



## China Enforces New Covid-19 Lockdowns for Millions

SINGAPORE — Various large Chinese cities have intensified their draconian Covid-19 restrictions as of August 30, as authorities step up efforts to limit the spread of Covid-19 prior to a major Chinese Communist Party (CCP) meeting this year.

In Shijiazhuang, a city about three-and-a-half hours' drive from Beijing, more than three million residents, save for essential workers, have been mandated to work from home until Wednesday afternoon.

Furthermore, the main urban areas with an estimated three million residents in Dalian (a major port in northeastern China vital for iron ore and soybean imports) entered a lockdown that is to last until Sunday. Each household is permitted to delegate only one person to go out daily to purchase daily necessities.

Almost four million people in Hebei province, located in the vicinity of the Beijing, are confined to their homes until the end of the week. Also, more than 13 million in the adjacent port city of Tianjin have to go for mass testing beginning at 6:00 a.m. local time, after only 51 mainly mild coronavirus cases were detected.

In the south of the country, Longhua — a Shenzhen district with 2.5 million residents — suspended large-scale events and shut down several entertainment venues and wholesale marketplaces. Besides, Longhua's district authority announced that people have to display proof of negative test results within 24 hours to step into residential compounds. Moreover, restaurants have to curtail the number of customers to up to 50 percent of their capacity. These new restrictions on people's freedom of movement are slated to expire on Saturday.

These aforementioned restrictions echo other strict measures announced on August 29 around the country.

For instance, Qinghai's provincial capital, Xining, with 2.5 million residents, has introduced a lockdown since Monday for its main urban areas, stopping public transport and curtailing movement outside residential compounds. The lockdown is scheduled to end on Thursday morning.

Authorities in Shenzhen also closed the world's largest electronics market of Huaqiangbei down as well as suspended service at 24 subway stations on Monday. Such a heavy-handed measure was taken in spite of just 35 daily Covid-19 cases being reported in a city with a population exceeding 18 million.

"The notice to close came abruptly, we only had a few hours to put our stock into warehouses and lock up," a trader surnamed Chen at the Huaqiangbei tech market revealed to AFP.

Monday morning also saw the sealing off of Wanxia urban village, which provides cheap



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Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on August 30, 2022

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accommodation to thousands of low-wage workers such as delivery drivers and laborers, even though there were zero positive Covid-19 cases there.

In Futian, the seat of the city government, officials announced that cinemas, karaoke bars, and parks would be closed and large public events canceled until September 2.

### **Consequences of China's Draconian Lockdowns**

China's severe crackdowns and lockdowns have been carried out on the pretext of controlling the spread of Covid-19, a virus that has already been [regarded in several parts of the world as no more deadly than the flu](#). These policies have taken a huge toll on businesses, as well as residents' well being.

A June editorial in the British medical journal *The Lancet* pointed out that "China's lockdowns have had a huge human cost with the shadow of mental-ill health adversely affecting China's culture and economy for years to come."

True enough, concerns about the mental health of teenagers and young adults have arisen, as this demographic is more susceptible to mental breakdowns owing to their relative young age and lack of control over their lives. Furthermore, they have to deal with far more competitive education pressures and economic worries than their parents and grandparents.

Based on estimates from China's Education Ministry, an estimated 220 million Chinese children and young people have been under lockdowns or movement restrictions for extended time frames.

Lu Lin, president of Peking University's Sixth Hospital, was quoted in a June 6 article in *China Daily* as saying that Covid-19's "toll on people's mental health could last over two decades."

Data from early 2020 shows that a third of residents who isolated at home have experienced conditions such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia, he said.

Likewise, such stringent control measures by the Chinese authorities have been at the forefront of worries of American companies in the country, a business lobby indicated on Monday.

The same lobby reported that more than 50 percent of its firms listed China's draconian measures as a factor to cancel or delay investments in the country.

"The looming possibility that companies will again be forced to partially halt operations due to lockdowns and the impacts of local controls on consumer demand have undermined confidence in the business environment," the U.S.-China Business Council (USCBC) revealed.

Undeniably, China is one of the last places in the world still implementing harsh zero-Covid policies that restrict the individual freedoms of residents via widespread digital surveillance, mass testing, prolonged quarantines, and last-minute lockdowns. These restrictions with no apparent end in sight, as well as an ailing property sector, have adversely impacted daily life and the Chinese economy as a whole. For example, youth unemployment in China reached sky high levels in July, with one in five young people out of work.

Yet authorities still assert doggedly that such measures save lives. Also, with the upcoming Communist Party's 20th National Congress slated to take place within the next three months, such strict measures are unlikely to end anytime soon.



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