

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 17th Dec 2020

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### News Highlights

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#### **WHO team dispatched to Wuhan to investigate the origins of the pandemic**

The World Health Organization is sending a team to Wuhan, the city in China where the Covid-19 outbreak originated. [The ten person research team is expected to arrive in the city next month, with one member telling the Associated Press they will work with Chinese scientists for four to five weeks](#), examining samples and x-rays taken before the first known outbreak, to identify if the novel coronavirus spread earlier than first thought.

#### **EU nations to launch vaccine rollout next week**

The 27 European Union member states will launch vaccination campaigns against Covid-19 in tandem to promote unity, said European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen. ['To get to the end of the pandemic, we will need up to seventy percent of the population vaccinated'](#), she told the European Parliament. 'This is a huge task...so let's start as soon as possible with the vaccination together. More than enough doses are available for everyone,' she added.

#### **Excluding prisoners a risky move in vaccine rollout**

The incarcerated are an especially vulnerable group during the pandemic, but are being excluded from plans to inoculate the population in the UK and the U.S. according to criminal justice groups. ['If the biggest hotspots for Covid-19 are prisons, doesn't it make sense to inoculate everyone from the guards to the prisoners?'](#) said Ashish Prashar, a justice reform advocate at Publicis. A University of Oxford psychiatrist said inmates 'should be among the first groups to receive any Covid-19 vaccine.'

#### **More lockdowns on the cards**

Multiple countries face imposing strict lockdowns to curb Covid-19. [Governments in Italy and Switzerland have been urged to lock their countries down by experts](#). [Wales is to enter a lockdown](#) in the post-Christmas period. [And South Korea, continuing to see record new cases](#), is risking a shortage of critical care beds and may be forced into its first lockdown as cases continue to rise.

### Lockdown Exit

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#### **China embarks on campaign of Covid vaccine diplomacy**

From the moment the first cases came to light in the Wuhan wet market last December, the coronavirus pandemic represented a profound loss of face for China. A superpower-in-waiting, proudly but defensively emerging on to the world stage, has inadvertently unleashed the worst global catastrophe since the Second World War. You didn't need to talk about the "China virus" or believe in conspiracies about leaks from bio labs to recognise the humiliation for the communist government of Xi Jinping. But now Beijing is attempting to win back international prestige by providing the solution to the problem that it incubated in the first place. After effectively quelling the pandemic among its own people, China, and to a lesser extent Russia, are positioning themselves as benefactors to countries which are struggling to secure supplies of vaccine.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/china-embarks-on-campaign-of-covid-vaccine-diplomacy-2739zdrnd>

### **A pandemic atlas: China's state power crushes COVID-19**

In many ways, normal life has resumed in China the country where COVID-19 first appeared one year ago. "It feels like life has recovered," said moviegoer Meng Xiangyu, when Beijing theaters reopened with 30 percent of their seating after a six-month hiatus. "Everything feels fresh." China's ruling Communist Party has withdrawn some of the most sweeping anti-disease controls ever imposed, but remains on guard against fresh outbreaks and cases from abroad. Health authorities report a dozen or so imported cases every day.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/a-pandemic-atlas-chinas-state-power-crushes-covid19-china-wuhan-communist-party-life-restaurants-b1774699.html>

### **New Zealand Says Harsh Lockdown Paying Off as Economy Rebounds**

New Zealand's government said the fiscal and economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic will be less severe than first feared as its decision to impose one of the world's strictest lockdowns pays off. Economic growth will recover more rapidly while budget deficits and net debt will be much lower than expected just three months ago, Finance Minister Grant Robertson said Wednesday in Wellington when presenting the half-year fiscal and economic update. Unemployment will now peak at 6.9% at the end of next year rather than the 7.8% predicted in September

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-16/new-zealand-says-harsh-lockdown-paying-off-as-economy-rebounds>

### **Jacinda Arden on how New Zealand eliminated Covid-19: 'You just have to get on with it'**

New Zealand this year pulled off a moonshot that remains the envy of most other nations - it eliminated the coronavirus. But the goal was driven as much by fear as it was ambition, Prime Minister Jacinda Arden revealed in an interview with The Associated Press. Ms Arden said the target grew from an early realisation the nation's health system simply could not cope with a big outbreak.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/worldnews/2020/12/16/news/jacinda-arden-on-how-new-zealand-eliminated-covid-19-you-just-have-to-get-on-with-it--2162343/>

### **Alaska health worker has serious allergic reaction to Pfizer's COVID vaccine**

A health worker in Alaska suffered a serious allergic reaction after getting Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine and is now hospitalized but stable, a report said Wednesday. The New York Times reported that the person received their shot on Tuesday, and Pfizer confirmed that the company was working with local authorities to investigate the incident.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/alaska-health-worker-has-serious-allergic-reaction-to-pfizers-covid-vaccine/>

### **Covid-19: Europeans urged to wear masks for family Christmas**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has urged Europeans to wear masks during family gatherings at Christmas. It said Europe was at "high risk" of a new wave of coronavirus infections in the early part of 2021, as transmission of the virus remained high. Countries across the continent have been registering thousands of daily cases and hundreds of deaths. Germany was among countries tightening restrictions on Wednesday, closing schools and non-essential businesses. Meanwhile European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the first Covid vaccine would be authorised for use within a week.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55333195>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Rollout of US COVID-19 vaccines is 'on track' to get 20 million Americans vaccinated this year**

The U.S. has delivered coronavirus vaccines to all 50 states since Pfizer's shot was given emergency FDA approval on Friday. Doses have reached all 636 locations slated for the first wave of deliveries.

Another 2 million doses of Pfizer's shot will be rolled out next week. If Moderna's shot is given emergency FDA approval this week, as expected, 5.9 million doses of its vaccine will ship out next week. Most states are vaccinating high-risk health care workers only, but Florida and West Virginia have started inoculating nursing home residents. The U.S. is negotiating with Pfizer for another 100 million doses of its vaccine but officials said the firm has been 'unable to specify' how many it can supply.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9059827/Rollout-COVID-19-vaccines-track-20-million-Americans-vaccinated-year.html>

### **Prisoners have been excluded from Covid vaccine plans, and health experts are sounding the alarm**

As coronavirus cases and related deaths surge, experts are questioning the ethics of how governments plan to distribute the first vaccines. Incarcerated individuals in the U.S. are almost four times more likely to become infected than people in the general population — and twice as likely to die, according to a study by a criminal justice group. "If the biggest hotspots for Covid are prisons, doesn't it make sense to inoculate everyone from the guards to the prisoners?" said Ashish Prashar, a justice reform advocate at Publicis.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/16/coronavirus-prisoners-have-been-excluded-from-covid-vaccine-plans.html>

### **Coronavirus vaccine: More than 18,000 Scots given first dose as weekly updates begin**

More than 18,000 Scots have been given a first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, it has been announced, in the first of what will be weekly updates on the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-vaccine-more-18000-scots-given-first-dose-weekly-updates-begin-3070215>

### **Coronavirus vaccine: 137,000 people in UK get COVID jab in first week**

More than 137,000 people have received a coronavirus vaccine in the UK, it has been announced. Nadhim Zahawi, the minister responsible for the jab's deployment, tweeted that it was a "really good start". In seven days, he said the number of doses administered were: 108,000 in England - 7,897 in Wales - 4,000 in Northern Ireland - 18,000 in Scotland

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-vaccine-137-000-people-in-uk-get-covid-jab-in-first-week-12163995>

### **Asia plays the long game on Covid vaccine rollout**

Asia has led the world in controlling the spread of Covid-19, but that very success has set the region behind the US and Europe in the race to vaccinate against the disease. In countries with limited coronavirus outbreaks, regulators have been happy to let westerners act as guinea pigs for quickly approved jabs, while in others, the low level of Covid-19 cases means that locally developed vaccines have struggled to complete clinical trials. Asia's vaccine caution contrasts with fervent enthusiasm in the US and Europe, where coronavirus infection is raging and authorities have made it a point of pride to grant approvals quickly.

<https://www.ft.com/content/3a37c3f5-20fc-4d1f-8dd4-2fd966c27542>

### **Coronavirus: tensions over handling of UK Covid vaccine rollout**

Vaccinating the population against Covid-19 will cost up to £12bn, Whitehall's spending watchdog has disclosed, amid details of tensions between health bodies over the rollout. The National Audit Office said the government would spend up to £11.7bn on purchasing and manufacturing Covid-19 jabs for the UK before deploying them in England. A report released on Wednesday reveals officials from Public Health England complained that they had been cut out of key decisions despite having previous experience of vaccine delivery programmes.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/dec/16/tensions-mount-over-handling-of-uk-covid-vaccine-rollout>

### **EU countries begin vaccinations against Covid-19 next week**

The European Commission president says they have enough doses for everyone.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p091mkjf>

### **Indonesia pledges free COVID-19 vaccines, with president first in line**

Indonesia will provide free coronavirus vaccines to its citizens when the world's fourth most populous nation starts its inoculation programme, President Joko Widodo said on Wednesday, adding he would get the first shot to reassure people on safety.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-indonesia-vaccines/indonesia-pledges-free-covid-19-vaccines-with-president-first-in-line-idUSKBN28Q102>

### **US Coronavirus: As the US prepares to green light a second Covid-19 vaccine, officials issue warning for the holidays**

Help is on the way. But for many Americans, it may not be soon enough. More Americans received their first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine Wednesday, and federal health officials could authorize a second coronavirus vaccine in the next few days.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-coronavirus-a-second-vaccine-could-soon-get-the-green-light-while-officials-issue-warning-for-the-holidays/ar-BB1bYf8r>

### **Covid-19: BAME communities urged to accept vaccine**

People from BAME backgrounds are being encouraged to accept a Covid-19 vaccine amid concerns that they are less likely to take it up. Thornbury district nurse Genevieve Palmer was given the job at Kingswood Health Centre in Bristol on Tuesday. She asked communities to take the vaccine "to protect yourself, protect your family and protect everybody." A Royal Society for Public Health survey found that BAME groups were less likely to want the Covid vaccine.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-55333513>

### **Covid-19 vaccines to start 'the same day' across EU**

The EU's 27 member countries aim to start Covid-19 vaccinations on "the same day" in a sign of unity, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has said. Her statement to the European Parliament came as pressure mounted on the bloc to catch up with the United States and Britain, which have already started inoculating people with a vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech. "To get to the end of the pandemic, we will need up to 70% of the population vaccinated. This is a huge task, a big task. So let's start as soon as possible with the vaccination together, as 27, with a start at the same day," Ms von der Leyen told MEPs.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2020/12/16/1184718-covid-virus-europe-christmas/>

### **Covid: Minister 'hopes' Christmas relaxations won't lead to January lockdown**

A senior Cabinet minister has said he hopes the relaxation of coronavirus rules at Christmas won't lead to a rise in Covid-19 cases that force the UK into another lockdown in January. Robert Jenrick urged the public to be cautious at Christmas, with Boris Johnson confirming at Prime Minister's Questions that the rules would not change, saying all four UK nations had agreed to continue "in principle" with the easing of restrictions. But the communities secretary added that Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty "has been very clear that there are risks of families coming together and people need to be very careful".

<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-12-16/covid-minister-hopes-christmas-relaxations-wont-lead-to-january-lockdown>

### **India virus lockdown devastates migrant workers**

India's nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 rendered millions of migrant workers jobless. But for the hand-to-mouth workers who had migrated to cities like New Delhi and Mumbai for employment, staying at home was not an option.

<https://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/nation/2020/12/16/india-virus-lockdown-devastates-migrant-workers/3917679001/>

### **The Virus Trains: How Lockdown Chaos Spread Covid-19 Across India**

The crowds surged through the gates, fought their way up the stairs of the 160-year-old station, poured across the platforms and engulfed the trains. It was May 5, around 10 a.m. Surat was beastly hot, 106 degrees. Thousands of migrant laborers were frantic to leave — loom operators, diamond polishers, mechanics, truck drivers, cooks, cleaners, the backbone of Surat's economy. Two of them were Rabindra and Prafulla Behera, brothers and textile workers, who had arrived in Surat a decade ago in search of opportunity and were now fleeing disease and death. Rabindra stepped aboard carrying a bag stuffed with chapatis. His older brother, Prafulla, clattered in behind, dragging a plastic suitcase packed with pencils, toys, lipstick for his wife and 13 dresses for his girls.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/15/world/asia/india-coronavirus-shramik-specials.html>

### **A pandemic atlas: Masks key to keeping Japan's caseload low**

The COVID-19 pandemic came by ship to Japan in February — a foreboding harbinger for a world that had not yet come to grips with the disaster to come. The virus raced through a luxury cruise ship called the Diamond Princess after it had returned to its home port near Tokyo. A 14-day quarantine was imposed on the passengers, some of whom complained that they were being held in “a floating prison.” Of 3,711 people aboard, 712 were infected and 12 died. Though Japanese health officials were accused of botching the handling of the ship, the country has weathered the pandemic well — it has been spared the dangerous surges seen in the U.S. and Europe thus far. By mid-December, Japan had reported 138 cases per 100,000 population.

<https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-tokyo-health-coronavirus-pandemic-japan-3036635e7dcc12722f68999ea5767928>

### **Aged care residents have endured brutal lockdowns. They deserve Christmas with their families**

For around one third of residents in aged care homes, this will be their last Christmas. Yet many residents will not be able to celebrate with families and loved ones, even though Australia has transitioned to Covid-normal. An aged care home in Melbourne informed families that residents would not be able to have guests join them for Christmas lunch due to “Covid-safe reasons”. The home also announced that while residents and staff could enjoy a Christmas party of afternoon tea with carols, there would be no entertainers and, again, families would not be able to join the celebration.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/16/aged-care-residents-have-endured-brutal-lockdowns-they-deserve-christmas-with-their-families>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Biden to get COVID-19 vaccine next week, Pence to receive it Friday**

President-elect Joe Biden will get the coronavirus vaccine as soon as next week, transition officials said on Wednesday, as U.S. authorities try to build public confidence in a measure that promises to stanch the deadly pandemic. Vice President Mike Pence will get the vaccine on Friday, the White House said. Both men will receive the shot publicly in an effort to boost confidence in the safety of the vaccine, which will become widely available to the public next year. “I don’t want to get ahead of the line but I want to make sure that we demonstrate to the American people that it is safe to take,” Biden said at an event earlier on Wednesday. Biden, 78, is in a high-risk category for the coronavirus because of his age.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/usa-biden-idUKKBN28Q1EK>

### **TikTok update targets Covid vaccine misinformation**

TikTok is cracking down on Covid-19 vaccine misinformation through a suite of new changes aimed at protecting vulnerable users from harmful conspiracy theories. The video-sharing app will introduce a new tool to detect content relating to the Covid-19 vaccine as part of a series of updates

being released later this month. From that date, any relevant videos will come with a banner message attached, stating: "Learn more about Covid-19 vaccines." Coronavirus vaccinations developed by Pfizer and BioNTech began to be administered in the UK last week and have since begun in the US and other countries.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/tiktok-update-covid-vaccine-news-b1774949.html>

### **'Maskless' Santa Claus exposes 50 children to Covid-19 in Georgia**

A Georgia couple who appeared last week as Mr and Mrs Santa Claus for an event attended by at least 50 children and posed with them for pictures, tested positive for coronavirus two days after the event, exposing them to risk of infection. Most of the children came in close contact with the couple and some of them even sat on their laps. The pictures from the event also showed the man dressed up as Santa Claus posing without a mask on.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/santa-claus-georgia-covid-test-positive-children-b1774760.html>

### **French culture takes centre stage in Covid protest**

Hundreds of actors, theatre directors, musicians, film technicians and critics, and many others from the world of French culture gathered in the heart of Paris and other cities on Tuesday to protest against the government's shutdown of culture venues because of Covid-19. Cinemas, theatres, museums and concert halls had been set to reopen, but days in advance Prime Minister Jean Castex announced a change of heart in response to France's stubbornly high infection rate. No reopening will take place now until at least 7 January - a decision Mr Castex said was "particularly painful for us".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55314653>

### **Ukraine says dozens of police hurt in clashes with lockdown protesters**

One police officer was knocked unconscious and 40 others received chemical eye burns from gas on Tuesday in clashes between police and thousands of people protesting a government lockdown to fight the coronavirus, the interior ministry said. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's government has announced a tight national lockdown starting in January to fight the spread of COVID-19, in the wake of a recent spike in cases. At a rally of entrepreneurs and representatives of small businesses on Kyiv's Independence Square, clashes between helmeted riot police and demonstrators erupted after the protesters tried to set up tents.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-ukraine-lockdown-idUKKBN28P2FN>

### **Amazon asks U.S. to include warehouse, grocery staff in vaccine rollout**

Amazon.com Inc on Wednesday asked the U.S. government to prioritize essential workers including its warehouse, grocery store and data center staff for receipt of the COVID-19 vaccine, according to a letter seen by Reuters. The request shows how the country's second-biggest private employer, with 800,000 workers in the United States, considers the vaccine important to keeping its staff safe and its facilities open. The U.S. National Retail Federation made a similar request on the industry's behalf Wednesday as well.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-amazon-com-vaccine/amazon-asks-u-s-to-include-warehouse-grocery-staff-in-vaccine-rollout-idUSKBN28Q2WA>

### **After experts criticized its approach, Facebook overhauls its Covid-19 misinformation policy**

Facebook has overhauled its approach to harmful Covid-19 health misinformation, announcing major changes that would send a much stronger message to users who have interacted with harmful falsehoods about the virus. The decision on Tuesday comes after STAT reported in May on expert criticism of the social network's handling of falsehoods about Covid-19 from the researchers whom Facebook said it had consulted to design the policy. Those experts told STAT that Facebook appeared to have misinterpreted the research and that the social media platform's approach was

unlikely to be effective.

<https://www.statnews.com/2020/12/16/facebook-misinformation-covid19-update/>

### **Kansas mayor resigns after threats over backing mask mandate**

Dodge City Mayor Joyce Warshaw stepped down over concerns for her safety. She received threats after she advocated mask mandates in a USA Today story. Warshaw said 'people are not acting normally' during the pandemic. Despite resigning, she said she doesn't regret backing the mask mandate

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9057727/Kansas-mayor-resigns-threats-backing-mask-mandate.html>

### **WhatsApp rumours fear over BAME Covid vaccine take up**

People from ethnic minorities in the UK are significantly less likely to take the coronavirus vaccine - with warnings of targeted online scaremongering. A study from the Royal Society for Public Health found 57% of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people said they would take the vaccine. This compared with 79% of white people who would take a Covid vaccine. Vaccine minister Nadhim Zahawi warned of the impact of conspiracy theories being shared online.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55332321>

### **Analysis: After the cheers come jeers for Germany's Merkel over COVID-19**

Chancellor Angela Merkel banged the podium in frustration as she implored Germans this month to reduce social contacts to curb the spread of COVID-19. At one point in her unusually passionate address to parliament, during which she was heckled, she brought her hands together as if in prayer. At others, she shook her fist. "I want to say this: if we have too much contact over Christmas, and afterwards it turns out that that was the last Christmas with the grandparents, then we will have really messed up and we should not mess up!" she said. Merkel's rare show of emotion on Dec. 9 was widely seen as a sign of impatience with the difficulties - and now criticism - she faces as she tries to steer Europe's biggest economy through a second wave of COVID-19.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-germany-criticism/after-the-cheers-come-jeers-for-germanys-merkel-over-covid-19-idUKKBN28Q2M1>

## **Continued Lockdown**

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### **Unicef to feed hungry children in UK for first time in 70-year history**

Unicef has launched a domestic emergency response in the UK for the first time in its more than 70-year history to help feed children hit by the Covid-19 crisis. The UN agency, which is responsible for providing humanitarian aid to children worldwide, said the coronavirus pandemic was the most urgent crisis affecting children since the second world war. A YouGov poll in May commissioned by the charity Food Foundation found 2.4 million children (17%) were living in food insecure households. By October, an extra 900,000 children had been registered for free school meals.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/16/unicef-feed-hungry-children-uk-first-time-history>

### **COVID-19: For the first time in its history UNICEF will help feed children in the UK**

UNICEF says it's the first time in its 70-year history that it has responded to a UK "domestic emergency". For the first time UNICEF has launched a domestic emergency response in the UK to help feed children hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-for-the-first-time-in-its-history-unicef-will-help-feed-kids-in-the-uk-12163515>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Some vaccine doses kept too cold, Pfizer having manufacturing issues, U.S. officials say**

The first days of Pfizer Inc's COVID-19 vaccine rollout have seen unexpected hitches including some vaccines being stored at excessively cold temperatures and Pfizer reporting potential challenges in its vaccine production, U.S. officials said on a Wednesday press call. At least two trays of COVID-19

vaccine doses delivered in California needed to be replaced after their storage temperatures dipped below minus 80 Celsius (minus 112 Fahrenheit), U.S. Army General Gustave Perna said on the call. Pfizer's vaccines, made with partner BioNTech SE, are supposed to be kept at around minus 70C. Officials are investigating whether storing the vaccines at excessively cold temperatures poses a safety or efficacy risk, he said. Pfizer also has reported some production issues, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-pfizer-vaccine-idUKKBN28Q2BM>

### **AstraZeneca jab would speed up UK vaccine rollout - medical chief**

The coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University would significantly accelerate the roll-out of vaccines in Britain if it is approved by regulators, the country's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said. "If AZ comes through, if there aren't any last-minute hitches, it will speed up very substantially the period before we can actually get to the point ... when those in the highest-risk groups ... can all be vaccinated," he told reporters.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-astrazeneca-idUKKBN28Q2EI>

### **FDA experts back safety and efficacy of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine**

A briefing document published by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has confirmed the safety and efficacy of Moderna's mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine, paving the way for a potential approval soon. The document, published ahead of tomorrow's FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee Meeting, confirmed that the vaccine has a 94.1% efficacy rate, supporting Moderna's own findings. The FDA analysis found that although the mRNA-1273 vaccine caused some common adverse reactions, including injection site pain, fatigue, headache, muscle/joint pain and chills, serious adverse reactions occurred in 0.2% to 9.7% of participants.

[https://www.pmlive.com/pharma\\_news/fda\\_experts\\_back\\_safety\\_and\\_efficacy\\_of\\_modernas\\_covid-19\\_vaccine\\_1360084](https://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/fda_experts_back_safety_and_efficacy_of_modernas_covid-19_vaccine_1360084)

### **EU fast-tracks review of Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine**

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has scheduled an 'exceptional meeting' of its Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) on 21 December to review additional data for Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine. The move to bring the review forward comes after the vaccine, BNT162b2, gained approval in the US last week and earlier this month in the UK. The meeting was originally scheduled for 29 December, and the EMA added that this meeting will still take place if needed, but that the CHMP is hoping to conclude the review on 21 December, if possible.

[http://www.pmlive.com/pharma\\_news/eu\\_fast-tracks\\_review\\_of\\_pfizerbiontech\\_covid-19\\_vaccine\\_1360098](http://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/eu_fast-tracks_review_of_pfizerbiontech_covid-19_vaccine_1360098)

### **EU could give final approval for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 23**

The European Union could give final approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as early as Dec. 23, a senior Commission official said on Wednesday, only two days after a possible green light from the bloc's regulator. Under EU rules, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) recommends the approval of new medicines and vaccines, but the final decision to allow them onto the market is made by the EU executive Commission after consultation with EU governments. The EMA said on Tuesday it could issue a recommendation on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Dec. 21..

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKKBN28Q25H>

### **Cigarette giant BAT's coronavirus vaccine gets approval for human trials**

A coronavirus vaccine being developed by cigarette giant British American Tobacco (BAT) is launching human trials after receiving regulatory approval. The UK-based manufacturer of Benson & Hedges and Lucky Strike said America's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given the green light for clinical tests involving 180 adult volunteers, with results expected in the middle of 2021. The vaccine has been developed by BAT's biotechnology division, Kentucky BioProcessing (KBP), which has previously worked on a treatment for Ebola and is also developing a seasonal flu vaccine.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/business/pharmaceuticals/bat-coronavirus-vaccine-gets-approval-for-human-trials-b339925.html>

### **COVID-19: Valneva begins clinical trials for new coronavirus vaccine in UK**

Clinical trials have begun in the UK for a new COVID-19 vaccine being developed in Scotland. The UK government has pre-ordered 60 million doses of the Valneva candidate, which is being developed at the French biotech company's facility in Livingston, West Lothian. It is being tested on 150 volunteers at four National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) testing sites in Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Southampton.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-valneva-begins-clinical-trials-for-new-coronavirus-vaccine-in-uk-12163618>

### **FDA approves first over-the-counter Covid-19 test**

The US Food and Drug Administration has authorised emergency use of the first over-the-counter, self-testing Covid-19 antigen kit, which can produce results within 20 minutes. The test, which was developed by Australia's Ellume,

<https://www.ft.com/content/af6f26c1-0bad-4c51-9dc3-1ed35854258b?sharetype=gift?token=cc7616da-127a-47c5-b6a2-bb5ded9c1a52>

### **An app could catch 98.5% of all Covid-19 infections. Why isn't it available?**

The world wasn't prepared for the Covid-19 pandemic – and it still isn't. Critical shortages of personal protective equipment and ventilators continue to put medical professionals and patients at unnecessary risk. Meanwhile, long wait times for test results contribute to viral spread. Yet throughout this year, promising scientific innovations have been developed that could help reduce deaths until everyone can get the vaccine. So why aren't they available?

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/16/coronavirus-test-app-infections>

### **Covid-19 Vaccine Trial Volunteers Note Occasional Harsh Side Effects**

Jocelyn Edwards wasn't sure she got Moderna Inc.'s experimental Covid-19 vaccine or a placebo when she received her first of two doses in August. Hours after the second shot, she said she was sure it was the genuine article. "I woke up around midnight freezing," said the 68-year-old retired nurse. "For the next 24 hours I had intense chills, serious neck pain, headache, all my joints were aching." She had a fever that peaked at 102.4 and poured out so much sweat that she lost 3 pounds, she said. The following day she woke up and felt fine. Ms. Edwards, like the other 30,000 volunteers who took part in Phase 3 clinical trials for Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine, wasn't told whether she got the vaccine or a placebo. However, she said a trial researcher attributed her symptoms to her body mounting a strong immune response to what was most likely the vaccine. "It's better having 36 hours of feeling really rough than getting Covid," she said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-vaccine-trial-volunteers-note-occasional-harsh-side-effects-11608114601>

### **Rapid Covid-19 home test developed in Australia approved for emergency use in US**

A rapid, over-the-counter Covid-19 test developed by Australian firm Ellume has been given emergency approval in the United States. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Brisbane-based company's 20-minute Covid-19 Home Test on Tuesday as the US battles the virus that has infected 16.5 million people and killed more than 300,000 people in the country. The agency approved a prescription coronavirus test last month, but an over-the-counter product will make it easier to ramp up testing.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/16/fda-approves-ellume-health-covid-19-home-test-developed-brisbane-australia-emergency-use-usa-coronavirus>

### **UK medical journals call for Christmas Covid rules to be reversed**

Plans to relax Covid restrictions at Christmas must be reversed or many lives risk being lost, according to a rare joint editorial from two of the UK's most eminent medical journals. That call was

echoed by the head of the hospital doctors' union, who described the government's plans as "kamikaze". Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, also urged Boris Johnson to reconsider the restrictions in a letter to the prime minister on Tuesday afternoon. The British Medical Journal and Health Service Journal said the government could no longer claim to be protecting the NHS if it went ahead with its "rash" plans to allow households to mix indoors over Christmas. "We believe the government is about to blunder into another major error that will cost many lives," it says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/uk-medical-journals-call-for-christmas-covid-rules-to-be-reversed>

### **A pandemic atlas: Italy becomes Europe's viral epicenter**

On the morning of Feb. 20, Dr. Annalisa Malara went to work at the public hospital in tiny Codogno, Italy, and broke protocol by ordering up a coronavirus test for a patient. In so doing, she confirmed that Europe's coronavirus outbreak was under way. Malara's intuition — to test a 38-year-old Italian marathoner who hadn't traveled to China or been in contact with a known positive case — sounded the alarm to Italy and the rest of the world: The virus had not only arrived in the West but was circulating locally. Italy would go on to become the epicenter of COVID-19 in Europe and a cautionary tale of what happens when a health care system in even one of the wealthiest parts of the world collapses under the weight of the pandemic sick and dead.

<https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-europe-italy-health-coronavirus-pandemic-f71955b0327aa9f7a0c2e44b9f485475>

### **STUDY: 10% of Spain has been infected with COVID-19 as two Andalusia provinces revealed among least affected**

Just under 10% of the Spanish population have been infected with COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, a study has found. The fourth round of the ENE-COVID national Seroprevalence Study estimates that 4.7m people (9.9%) have already caught the disease. Around half of these were infected during the first wave and the other half during the second wave, said the report prepared by the ministry of Health, the Carlos III Health Institute and National Institute of Statistics.

<https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2020/12/16/study-10-of-spain-has-been-infected-with-covid-19-as-two-andalusia-provinces-revealed-among-least-affected/>

### **Brazilian Health Regulator Says Chinese Authorities Have Not Been Transparent About Covid-19 Vaccine**

China's 'vaccine diplomacy' efforts hit a snag on Monday as Brazilian health regulator Anvisa said that Chinese health authorities had not been transparent about their experimental Covid-19 vaccines, one of which is currently being tested in Sao Paulo. Anvisa which is assessing the CoronaVac shot developed by China's Sinovac Biotech said that Brazil was the "international leader" in the evaluation process for the experimental vaccine, Reuters reported. The health regulator noted that while the vaccine has had an emergency use authorization in China since June, the country's authorities have not been transparent about the criteria used for granting this authorization.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2020/12/15/brazilian-health-regulator-says-chinese-authorities-have-not-been-transparent-about-covid-19-vaccine/>

### **Pandemic atlas: NZ was envy of the world as nations ran the gamut in their response**

The nations of the world ran the gamut in their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic — sometimes veering from strict to lax measures in the course of just a few months, and vice versa. A look at the state of the pandemic around the globe

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/world/pandemic-atlas-nz-envy-world-nations-ran-gamut-in-their-response>

### **COVID: WHO urges Europeans to wear masks during Christmas**

Germany will begin coronavirus vaccinations on December 27 with elderly care home residents, Health Minister Jens Spahn announced Wednesday, with the European Union aiming for all 27 member states to begin on the same day. In a statement, Germany's 16 state-level health ministers

said Spahn had announced "the expected approval and supply of the BioNTech vaccine" with distribution beginning shortly before year's end. As Germany holds the EU's rotating presidency, that could mean December 27 will be the start date for all member countries. Also Wednesday, French Prime Minister Jean Castex said that France could begin vaccinations "in the last week of December" if "all conditions are met".

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-germany-aims-virus-vaccinations-december.html>

### **WHO research team expected to travel to Wuhan to investigate coronavirus origin**

A World Health Organization research mission to China is expected to arrive in Wuhan next month to investigate how the novel coronavirus jumped from animals to humans, and whether it emerged earlier or in a different place than originally thought. Fabian Leendertz, a biologist at Germany's Robert Koch Institute and a member of the WHO's 10-person mission team, told the Associated Press they will be working with Chinese scientists for four to five weeks. Most scientists think the virus Sars-Cov-2 began in animals in China, most likely bats, before jumping to humans. Cases were first discovered in the city of Wuhan in late December 2019, linked to a seafood market. More than 73.4 million people have since been diagnosed with the virus, and 1.63 million have died.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/16/who-research-team-expected-to-travel-to-wuhan-to-investigate-coronavirus-origin>

### **U.S. vaccine campaign grows as COVID-19 kills 2,500-plus Americans daily**

The United States on Thursday expanded its campaign to deliver COVID-19 vaccine shots into the arms of doctors and nurses on the frontlines of a pandemic that has killed more than 2,500 Americans a day, even as a major winter storm threatened to slow progress on the East Coast.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-usa/u-s-vaccine-campaign-grows-as-covid-19-kills-2500-plus-americans-daily-idUKKBN28Q1TO>

### **US says Pfizer vaccine production may face challenges**

US officials are working with Pfizer Inc to help maximize production capacity for its COVID-19 vaccine after the drugmaker told them it may be facing production challenges, US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar said in a Wednesday press call. Pfizer did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but its Chief Executive Albert Bourla told CNBC earlier this week the company was asking the US government to use the Defense Production Act to relieve some "critical supply limitations," particularly in some components. He did not provide further details on the areas of shortage.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/16/us-says-pfizer-vaccine-production-may-face-challenges>

### **Experts propose steps to promote, distribute COVID vaccine**

Two commentaries published yesterday in JAMA and a University of Michigan news release offer ideas from behavioral science and other fields to boost COVID-19 vaccine uptake in the United States and discuss the ethics of continuing placebo arms in trials of coronavirus vaccines already proven effective. The first commentary, by Kevin Volpp, MD, PhD, and Alison Buttenheim, PhD, MBA, of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, and George Loewenstein, PhD, of Carnegie Mellon University, tackled the problem of Americans' hesitancy to take a COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/12/experts-propose-steps-promote-distribute-covid-vaccine>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **New York's COVID-19 hospitalizations rise by 23% in a week**

There were 128 deaths reported on Monday across New York, which is the highest daily death toll since May 16 when 132 fatalities were reported. Hospitalizations have surged 23 percent in the last week with 5,982 patients currently being treated for COVID-19 across the state. There are now 1,065 patients being treated in intensive care - a 17 percent increase from a week earlier. Gov.

Andrew Cuomo has threatened to close all nonessential businesses in regions where hospitalizations reach 90 percent. Currently, 77 percent of hospital beds are full in New York state and 67 percent of ICU beds are occupied. New York City's hospital beds are now 80 percent full. Cuomo is warning that hospitals in parts of the state could become overwhelmed by January based on the current 'unsustainable trajectory.' He said the state may be headed for a second lockdown, like the one seen in the spring, if the trajectory of hospitalizations, cases and deaths doesn't change

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9059621/New-Yorks-COVID-19-hospitalizations-rise-23-week.html>

### **Family festivities or safe, solo celebrations. Here's how Europe is handling a Covid-19 Christmas**

Europe is preparing for a Christmas season like no other, as governments desperately try to thread the needle between preserving public health and allowing families to gather for traditional celebrations at the end of a tough year. Countries across the continent are taking varied approaches, even as Covid-19 cases continue to rise in some nations. Here's what European nations are planning this festive season

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/16/europe/europe-christmas-covid-restrictions-intl/index.html>

### **Germany reports record Covid deaths as country enters Christmas lockdown**

Germany has recorded a daily record 952 coronavirus-related deaths, as shops, schools and nurseries across the country close for an emergency Christmas lockdown. After experiencing relatively low numbers of infections and fatalities compared with other European countries in the spring, Germany's disease control agency has recorded more than 400 deaths for 11 days in a row. Wednesday's figure of 952 deaths was artificially inflated by the fact that Saxony, one of the federal states most affected by the second wave, also supplied numbers its health authorities had failed to report for Monday.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/16/germany-reports-record-covid-deaths-as-country-enters-christmas-lockdown>

### **'Lock down,' says Italy adviser, as deaths head for wartime levels**

An adviser to Italy's health ministry has called for coronavirus restrictions to be drastically tightened to avoid a "national tragedy" after the national statistics bureau ISTAT said deaths this year would be the highest since World War Two. "We are in a war situation, people don't realise it but the last time we had this many deaths, bombs were dropping on our cities during the war," public health professor Walter Ricciardi told the television channel la7 on Tuesday evening. Ricciardi, the adviser to Health Minister Roberto Speranza, said the government, which is considering tightening restrictions over the Christmas and New Year holidays, should lock down the main cities completely.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-italy-idUSKBN28Q0ZW>

### **Germany sees record death toll on first day of new lockdown**

German streets were quiet "like Sunday" on the first day of a new partial lockdown to try to halt surging infections, as the country reported a record number of Covid-19 deaths. A total of 952 people died in the previous 24 hours, according to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) disease control centre Wednesday, a figure that could rise as the hard-hit Saxony region was not included in Tuesday's numbers. The RKI said 27,728 new coronavirus cases were registered, a figure close to the daily record of nearly 30,000 infections reported on Friday.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201216-germany-sees-record-death-toll-on-first-day-of-new-lockdown>

### **South Korea reports record coronavirus cases as Seoul runs out of critical care beds**

South Korea reported a record daily rise in novel coronavirus cases on Wednesday and the prime minister issued an urgent call for more hospital beds to cope with the country's worst outbreak since the start of the pandemic. Hospitals were at breaking point with only three critical care beds available in greater Seoul, an area with a population of almost 26 million people, officials said. "The

top priority is securing more hospital beds,” Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun told a government meeting, according to a transcript. “Full administrative power should be mobilised so that no patient would wait for more than a day before being assigned to her bed.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-southkorea/south-korea-reports-record-coronavirus-cases-as-seoul-runs-out-of-critical-care-beds-idUSKBN28Q05Z>

### **Honeymoon over for Japan's new PM amid Covid third wave**

Yoshihide Suga's honeymoon period as Japan's prime minister had barely begun when coronavirus intervened. Now, two months into his leadership, he finds himself battling a resurgent outbreak and disillusionment among voters. Enthusiasm for the farmer's son who worked part-time to pay his way through university has all but evaporated since he took office in late September. As Japan prepares for a holiday period that experts fear could be overshadowed by a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, an anxious public has Suga in its sights. After the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) selected Suga to replace an apparently ailing Shinzō Abe as party leader and, following parliamentary approval, prime minister, his support rating was briefly 74%.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/16/honeymoon-over-for-yoshihide-suga-japan-pm-covid-third-wave>

### **German Factories Saw Bottlenecks in Days Before New Lockdown**

German manufacturing powered ahead in December, with global demand helping factories post a better-than-forecast performance. IHS Markit's monthly index unexpectedly jumped to 58.6, the highest level in almost three years, from 57.8. Orders across the goods-producing sector increased sharply, with many firms citing stronger demand from China in particular. The reading pushed the euro higher. It extended its gain and was up 0.4% to \$1.2198 as of 10:47 a.m Frankfurt time. The yield on German 10-year bonds rose.

[https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/german-factories-saw-bottlenecks-in-days-before-new-lockdown/ar-BB1bYbkK?fbclid=IwAR3i95bZKW\\_CRTLAXnvDL6bFLgVRBZqj2m6unFoztUn-6Mx3tqzmFa1O87g](https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/german-factories-saw-bottlenecks-in-days-before-new-lockdown/ar-BB1bYbkK?fbclid=IwAR3i95bZKW_CRTLAXnvDL6bFLgVRBZqj2m6unFoztUn-6Mx3tqzmFa1O87g)

### **If Australia can close internal borders to fight Covid so can we. Here's how.**

Great news, a Covid vaccine is coming! But we can't let our guard down now--it will take many months to fully roll it out, and it remains only one important tool in our toolbox. In the meantime, we must deploy parallel strategies to suppress Covid so that health and business can get back to normal as soon as possible. Failing that, we will face more lockdowns and risks, for example, the new Covid strain revealed this week in England, which could spread to Ireland given significant traffic between the two jurisdictions. Also this week, Michael Martin warned us about an impending January lockdown, as have many experts.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/if-australia-can-close-internal-borders-to-fight-covid-so-can-we-here-s-how-1.4437622>

### **COVID: Italy urged to 'lock down' to avoid 'national tragedy'**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure to review plans aimed at easing coronavirus restrictions for the Christmas period. Several European countries have imposed tighter coronavirus restrictions ahead of the festive season. The United States reported another record number of new cases as worldwide infections near 73 million, with more than 1.6 million deaths. South Korea hit another record high of daily new COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began, prompting health officials to consider even tougher measures.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/16/uk-govt-slammed-for-plans-to-relax-covid-rules-for-christmas>

### **Bed shortage looms as S.Korea reports record new coronavirus cases**

South Korea reported a record daily rise in novel coronavirus cases on Wednesday and the prime minister issued an urgent call for more hospital beds to cope with the country's worst outbreak since the start of the pandemic. Hospitals were at breaking point with only three critical care beds available in greater Seoul, an area with a population of almost 26 million people, officials said. “The

top priority is securing more hospital beds," Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun told a government meeting, according to a transcript. "Full administrative power should be mobilised so that no patient would wait for more than a day before being assigned to her bed."

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-southkorea-idUKKBN28Q0H1>

### **Should COVID cancel Christmas? UK says it is a personal decision**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Wednesday that people should plan only for a "merry little Christmas" and exercise extreme caution but he refused to outlaw festive family gatherings as COVID-19 cases soared across swathes of Britain.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain/should-covid-cancel-christmas-uk-says-it-is-a-personal-decision-idUKKBN28Q0QN>

### **Swiss coronavirus expert calls for lockdown to curb COVID-19**

The leading expert advising the Swiss government on the coronavirus pandemic urged it on Tuesday to impose an immediate and strict lockdown to contain the infection rate, echoing calls by other scientists, officials and medical professionals. "We think we need very strong measures, the earlier the better," Martin Ackermann, who heads the independent scientific advisory body on COVID-19, told a media briefing. Ackermann called for the closure of restaurants and non-essential shops and for strict work-from-home rules.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-swiss/swiss-coronavirus-expert-calls-for-lockdown-to-curb-covid-19-idUKKBN28P24Q>

### **'On the brink': Covid pressure mounts at hospitals in Northern Ireland**

When ambulances started queueing outside hospitals across Northern Ireland, revealing a health system overwhelmed by Covid-19, Sean Brophy was not surprised. Weeks earlier the 52-year-old hospital transport worker had himself been hospitalised with the virus and saw how even then the system was cracking under pressure. "When someone died or was discharged the bed was filled within an hour - they were already at capacity. Staff were brilliant but they looked as fatigued as those of us with Covid. It was just wrong. I could see where it was heading," said Brophy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/dec/16/on-brink-covid-pressure-mounts-hospitals-northern-ireland-wales>

## **New Lockdown**

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### **Wales to enter post-Christmas lockdown**

First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford has announced tougher new measures to tackle Covid-19, including a post-Christmas lockdown. "We must move to alert level 4 and tighten the restrictions to control the spread of coronavirus and save lives," he said. Mr Drakeford also advised that "only two households should come together" at Christmas. Under rules agreed for all nations of the UK up to three households are allowed to meet for a limited period.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55335968>

### **Wales imposes fresh Covid lockdown rules from Christmas Eve**

Fresh lockdown measures are to be imposed in Wales beginning on Christmas Eve, while the law will be changed to limit Christmas mixing to two households, the first minister, Mark Drakeford, has announced. Amid surging cases, all non-essential shops, plus leisure and fitness centres and close-contact services, will shut at the end of trading on Thursday 24 December. Hospitality premises, including pubs and restaurants, will close from 6pm on Christmas Day. On 28 December, tighter restrictions for household mixing, staying at home, holiday accommodation and travel will apply. This new set of "level 4" restrictions will apply to the whole of Wales.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/dec/16/wales-to-impose-fresh-covid-lockdown-rules-from-christmas-eve>

### **Coronavirus: Germany faces hard lockdown until Easter as deaths spiral**

Germany's Covid-19 death toll has risen by nearly 1,000 in a single day, leading to speculation that

its lockdown could last until Easter. One of the country's regional chief ministers has warned that the hospital system is for the first time "seriously on the brink of overload" as the infection rate continues to mount and spare intensive care capacity dwindles. This morning the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), which compiles the government's coronavirus statistics, reported 952 deaths within the previous 24 hours, well above the previous single-day record of 590, which was set on Friday.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/coronavirus-germany-faces-hard-lockdown-until-easter-as-deaths-spiral-2v3cntf2d>

### **South Korea warns of first potential lockdown as coronavirus numbers continue to rise**

South Korean health officials have warned residents to take current restrictions seriously, as the country faces the possibility of entering into its first potential lockdown since the beginning of the pandemic amid an alarming rise in new infections.

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/12/16/South-Korea-first-COVID-lockdown.html>

### **Last gasp: Londoners party on eve of tougher rules**

One woman waved purple burlesque feather fans while dozens cheered with beers and some sang Karaoke in the streets for one last gasp of revelry in London's partyland before the capital went into the strictest level of COVID restrictions. For much of 2020, the pubs of London's West End and the hedonistic nightclubs of Shoreditch have lain silent - devoid of the fun that has, over the centuries, attracted drunken poets, louche musicians and the lonely seeking a liaison. As tougher restrictions loomed at the stroke of midnight, a few hundred revellers brushed away the COVID-19 doom and gloom in Soho by partying on the streets, mostly without masks.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-party/last-gasp-londoners-party-on-eve-of-tougher-rules-idUKKBN28Q184>

### **Denmark to close shops and shopping malls during Christmas, Ekstra Bladet newspaper reports**

Denmark will impose a hard lockdown over Christmas and the New Year to limit the spread of COVID-19, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Wednesday. Shopping malls will close starting Thursday, and other stores, with the exception of supermarkets and food shops, will close from Dec. 25. Students still in school will be sent home as of Monday. "Our healthcare system is under pressure," Frederiksen said. "We have to act now." Danish authorities expect the coming months to be the worst of the pandemic, she said.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-denmark-idUKKBN28Q2B0>