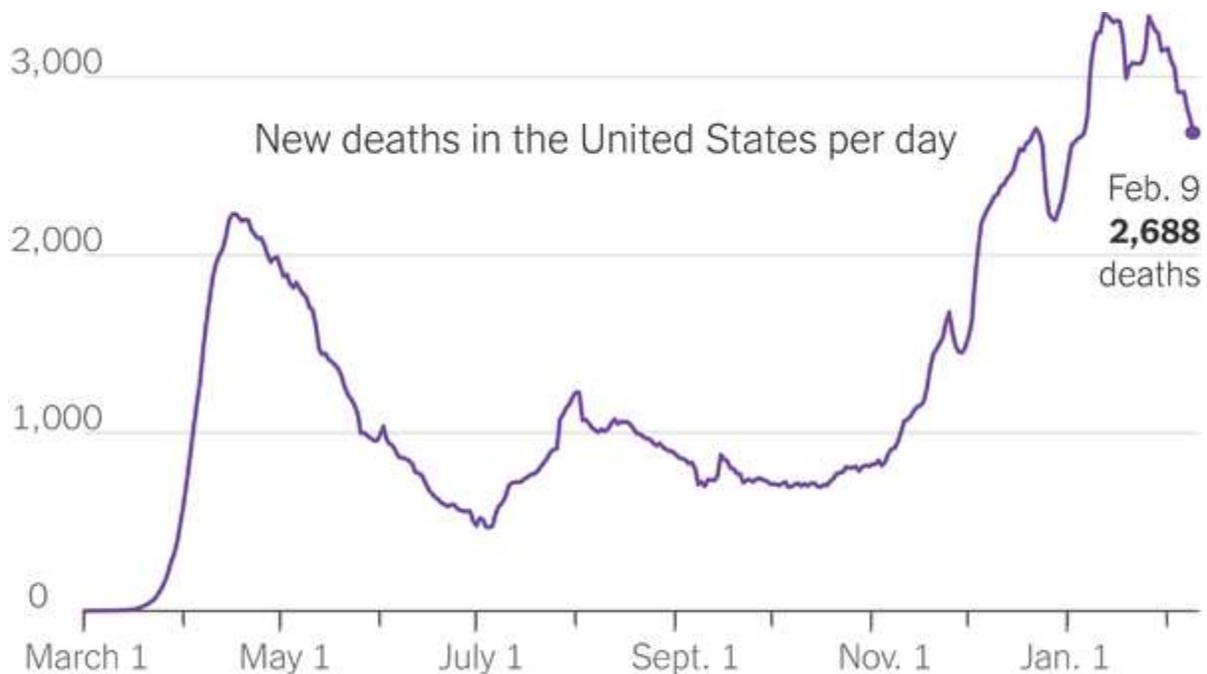
But most of the decline in the chart above is real. We know that because the percentage of tests that came back positive has also dropped sharply (to 7 percent, from 14 percent on Jan. 8). The number of people hospitalized with Covid-19 symptoms is falling, too:



Graph shows 7-day rolling averages.

By The New York Times | Source: The COVID Tracking Project

Most important, deaths have begun to decline:

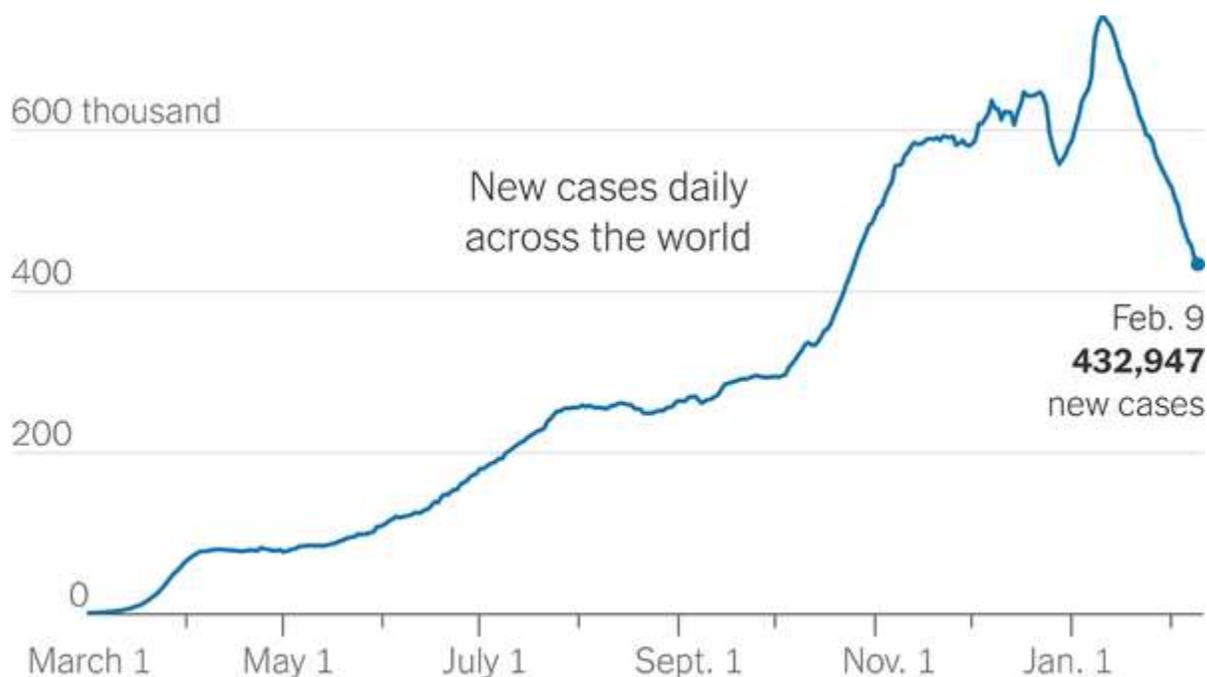


Graph shows 7-day rolling averages.

And deaths are likely to decline more. The fatality trends typically trail behind the trends in diagnosed cases [by about three weeks](#) — which means the sharp recent drop in cases is only now starting to affect the death numbers. Over the next two weeks, the number of daily deaths will probably fall below 2,000, [Dr. Ashish Jha](#), dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, predicts, and it could drop below 1,000 by next month.

We're slowly building immunity

The main cause of the decline appears to be that a significant share of people [now have at least some immunity to the virus](#). That also helps explain the global decline in newly diagnosed cases:



Graph shows 7-day rolling averages.

By The New York Times | Sources: Governments and health agencies

In the U.S., about 110 million people have likely had the virus (including unconfirmed cases), researchers say. Another 33 million have received at least one vaccine shot.

Combined, these two groups make up about 43 percent of all Americans, which appears to be enough to slow the spread. “Though it is difficult to know for sure,” [Andrew Brouwer](#), a

University of Michigan epidemiologist, told The Wall Street Journal, “we may be approaching herd protection.”

Still, this protection does not ensure a continuing decline in cases. Most Americans still haven’t had the virus.

Will we become complacent?

The first thing to watch in coming days is whether Super Bowl parties [turned into superspreader events](#) that have caused new outbreaks.

The next question will be whether the recent decline causes Americans to become lax again, as happened both last summer and fall. New York, Massachusetts and other states have begun lifting some restrictions, and many public experts are worried that politicians will go too far in this direction. Doing so in coming weeks would be especially dangerous because of the growing spread of [more contagious virus variants](#).

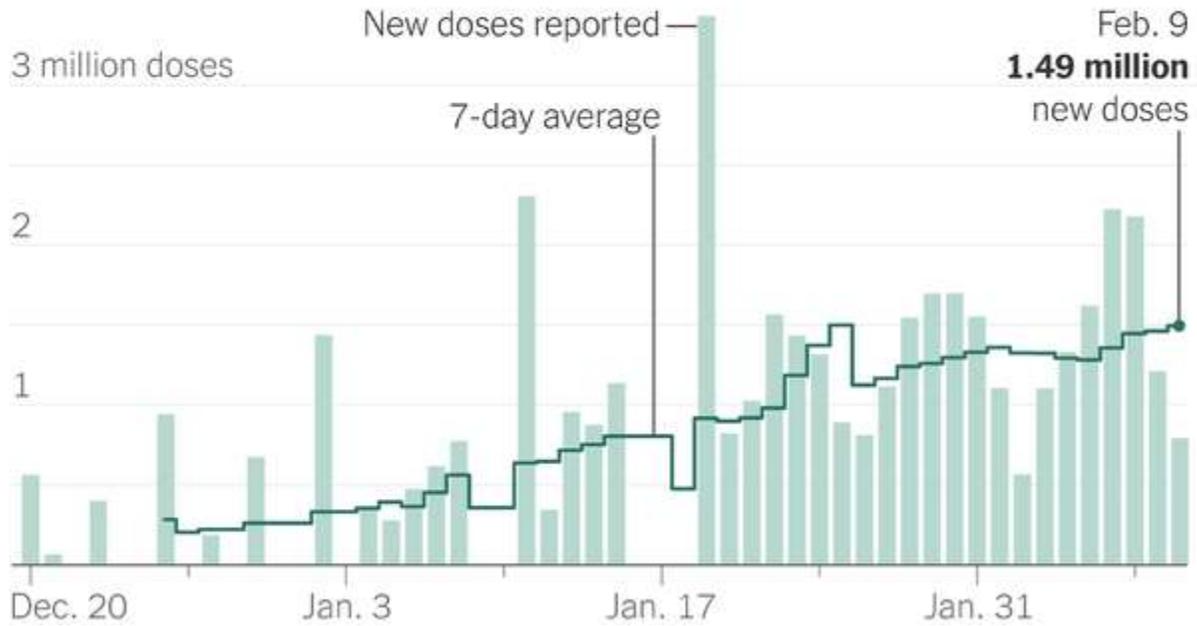
“These contagious new variants really heighten the risk,” Apoorva Mandavilli, a Times science reporter, told me. “The good news is that we know what to do: Wear a mask or maybe two, stay as far from others as you can, meet people only outside or at least open the windows, and wash your hands often.” Failing to follow this advice could be more damaging with the variants than with the original version of the virus.

Adding to the risk is the possibility that some people who have already had the virus remain vulnerable to reinfection from one of the variants. If that turns out to be the case — [as early research suggests](#) — vaccination will become even more important.

The vaccination acceleration

The U.S. vaccination campaign got off to a bad start. The Trump administration vowed to give shots to 20 million people by the end of 2020 — and [reached fewer than three million](#). But the pace sped up in the administration’s final weeks, and the Biden administration has further accelerated it:

Vaccination doses administered daily in the United States



By The New York Times | Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The bottom line: The pandemic is in retreat. What happens next will depend mostly on three factors: 1) how many Americans wear masks and remain socially distant; 2) how contagious the new variants are; and 3) how quickly the vaccines — [which have virtually eliminated the worst Covid symptoms](#) — get into people's arms.

More virus developments:

- The C.D.C. urged Americans [to wear tightly fitted masks](#) and said that surgical masks had the best chance of preventing infection.
- Europe's oldest known person, a French nun who survived the virus, [turns 117 today](#).

THE LATEST NEWS

IMPEACHMENT DAY 2



Delegate Stacey Plaskett of the Virgin Islands, a House impeachment manager. Senate Television, via Associated Press

- House impeachment managers [meticulously recounted](#) Donald Trump’s efforts to sow doubt over the election, relying heavily on video clips.
- “Seeing them all strung together chronologically is striking,” The Times’s Lisa Lerer noted. “And that’s a big part of the Democratic strategy.”
- The managers showed previously [unseen security footage](#) in which rioters came close to lawmakers. At one point, a police officer [gets Mitt Romney](#) to run away from the mob.
- “That was a mob sent by the president of the United States to stop the certification of an election,” Stacey Plaskett, a member of the House team, [told the Senate](#).
- [Here are more takeaways](#). The impeachment trial [continues at noon Eastern today](#).

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