

The Latest

Lenses' Monthly Magazine - March 2022



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A Message From Lenses

Lenses is a 100% teen-organized news platform that provides teenagers with the chance to share their thoughts and beliefs about the headlines that we see on a daily basis. Our community aims to get teenagers' ideas on 'adult issues' and provide accessible and simplified news to our readers, who may not always have the chance to stay up to date with the daily news.

Lenses intends to highlight the fact that though we all have different perspectives and 'lenses' when it comes to various issues, each of our beliefs matter and are worth sharing with the community. Through a combination of long and short-form articles, as well as short descriptions of important daily news on our social media, we intend to help all teenagers stay informed about the world around them and learn about what other Gen-Z members think when it comes to each of these issues.



Supreme Court Nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson and the Significance of Her Nomination

Nirja Divekar

As the month comes to an end, we've seen more of Supreme Court Nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, who was nominated by President Joe Biden to serve as the next Justice on the Supreme Court. If inducted into the Supreme Court, she will serve as the first Black Supreme Court Justice, an important step in diversifying the government branches that serve our nation. As mentioned by author Camille Bussette in Brookings, "While her potential confirmation may not alter the balance of opinion on the U.S. Supreme Court in the short term, her professional experience, particularly as a judge with a significant background as a public defender, and her personal experience as a Black woman in the United States will shape how she approaches cases before the court and how both majority and minority opinions will be framed and argued." Her presence in the court itself may alter public policy, shifting the judiciary branch as we know it today temporarily. We may be seeing more sympathy towards minorities and seeing a different point of view, as Judge Jackson herself grew up in a community whose values have been considered subordinate to "mainstream" values.



Jackson during her Confirmation Hearings Last week - Image from NBC News

Ukraine-Russian Updates

Purnima Vasistha

On March 28th, loud explosions were heard in Ukraine's capital city Kyiv early in the morning. These explosions, along with Ukrainian authorities' reports, indicate that Russian forces are continuing in their effort to take over major highways as transportation systems for their army. Unfortunately, they seem to be making headway, as these highways, located East and Northwest of Kyiv, practically guarantee access to the capital.

Following this, authorities announced that they would close all of their humanitarian corridors as Russian forces continued to shell and bomb cities. Other, somewhat contradictory reports state that Ukrainian troops have been able to push Russian troops out of several towns. But again, these small victories may be no match for Russian forces, as proven by a spokesperson for Ukraine's Defense Ministry, who, during a media briefing, stated that there is little evidence indicating that Russian efforts to surround and conquer Kyiv are going to cease, especially as fighting continues on multiple fronts.

Additionally, intelligence from both Ukraine's military and the Pentagon stipulates that the Kremlin (Russian government) might be moving its efforts to control the Eastern Donbas region, which is already partially owned by Russian separatists. On March 27th, the head of Ukrainian intelligence accused Russia of trying to split the country in two in order to create a "North and South Korea in Ukraine" by targeting both Kyiv and Donbas.

Simultaneously, in Mariupol, a southern port city located between the separatist region and Crimea, Ukrainian forces are working hard to prevent a complete takeover. The city's mayor, Vadym Boychenko, says that "Ukrainians are still holding onto power" while also admitting that Russian forces are closing in and asking for a complete city-wide evacuation. He goes on to accuse the Russian military of committing genocide. According to defense analysts, Mariupol could fall to Russia in just a few days.

In an interview with independent Russian journalists, President Zelensky reveals that he had offered soldiers defending the city the option to retreat. Reporters were told that the troops honorably declined because they didn't want to abandon the remaining civilians, the dead, and the wounded. The president adds that Ukraine offered a compromise with Russia on the Donbas region, which is significant as it hints toward a potential peace deal. Unfortunately, this interview was censored in Russia.

Peace talks are especially notable as they could lead to Ukraine declaring neutrality — a major diplomatic opening for Russia. By definition, neutrality is a foreign policy under which a country remains neutral or nonaligned in future wars unless the country itself is attacked. A commonly referenced example of this is Switzerland. Neutrality, in practice, varies greatly, and it's unclear as of this moment what it would look like in Ukraine. Despite this uncertainty, experts largely agree that neutrality would include some form of promise in which Russia agrees to respect Ukraine's territory.

The downside to such an agreement is that it will end Ukraine's attempts to join NATO, both now and in the future. Zelensky has indirectly implied that he does not hope to join NATO at this point in the war; however, a formal declaration of neutrality would likely end the war altogether. The Ukrainian president has also said that the question of neutrality must be put to a national referendum after Russian forces have already withdrawn. Despite this, he continues to restate that Ukraine will need confirmed security assurance as part of any deal.

In other news, the U.S. announced that it would send six Navy attack planes and 240 troops to Germany, following a statement by Zelensky that harshly criticized western nations for their hesitant support in the midst of such a devastating crisis. "Devastating" truly is the keyword here, as a new study done by the United Nations on March 27th finds that 1,119 civilians have been killed and 1,790 have been injured since the war began. It is important to note that the agency has said that the actual numbers are likely higher; because of ongoing fighting and conflicting sources, confirmation of casualties and fatalities is unreliable. Ukraine's Prosecutor General has also said her office is investigating 3,085 war crimes committed by Russian forces.

Latest Headlines

- The 94th Academy Awards took place on Sunday, March 27th, 2022, with CODA becoming the first streaming-service movie to win the best picture, and actress, Jessica Chastain, won an Oscar on her third try, for her role in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye." However, one of the most controversial moments of the night was Will Smith slapping Chris Rock over a joke about his wife, Jada Smith.

Flickering Through

March Lenses Articles You Need to Read

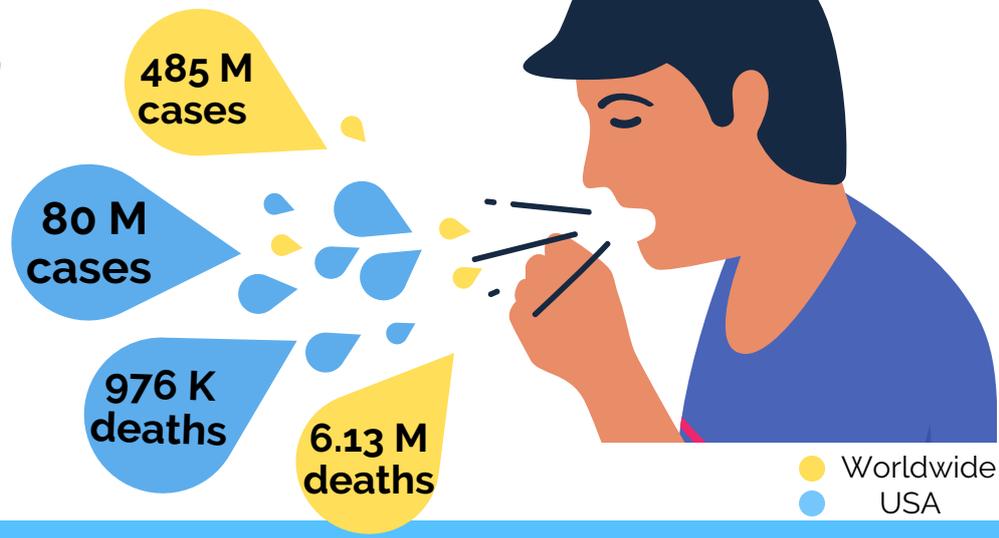
- [Ketanji Jackson](#) - Emily Dissanayake
- [Venice Flood Barrier](#) - Ila Chynoweth
- [SAT Changes](#) - Yasmine Marrero
- [Electric Cars](#) - Soha Mahapatra
- [Booktok](#) - Maia Nehme
- [NATO and Ukraine](#) - Yasmine Marrero
- [U.S. Space Force](#) - Maraki Banacha



COVID-19 Updates

As of Thursday, March 31st 2022

Sources: CDC, AP



U.S Vaccination Status

702 M

Total
Doses
Delivered

65.5 %

of Population
Fully Vaccinated

560 M

Total
Doses
Administered

76.9 %

of Population
with At Least
One Dose

97.5 M

Booster
Doses
Administered

44.8%

of Fully Vaccinated
Population Boosted

Updates

Recently, China began a citywide lockdown in Shanghai as the biggest outbreak of COVID-19 since 2020 hit the city earlier this month.

In the United States, COVID-19 restrictions continue to relax. In schools around the country masks have also become optional as life is returning to "normal".

Deep Cuts

Key topics of the month

The Origins of Women's History Month

Siddharth Kondam

OWoman's History Month, celebrated in March by the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, honors the many contributions made by women worldwide. Though the celebration serves as a staple in our society nowadays, Women's History Month grew tremendously from its beginnings.

The origins of Women's History Month came during the Suffrage movement. In 1909, a meeting in Manhattan between various socialists and suffragists was dubbed "National Women's Day." A year later, activist Clara Zetkin suggested the creation of "International Women's Day" as a national holiday, which was eventually passed in Europe in 1911. The United States, however, never actively celebrated a women's holiday until the 1970s.

Originating in Santa Rosa, California in 1978, Women's History Month initially was a week's celebration. The Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women planned a "Women's History Week," which rippled into other celebrations occurring across the nation. By 1980, Jimmy Carter had declared that March 8th was the start of National Women's History Week, and in 1987, Congress had announced that the entire month of March was Women's History Month.

In the U.S, many partake in various events to commemorate the accomplishments of women. For this year, the National Women's History Alliance designated a theme of "Women provide healing, Promoting Hope" to honor this month and celebrate the many contributions of women frontline workers and others that have provided hope and healing throughout our history. Others in the nation hold rallies, educational initiatives, and other customs like presenting women with gifts to mark the month. Celebrating Woman's History Month allows us to remind ourselves of the many achievements of women from the past and the present. From the innovative pioneers to those that work tirelessly to support their families, the contributions made by women have been a vital pillar of our world.

COVID Surges in Europe as Spring Break Travel Season Ramps Up

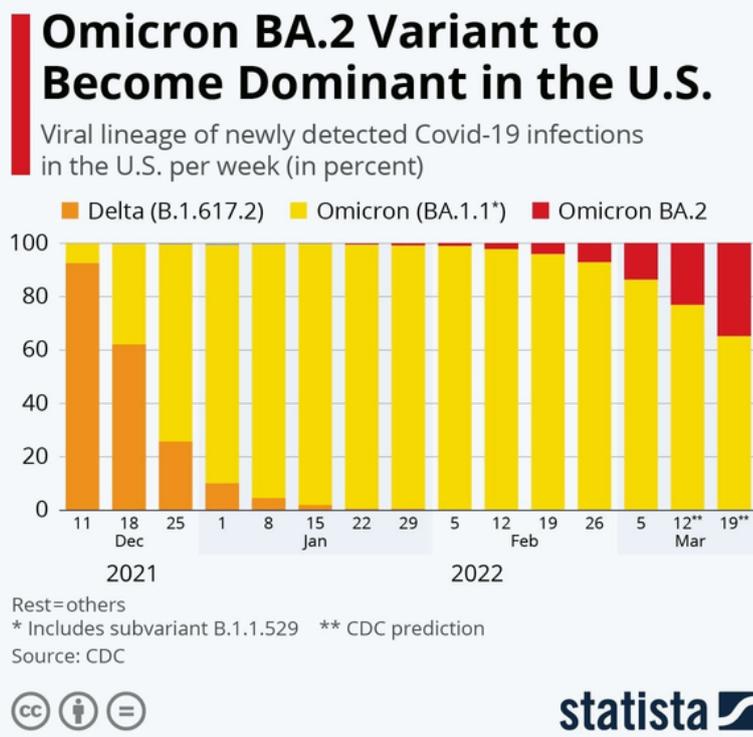
Lucas Ribiero

As April approaches, we are seeing yet another rise in COVID cases, as the BA2 variant rages across Europe. The variant is similar to Omicron in risk of death, but 1.5 times more infectious. Like with Omicron, the overwhelming response to the variant has been one of dismissal.

BA2 was first detected in European countries, and it has propelled case averages to near-record numbers. This comes as European countries rescind their coronavirus restrictions, with France, for example, removing its mask requirements inside the country and test requirements for international visitors, and the UK rescinding all covid travel restrictions.

This reopening, even despite rising COVID cases, has sparked fierce debate. On the one hand, agencies like the WHO have condemned European nations for removing COVID restrictions too soon. On the other side, many health agencies have argued that vaccines and other protections mean that we must no longer allow rising COVID cases to create new restrictions.

Regardless of which point of view one has on coronavirus restrictions, the BA2 variant is sure to cause turmoil as the US and European spring break season approaches, as rising cases bring about labor shortages and other travel complications.



A graph describing the prevalence of the BA.2 Variant in the US - The World Economic Forum

Penny Points

Economy Updates

Russia-Ukraine Economic Impacts

Achraf Azzaoui

Conflict's

Disastrous

"Demilitarization and Denazification" – the justification for the invasion of Ukraine, or a cover for violent irredentism? The decade long proxy-conflict between Russia and Ukraine culminated on February 24th, 2022, when Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized "special military operations" in Ukraine, leading to a flurry of missile and artillery attacks on major Ukrainian cities. Russia's invasion was met with widespread condemnation from world leaders, including European Union Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen namesaking it an "unprecedented attack of aggression".

The condemnation went beyond verbal scrutiny to include economic action against the Russian state. Following the invasion, the European Commission immediately decided to disconnect seven Russian banks from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), an international payments system that expedites the process of borrowing and investing money across national borders. Furthermore, the U.S. placed sanctions on Russia's Central Bank and the Russian Direct Investment Fund, preventing Americans from conducting transactions with these institutions – however, these sanctions excluded transactions with Russia's energy sector. Multiple countries have also made the decision to immobilize Russian assets within their borders, in an attempt to halt the Russian war effort.

The impact of the collection of these sanctions on the Russian economy cannot be understated. Oxford Economics estimates that the Russian economy could retract by as much as 7% as a result, more than double the amount during the U.S. great depression. Interest rates in the nation have doubled, disincentivizing investment. Furthermore, the tandem of the Russian ruble losing over 40% of its value, and inflation rising to higher than 20%, will weaken Russian citizens' purchasing power and decrease Real GDP.

Putin has responded to these events and speculation that unemployment could double in the coming months, by announcing a new welfare payment to low-income families with children aged 8-16.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has also had a ripple effect on the world economy, causing consumer good prices to rise and consumer confidence to plummet. With the uncertainty in global relations, "safe" currencies in the foreign exchange market such as the Japanese Yen and the U.S. dollar rose in value. However, some of the most significant impacts lie in the war's ability to affect the price levels of multiple crucial consumer goods. The Russian economy is a key supplier in the energy industry, as well as important crops such as wheat. The world economy is highly reliant on these goods, but the conflict is leading countries such as the U.S. to ban imports of Russian oil and natural gas, further straining global supply chains already impacted by pandemic-induced constraints on production and transportation.

Using the Global Econometric Model NiGem, the U.K. National Institute of Social and Economic Research estimates that oil price per barrel will increase by over \$40 in 2023. This is also expected to result in an inflationary spiral in the U.S. and European Union, and over 2022 and 2023 they are expected to experience inflation of 10.6% and 7.6%, respectively. However, these effects are most prominent in the short term, with U.S crude oil prices per barrel temporarily reaching a 13-year high of \$130. The lower available supply of petroleum has also had secondary impacts on other necessities such as food, as transporting items becomes more costly. Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, the price of chemical fertilizers has increased by 34%, causing the price of wheat to subsequently increase by 18%.

The long-term economic impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are severe, with harsh impacts on the world economy. Companies will be eager to simplify their supply chains, after experiencing the fragility of complex supply chains during volatile periods, and supply shocks to the energy and agricultural industry will cause long periods of slow economic growth worldwide.

Upcoming Events



Ramadan

Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide from April 1st, 2022, to May 1st, 2022. It is a holy month in Islam, marking the ninth month of the Hijri or Islamic Calendar. Ramadan occurs during the ninth month because it is thought to be the time when the Quran, the holy text of Islam, was first received by Muhammad, the Islamic prophet. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset and the end of Ramadan there is a celebration called Eid-Al-Fitr.

Passover

Passover is a Jewish holiday from April 15th, 2022 - April 23rd, 2022. It celebrates the freeing of enslaved Jewish people known as Israelites by Moses which is described in the book of Exodus in the Bible. Typical traditions include a special meal called the seder eaten with one's family and prayer.



Easter

Easter is on April 17th, 2022. It is a Christian holiday celebrating the rebirth or resurrection of Jesus Christ. This comes after he was crucified as described in the Bible. Christians celebrate Easter by attending church services and and it is often correlated with Eggs. Eggs symbolize rebirth and modern Easter celebrations have spread to other religions through activities like egg hunts, egg dyeing, and egg decorating.

Earth Day

Earth Day is on April 22nd, 2022. Earth day is celebrated to raise awareness for issues like climate change and deforestation and educate others on how they can help. It was first created in 1970 by U.S. environmentalists and has since spread into an international celebration and network.



Autism Awareness Day

Autism Awareness Day is on April 2nd, 2022. It is a UN sanctioned day to raise awareness for autism and to help people around the world better understand autism. It was started by the UN in 2007 and has since developed into Autism Awareness Month.

Listen to [Lenses' podcast](#) posted on 3/23/22 about Teen Transit Use., featuring Hosts, Lucas Ribiero and Valerie Zhao, and Guest, Zoe Tishaev, transit activist at Duke University. Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Anchor, Overcast, Castbox, and Beaker.



The Latest Staff

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