

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

5th Jan 2021

News Highlights

Despite experts' concerns, more countries mull delaying doses

More countries [are mulling over details, following the UK strategy of delaying Covid vaccine](#) doses to increase availability. Delaying the second dose after four weeks has been deemed risky by [some experts and manufacturers, though there is debate on the issue](#). This controversy notwithstanding, Germany is reportedly considering following the UK, and Denmark has approved a similar plan for up to six weeks' delay. [Earlier research has shown the Pfizer vaccine to be 52% effective after the first dose and 95% after the second](#).

Indonesia's vaccination plan to target working population first

Inoculation against Covid-19 in Indonesia will first target its working-age population, in contrast to the strategies of most other countries that prioritise the elderly. [The objective of Indonesia's plan is to ramp up herd immunity as quickly as possible and boost the economy](#). A deal has been forged to procure 125.5 million doses of Sinovac Biotech's CoronaVac shot, which has only been tested on 18-59 year olds in the country; as such, it is unproven as to the vaccine's efficacy among the elderly.

Australia bucks trend on accelerating vaccine approval

Despite fresh Covid-19 cases in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia is not following in the footsteps of some other nations in expediting approval and distribution of the AstraZeneca vaccine or the Pfizer vaccine. [Regulators are seeking further information before approval](#). Meanwhile, opposition parties are calling for the speeding up of vaccine rollout in Australia due to a Covid-19 resurgence.

China plans to vaccinate fifty million with first dose by mid-January

In China, [fifty million people are targeted to received the first dose of Sinopharm's Covid-19 vaccine by January 5th and the second by February 5th, ahead of the Lunar New Year](#). The country's indigenous vaccine candidate has already been administered to some ahead of receiving official regulatory approval, in what The Washington Post described as an 'urgent use' push.

Lockdown Exit

Outpacing Trump's Operation Warp Speed, China to give coronavirus vaccine to 50 million in a month

China has begun a nationwide drive to vaccinate some 50 million front-line workers against the coronavirus before the Lunar New Year travel rush next month, in hopes of avoiding a repeat of last year's grim holiday season. Workers in a range of industries will receive their first of two vaccine shots by the middle of this month, with the next shot coming two to four weeks afterward, according to the national plan. The nine prioritized groups include health sector workers, delivery workers, people whose jobs require overseas travel, public servants and utilities employees. China's target of vaccinating 50 million people in a month is an ambitious goal, more than the populations of California and Michigan combined. In the United States, where the Trump administration has touted its Operation Warp Speed to fast-track delivery of vaccines, 4.2 million people have received a first

dose since distribution began on Dec. 14

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/coronavirus-vaccine-china-lunar-new-year/2021/01/04/d9401354-4e34-11eb-a1f5-fdaf28cfca90_story.html

Covid-19: New UK virus variant reaches NZ as Government introduces tougher testing rules for travellers

The mutant coronavirus strain that sent large parts of England into a “tier 4” lockdown earlier this month has reached New Zealand. There were 19 new cases of Covid-19 within New Zealand since the New Year. Of the new cases announced on Sunday, one was historical and the rest were in managed isolation. However, six cases of the mutant UK strain have also been found in New Zealand, the Ministry of Health confirmed. The six cases, five of whom travelled from the United Kingdom and one who travelled from South Africa, arrived into New Zealand between December 13 and 25.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300197445/coronavirus-new-uk-covid19-variant-reaches-nz-as-government-introduces-tougher-testing-rules-for-travellers>

New Zealand tightens border again amid fears over new Covid strain

Travellers from UK and US now required to test negative before departure and take an extra test on arrival as ‘extra precautionary steps’

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/new-zealand-tightens-border-again-amid-fears-over-new-covid-strain>

Covid-19: What you need to know about UK coronavirus strain now in New Zealand

The arrival of a highly-transmissible Covid-19 strain on New Zealand shores from the United Kingdom has experts warning the country's quarantine process will be put to the test. On Sunday, health authorities announced six cases of Covid-19 have been found to match a newly identified variant of the disease, known as B.1.1.7, which spread rapidly and caused infection rates to soar in the UK. Six people carrying the new variant – thought to be 50 to 70 per cent more infectious than the regular coronavirus – arrived in New Zealand between December 13 and 25.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300197723/covid19-what-you-need-to-know-about-uk-coronavirus-strain-now-in-new-zealand>

Five key milestones in the Covid-19 pandemic that we’re anticipating in 2021

If 2020 was defined by the explosion of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, 2021 could be about its dwindling. But how many people will fall ill, and die, as that happens is dependent on our leaders, individuals, vaccine makers, and public campaigns to encourage people to get the Covid-19 shots developed with unprecedented speed. STAT News publishes its forecast regarding what to anticipate for the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/04/five-key-milestones-in-the-covid19-pandemic-2021/>

How it started: A Q&A with Helen Branswell, one year after Covid-19 became a full-time job

Before the virus that causes Covid-19 had a name — before Covid-19 itself had a name — it was a medical mystery. It wasn’t even clear it was a virus. All the world knew, or the tiny sliver of the world that was paying attention, was that a handful of cases of unexplained pneumonia had been reported in central China. That is what STAT reported on this date, one year ago. The author of the story, infectious disease reporter Helen Branswell, has written 147 others in the hazy, horrible months that have followed. We took a break recently to mark today’s anniversary and look back at where we’ve been. Rest assured, reader, her wish at the end of this Q&A shall be granted.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/04/how-it-started-a-qa-with-helen-branswell-one-year-after-covid-19-became-a-full-time-job/>

Why Indonesia is vaccinating its working population first, not elderly

As Indonesia prepares to begin mass inoculations against COVID-19, its plan to prioritise working age adults over the elderly, aiming to reach herd immunity fast and revive the economy, will be closely watched by other countries. Several countries such as the United States and Britain that have already begun vaccinations are giving priority to elderly people who are more vulnerable to the respiratory disease. The following are experts' views on merits and risks of the Indonesian approach, under which working age adults will be vaccinated after frontline health workers and public servants. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-indonesia-explaine/why-indonesia-is-vaccinating-its-working-population-first-not-elderly-idUSKBN2990MX>

Exit Strategies

New York to fine hospitals that fail to deploy COVID-19 vaccine within a week -governor

New York state will begin fining hospitals that do not administer allotted COVID-19 vaccines within a week of receiving their supplies and will decline to provide them with further doses, Governor Andrew Cuomo said in a news conference on Monday. The U.S. federal government has distributed more than 13 million vaccine doses to states and territories around the country, but only around 4 million have actually been administered, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last updated on Saturday. New York Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker notified hospitals of the potential actions in a letter on Sunday, Cuomo told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-vaccine-new-york-idUSL1N2JF1KC>

First NHS staff in the region receive the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

Frontline NHS staff in South Tyneside and Sunderland are among the first in the region to receive the newly approved Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. Tracy Barnett from the South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust's Community Stroke Team was the very first to be vaccinated at South Tyneside District Hospital today.

<https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2021-01-04/first-nhs-staff-in-the-region-receive-the-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine>

China giving COVID-19 vaccine to 50 million in a month, Israel vaccinating so fast it's running out of vaccine

China is aiming to administer the first dose of the vaccine to 50 million people before Jan. 15 and the second shot by Feb. 5. Lunar New Years festivities begin on Feb. 11. Health officials in Israel are working to secure more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine as the country has inoculated a higher proportion of its population than any other country and is running low on supply.

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/532537-china-giving-covid-19-vaccine-to-50-million-in-a>

Coronavirus vaccine: Delaying second booster jabs is the right move

Mixed news on the Covid front this week. On the upside, the first doses of the Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine have finally arrived and the additional supply will give a much-needed boost to the UK immunisation programme. On the downside, cases of infection continue to rise at an alarming rate, a last-minute change to the vaccine schedule delaying second doses has caused widespread concern, and many people in the top-priority groups have yet to hear when they will be vaccinated.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-vaccine-delaying-second-booster-jabs-is-the-right-move-p82q8vgv9>

BMA 'will support' GPs who honour existing appointments for second dose of Covid vaccine

The BMA has said it will support GPs who honour appointments already made to administer the second dose of the Covid vaccine within three weeks of the first dose. The Government said that GPs should cancel appointments they had already made to administer the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine within three weeks because it wanted more people to receive the first dose sooner. But

doctors' groups have warned of the problem of cancelling second appointments for patients over 80, with the Doctors' Association UK (DAUK) warned there was 'chaos ensuing'. It comes as NHS England has made an additional £1,000 available to the first wave primary care networks to support with administrative costs in rescheduling appointments. Pfizer initially stated that its vaccine must be taken in two doses, three weeks apart.

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/coronavirus/bma-will-support-gps-who-honour-existing-appointments-for-second-dose-of-covid-vaccine/>

GP warns UK faces 'disastrous waste' of Covid vaccine this week after dosing U-turn

A top GP has warned the UK faces a disastrous waste of vaccine doses after the Government's decision to U-turn on its original inoculation plan. Downing Street has opted to delay the vital second dose of the Pfizer vaccine for the elderly from 21 days to three months. But the timing of the move was "wrong", according to Dame Clare Gerada. The ex-chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and a practising GP, said one million people in their 80s and older would now have to be contacted in order to arrange new appointments. The re-think comes days before they were due to be vaccinated later this week, which members of the Doctors' Association have already called a "gamble".

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/gp-warns-uk-faces-disastrous-23257041>

UK's decision to delay second Covid vaccine shot reluctantly endorsed by advisers

The U.K.'s independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) said in a statement published Sunday that it was a "very difficult and finely balanced decision" but it endorsed the U.K. government's move to pursue coverage of as high a proportion of the population as possible. However, it said the change of policy must be accompanied by several other measures. Germany's health ministry on Monday sought the advice of an independent vaccination commission on whether to follow in the U.K.'s footsteps.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/04/uk-decision-to-delay-second-covid-vaccine-shot-endorsed-by-advisers.html>

Germany mulls delaying second COVID-19 vaccine shot, Denmark approves delay

Germany was weighing on Monday whether to allow a delay in administering a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from BioNTech and Pfizer to make scarce supplies go further, after a similar move by Britain last week. Separately, Denmark approved on Monday a delay of up to six weeks between the first and second shots of the vaccine. In Berlin, the health ministry was seeking the view of an independent vaccination commission on whether to delay a second shot beyond a current 42-day maximum limit, according to a one-page document seen by Reuters on Monday.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-vaccines-germany/update-5-germany-mulls-delaying-second-covid-19-vaccine-shot-denmark-approves-delay-idUKL8N2JF1PQ>

'Scandal!' Fury in France at slow rollout of Covid-19 vaccine programme

President Emmanuel Macron is under intense pressure to accelerate vaccine-sceptical France's inoculation campaign, whose tortuously slow start has been denounced as a "fiasco" and "bureaucratic sabotage". Only a few thousand French people had received the Covid-19 vaccine by Monday, compared with 200,000 in Germany, after an EU-wide programme kicked off a week ago. "This is the biggest fiasco we have ever seen in the health field," said epidemiologist and public health expert Martin Blachier. "A logistics fiasco and a communication fiasco," he told LCI news channel

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/france-covid-vaccine-emmanuel-macron-b1782171.html>

Houston's free COVID-19 vaccination clinic sees overwhelming public response

Houston's free COVID-19 vaccination clinic was met with overwhelming response. At least 1,000 people received the much-anticipated Moderna vaccine at Houston's first free public COVID-19 vaccination clinic,

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/coronavirus/article/Houston-vaccine-clinic-reservation-where-location-15844481.php>

NYC is only handing out COVID-19 vaccine shots during 'business hours'

Cuomo said on Monday that his state has administered almost 300,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses - or about 46 percent of its allocation - in the last three weeks. The latest CDC data, however, shows that New York state has administered 236,941 of its 774,075 distributed doses. In New York City, 110,241 of 443,000 vaccine doses have been administered since vaccinations started three weeks ago. Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday said hospitals will be fined \$100,000 if they fail to use up their dose allocations by the end of the week. Facilities now also must use up their vaccine allocations within seven days going forward or risk being allowed to receive any future doses. NYC Mayor Bill De Blasio said he expects the city to administer 400,000 doses per week by the end of the month with 250 new vaccine sites set to open. NYC Councilman Mark Levine has slammed the current rate of vaccine distribution, saying shots need to be handed out 24/7.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9111445/NYC-handing-COVID-19-vaccine-shots-business-hours.html>

US coronavirus news: One American dies from Covid-19 every 33 seconds as the vaccine rollout hits snags

While hopes of vaccinating 20 million people by New Year's Day sputtered out, the US now faces staggering new challenges in the fight against Covid-19. Over the past week, the US has averaged 2,637 coronavirus deaths every day, according to Johns Hopkins University. That's an average of one Covid-19 death every 33 seconds. December was actually the deadliest month yet of this pandemic, with 77,572 lives lost. And deaths are likely to accelerate as new infections and hospitalizations rise.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/us-coronavirus-news-one-american-dies-from-covid-19-every-33-seconds-as-the-vaccine-rollout-hits-snags/ar-BB1crR4B>

US may cut Covid vaccine doses by half to speed up rollout

The federal government of US is thinking about reducing Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine dosages to half to some people in order to speed up the vaccine rollout amid concerns intensifying that the distribution drive is slower than expected. Moncef Slaoui, head of Operation Warp Speed, an initiative to accelerate coronavirus vaccine efforts, said Moderna vaccine's single shot to people between the age group 18-55 gives "identical immune response" to the recommended two injections dose. He said that the officials are in discussion with Moderna and the Food and Drug Administration.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/covid-vaccine-us-dose-cut-half-moderna-b1781863.html>

First Oxford vaccine administered amid UK lockdown calls

Britain administered the first dose of its newly-approved Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine on Monday amid calls for the country to enter a third nationwide lockdown. Brian Pinker, an 82-year-old man from the vaccine's birthplace Oxford, was the first to be given the new vaccine, which is being rolled out as the U.K. grapples with a surge in coronavirus cases. "Didn't feel it, how strange," Pinker said after receiving the injection. "I can now really look forward to celebrating my 48th wedding anniversary with my wife Shirley later this year." The vaccine is the second to be approved for use in the U.K. after the Pfizer/BioNTech jab was given the thumbs-up by regulators at the end of 2020. It comes as Prime Minister Boris Johnson faces mounting calls to introduce tougher restrictions across England, with opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer demanding the replacement of its current tiered system of restrictions with a more stringent national lockdown. The U.K. has registered more than 50,000 new daily cases for six days in a row, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the BBC's Today program the total number of people in hospital in England was now "higher than the first peak" last spring.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/first-uk-oxford-astrazeneca-coronavirus-vaccine-lockdown/>

France ramps up Covid-19 vaccination programme as slow start sparks anger

France is overhauling its Covid-19 immunisation campaign after a cautious, phased strategy aimed at placating the world's most vaccine-sceptical population fell flat in its first week. The country has only vaccinated some 350 people to date — compared with the UK's 1m and Germany's 238,000 — although the government has received 500,000 doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine and will get a similar amount each week in January. The situation is piling pressure on President Emmanuel Macron and risks sparking another political fight over how the government has managed the pandemic. Opposition politicians have criticised the government over how it bungled mask supplies and struggled to roll out mass testing last year.

<https://www.ft.com/content/b8fae463-91dd-44e3-a6fe-fce5cf8f04c2>

India's COVID-19 vaccine drive will be a 'work in progress', with no final plan in a highly fluid situation

Since both the Indian vaccines – Covaxin and Covishield – have now been officially approved for emergency use, the focus is on its distribution and prioritization, which are still being worked out as a 'work in progress' due to many inherent difficulties in India's vaccine drive against COVID-19, monitoring the recipients of the vaccines, and also the future uncertainties relating to the pandemic itself. The known and unknown administrative issues may also crop up during the implementation of the drive requiring great alertness and quick response. The Serum Institute of India's (SII) Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, formally cleared by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), has enabled the country to launch the vaccination drive simultaneously in most states that were part of 'Dry Run' of January 2, to test the preparedness of our system to effectively furnish the task in

<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/indias-covid-19-vaccine-drive-will-be-a-work-in-progress-with-no-final-plan-in-a-highly-fluid-situation>

Covid, lockdown disrupted travel sector but people, vaccination to drive revival of tourism in India in 2021

Travel during Covid pandemic in India: In a glimmer of hope for the travel and tourism industry, the winter holiday season witnessed a favourable growth as more and more people gathered the courage to step out braving the ongoing Covid pandemic. The year 2020 was nothing short of a nightmare for us and travel and tourism sector bore the brunt of Covid Pandemic and lockdown. However, in a ray of hope, the undaunting spirit and indelible essence of people for the travel keep the tourism sector afloat against a high tide of losses. Meanwhile, the Narendra Modi government has taken an array of initiatives to provide thrust to the rich culture of tourism in India.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/travel-tourism/covid-lockdown-disrupted-travel-sector-but-people-vaccination-to-drive-revival-of-tourism-in-india-in-2021/2163803/>

Australia's largest state reports zero COVID cases, urges thousands to get tested

Australia's most populous state New South Wales (NSW) on Monday reported zero local coronavirus cases for the first time in nearly three weeks, as Sydney battled multiple outbreaks and authorities urged tens of thousands of people to get tested. NSW daily testing numbers have dropped to around 20,000 in the last two days from a peak of about 70,000 recorded on Christmas Day, Dec. 25. The overwhelming majority of tests are in the state capital Sydney. "The numbers are far too low... if we're going to succeed in staying ahead of the COVID pandemic, testing is crucial in large numbers so we can be confident of the data when we're making decisions," NSW Acting Premier John Barilaro told reporters.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-australia/australias-largest-state-reports-zero-covid-cases-urges-t-housands-to-get-tested-idUKKBN29909Q>

'No other lockdowns': NSW says current restrictions enough to deal with clusters

NSW will not lock down Sydney suburbs involved in a new, growing coronavirus cluster, but restrictions will remain in place on the northern beaches and there will be a new cap on the number

of people allowed at the Sydney Test. Despite two new cases on the northern beaches in four days, the NSW government said there was "no option" to lift restrictions for those living north of Narrabeen Bridge before the weekend. Victoria also indicated on Monday its strict hard border with NSW would remain for the rest of January, potentially leaving thousands of people stranded in NSW for another three weeks.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/upper-beaches-to-remain-locked-down-as-cluster-grows-in-west-20210104-p56rn8.html>

Cambodia reopens schools and museums as others lock down

Cambodia has started reopening schools and museums as it relaxes a six-week lockdown following a coronavirus outbreak late last year, marking a contrast with some neighbouring countries that are facing new restrictions due to rising COVID-19 cases. The Southeast Asian country of just over 16 million people, one of the least impacted by the novel coronavirus with just 382 infections and no deaths since the beginning of the pandemic, saw a rare cluster of cases in November. On Monday, students wearing masks lined up for temperature checks and hand washing before being allowed to enter the Sovannaphumi primary school in the capital Phnom Penh.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-cambodia-idUSKBN2990WU>

UK rolls out AstraZeneca vaccine, hails lead in fight against coronavirus

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday ordered England into a new national lockdown to contain a surge in COVID-19 cases that threatens to overwhelm parts of the health system before a vaccine programme reaches a critical mass. The announcement came just hours after the government hailed Britain's success in becoming the first country to begin rolling out the vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca against COVID-19. Johnson said a new, more contagious variant of the coronavirus first identified in the United Kingdom and now present in many other countries was spreading at great speed and immediate action was needed to slow it down. "As I speak to you tonight, our hospitals are under more pressure from COVID than any time since the start of the pandemic," Johnson said in a televised address to the country.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain/update-4-uk-rolls-out-astrazeneca-vaccine-hails-lead-in-fight-against-coronavirus-idUKL1N2JF09J>

Feds consider half-doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to stretch supplies, as U.K. spaces out Pfizer, AstraZeneca shots

Initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccines are obviously limited, even as drugmakers ramp up production, so governments are looking for ways to stretch their stocks. For Moderna's mRNA-1273, that could mean reducing the dosing strength. The U.S. government is considering halving the dose of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, Operation Warp Speed chief Moncef Slaoui told CBS' Face the Nation Sunday. The vaccine task force is in talks with Moderna and the FDA about implementing the idea, he said. "We know that, for the Moderna vaccine, giving half of the dose to people between the ages of 18 and 55, two doses [at] half the dose ... we know it induces identical immune response" to the currently authorized dose, Slaoui added. Moderna declined to comment on potential ongoing regulatory discussions.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/feds-consider-half-dose-moderna-covid-19-vaccine-as-u-k-spaces-out-pfizer-astrazeneca-shots>

'Still waiting for my turn': Primary care doctors are being left behind in the vaccine rollout

Only 23% of primary care clinicians know where they'll get a vaccine from, according to a survey of more than 1,400 such doctors from Dec. 11 to 15 by the Larry A. Green Center with the Primary Care Collaborative. "More than three quarters don't even know where they're getting the vaccine," said Ann Greiner, chief executive of the Primary Care Collaborative. These doctors should be

vaccinated to fully support patients, she added: “We really want to keep patients out of the emergency room, for obvious reasons.” So far, a “stark minority” of the primary care physicians that Maxson works with at Aledade have received their vaccine; most doctors are still waiting, she said. Federal guidance is subject to interpretation from states, the majority of which are distributing vaccines via major hospitals. And, without any clear state or federal government directive on when primary care doctors should be vaccinated, many independent physicians must rely on the goodwill of hospitals to receive their doses.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/04/covid19-vaccines-primary-care-doctors-rollout/>

Britain takes a gamble with Covid-19 vaccines, upping the stakes for the rest of us

In an extraordinary time, British health authorities are taking extraordinary measures to beat back Covid-19. But some experts say that, in doing so, they are also taking a serious gamble. In recent days, the British have said they will stretch out the interval between the administration of the two doses required for Covid-19 vaccines already in use — potentially to as long as three months, instead of the recommended three or four weeks. And they have said they will permit the first dose and second dose for any one person to be from different vaccine manufacturers, if the matching vaccine is not available. The moves are borne of a desire to begin vaccinating as many people as quickly as possible, particularly with Britain facing high levels of transmission of an apparently more infectious form of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/04/britain-takes-a-gamble-with-covid-19-vaccines-upping-the-stakes-for-the-rest-of-us/>

Partisan Exits

Greece's Orthodox Church defies Epiphany lockdown order

Greece’s Orthodox Church said on Monday it would defy a government lockdown order imposed to limit the spread of the coronavirus and open churches to the faithful during the Epiphany celebration on Jan. 6. Greece tightened coronavirus curbs for a week from Sunday and reversed an earlier decision to allow Epiphany services after hospitals struggled to deal with a flood of new cases. The Greek Orthodox Church said it had written to the government urging it to respect the agreement allowing Epiphany services to go ahead.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-church/greeces-orthodox-church-defies-epiphany-lockdown-order-idUSL8N2JF3XZ>

Greek Orthodox church to defy lockdown by opening for Epiphany

The Greek Orthodox church has announced it will defy government lockdown orders aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus and open places of worship to mark Epiphany this Wednesday. After an emergency session of the holy synod, its governing body, senior clerics said they would press ahead as planned and celebrate the baptism of Christ on 6 January. “The synod does not agree with the new government measures regarding the operation of places of worship and insists on what was originally agreed with the state,” the ecclesiastical body said in a statement. “It asks that the aforementioned decision be absolutely respected by the state without further ado taking into consideration ... that all the foreseen hygiene measures were upheld by clerics in thousands of churches across Greece.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/greek-orthodox-church-defy-lockdown-opening-epiphany>

Skiers ignore Covid lockdown rules in Scotland to flock to Cairngorm Mountain

Skiers from Tier 3 and 4 areas of England ignored Covid-19 lockdown rules by travelling to Cairngorm Mountain, blocking access to roads - despite the snow resort being closed under a lockdown on the Scottish mainland. The Highlands snow resort closed following an announcement that mainland Scotland was entering Tier 4 from Boxing Day. Operators at the resort say they had seen visitors arrive from across the UK, including parts of England in Tier 3 and Tier 4, despite a

Government ban on all but essential travel. Blocked roads and snowy conditions at the foot of the mountain came ahead of Nicola Sturgeon's announcement today that Scotland will be plunged back into a national coronavirus lockdown.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9110617/Skiers-ignore-Covid-lockdown-rules-Scotland-flock-Cairngorm-Mountain.html>

Education unions call for 'pause' in school reopenings as councils defy government

Half a dozen unions representing teachers and support staff have called on the government to "pause" its "chaotic" reopening of schools, as councils across the country move to defy ministers. Local authorities in some areas of England say they will unilaterally keep their primary schools shut, ignoring orders from Whitehall on public health grounds. Conservative-controlled Essex is among local authorities to recommend the continued closure of its primary schools, despite government designs that some would reopen as planned on Monday.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/schools-closed-covid-unions-teachers-councils-b1781939.html>

Continued Lockdown

Lockdown in Wales could remain in place until the end of January

A review of the Level 4 lockdown restrictions in Wales is due to be held this week, but First Minister Mark Drakeford has warned that there is not "much headroom for change". The restrictions, which has seen people being told to stay at home and avoid all but essential travel, have been in place since Sunday, December 20 and are reviewed every three weeks. All non-essential shops, gyms and hospitality were also told to close. Ministers are to review restrictions this Thursday ahead of an announcement on Friday, January 8. It is likely that not much will change, and with the next review not for another three weeks it means the lockdown could extend to the end of January. But Mark Drakeford said in a BBC interview that it was "very hard to see where the room for manoeuvre is at the moment" with the NHS "under huge pressure".

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/coronavirus-lockdown-wales-january-drakeford-19557426>

Germany to Extend Curbs Amid Criticism Over Vaccine Rollout

Germany is poised to extend stricter lockdown measures beyond Jan. 10 amid criticism over alleged failures in the government's fledgling vaccination program. Chancellor Angela Merkel is consulting with regional officials and health experts on Monday and Tuesday to decide on prolonging the restrictions, which include closing schools and non-essential stores. She will announce the outcome of the talks at a news conference likely sometime on Tuesday afternoon in Berlin. Authorities have agreed to extend the curbs until Jan. 31, Bild newspaper reported, without identifying the source of the information.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-04/germany-to-extend-lockdown-amid-criticism-over-vaccine-rollout>

European countries set to extend lockdowns as Covid cases surge

Germany is preparing to extend its nationwide lockdown until the end of January as governments across Europe consider prolonging or strengthening restrictions to battle highly contagious mutations of coronavirus. "Premature easing would set us back very far again," Markus Söder, the premier of Bavaria and leader of the Christian Social Union, one of Germany's governing parties, said on Sunday, after the heads of the country's 16 states met virtually over the weekend. "The numbers are simply still far too high," he added. "As annoying as it is, we have to stay consistent and not give up too soon again."

<https://www.ft.com/content/3292fc38-7945-4d7e-b8ed-582146ebe782>

Austria extends lockdown for another week until Jan. 24 - APA

Austria has scrapped plans to allow anyone with a negative coronavirus test to exit lockdown a week

early, effectively extending strict measures and keeping restaurants and non-essential stores shut until Jan. 24, news agency APA reported on Monday. The decision came after Austria's opposition parties blocked a draft law that would have allowed an early exit from lockdown for anyone producing a negative test for the coronavirus, APA cited Health Minister Rudolf Anschober as saying. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-austria-lockdown-idUKL8N2JF28R>

Scientific Viewpoint

BioNTech says no data to support delayed COVID-19 vaccine booster shot

Germany was weighing on Monday (Jan 4) whether to allow a delay in administering a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from BioNTech and Pfizer to make scarce supplies go further, after a similar move by Britain last week. Separately, Denmark approved on Monday a delay of up to six weeks between the first and second shots of the vaccine. In Berlin, the health ministry was seeking the view of an independent vaccination commission on whether to delay a second shot beyond a current 42-day maximum limit, according to a one-page document seen by Reuters on Monday.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/biontech-says-no-data-to-support-delayed-covid-19-vaccine-13892404>

Moderna raises production goal of its coronavirus vaccine from 500 to 600 million by the end of 2021

On Monday, Moderna Inc said it will produce a minimum of 600 million coronavirus vaccine doses in 2021. This is 20% higher than the 500 million doses the firm said it would be able to manufacture by year's end. So far, Moderna has distributed 18 million doses of the 200 million it has promised the federal government. The vaccine rollout in the U.S. has been very slow, with just 4.2 million people receiving shots, short of the 20 million the Trump administration hoped for

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9111813/Moderna-raises-production-goal-coronavirus-vaccine-500-600-million-end-2021.html>

Covaxin: Concern over 'rushed' approval for India Covid jab

Experts have raised concerns over India's emergency approval of a locally-produced coronavirus vaccine before the completion of trials. On Sunday, Delhi approved the vaccine - known as Covaxin - as well as the global AstraZeneca Oxford jab, which is also being manufactured in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi touted the approval as a "game changer". The head of Bharat Biotech, which makes Covaxin, defended the approval process, but health experts warn it was rushed. It said that there were "intense concerns arising from the absence of the efficacy data" as well as a lack of transparency that would "raise more questions than answers and likely will not reinforce faith in our scientific decision making bodies". The statement came after India's Drugs Controller General, VG Somani, insisted Covaxin was "safe and provides a robust immune response". He added the vaccines had been approved for restricted use in "public interest as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode, to have more options for vaccinations, especially in case of infection by mutant strains".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-55526123>

Uproar after India's Covid-19 vaccine is approved before clinical trials end

India's indigenously produced Covid-19 vaccine is at the centre of a controversy after it was licensed with clinical trials for effectiveness still incomplete. Covaxin was granted emergency approval on Sunday (Jan 3) by the Indian drug regulator. Also getting the nod was AstraZeneca-Oxford University's Covishield, to be made in India by Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine producer by volume. The decision to approve Covaxin, developed and manufactured by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, triggered a row. The Indian health minister said it was granted permission for "restricted use in emergency situations" in the "larger public interest".

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/uproar-after-indias-covid-19-vaccine-is-approved-before-clinical-trials-end>

South Africa testing whether vaccines work against its variant

Scientists in South Africa are urgently testing to see if the vaccines for COVID-19 will be effective against the country's variant virus. The genomic studies come as Britain's health minister, Matt Hancock and other experts in the U.K. have said they worry that vaccines may not be effective against the South African variant. "This is the most pressing question facing us right now," said Dr. Richard Lessells, an infectious diseases expert who is working on the country's genomic studies of the variant. "We are urgently doing experiments in the laboratory to test the variant," against the blood of people with antibodies and against the blood of people who have received vaccines, Lessells told The Associated Press Monday.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/south-africa-testing-whether-vaccines-work-against-variant-south-africa-covid19-vaccines-vaccines-country-b1782028.html>

TGA still waiting for 'further data' on AstraZeneca vaccine

Concerns over new coronavirus cases in Sydney and Melbourne look unlikely to prompt an accelerated approval and rollout of vaccines in Australia, with the local regulator still waiting on further data from AstraZeneca about its vaccine. The Oxford-AstraZeneca product is the only vaccine set to be made in Australia at this stage, with biotechnology giant CSL set to produce 50 million doses this year, subject to approvals. AstraZeneca has long hoped for approvals and rollout across the globe by the end of January, however, neither the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) nor AstraZeneca have confirmed when they expect the process to be completed. The product was approved for use in the UK on December 30.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/tga-still-waiting-for-further-data-on-astrazeneca-vaccine-20210104-p56rlj.html>

Peer-reviewed data show high protection for leading COVID vaccines

The peer-reviewed data on both the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech COVID vaccines are in, demonstrating 94% to 95% protection from the disease. The phase 3 clinical trial results for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, mRNA-1273, and the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, BNT162b2 or Comirnaty, were published late last week in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). When compared with placebos, Moderna's vaccine showed 94.1% efficacy (95% confidence interval [CI], 89.3% to 96.8%), and Pfizer's had 95.0% efficacy (95% CI, 90.3% to 97.6%). Both rates are for patients who received the two intended doses. Adverse events were uncommon in both studies.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/peer-reviewed-data-show-high-protection-leading-covid-vaccines>

New death risks noted in nursing home residents with COVID-19

Older age, male sex, and physical and cognitive impairments were linked to higher death rates from any cause in 5,256 residents at 351 US nursing homes, according to a study published today in JAMA Internal Medicine. Led by researchers at Brown University, the cohort study involved mining the electronic health records, daily infection logs, and minimum data sets of resident assessments from a large chain of nursing homes in 25 states from Mar 16 to Sep 15, 2020. By 30 days after their first positive COVID-19 test result, 1,129 of the 5,256 residents (21%) had died from any cause.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/new-death-risks-noted-nursing-home-residents-covid-19>

Scientists cast doubt on WHO's China mission to find virus origin

In the coming days, barring any last-minute hitches, 10 renowned international scientists will check into Chinese hotel rooms for two weeks of quarantine. So will start the World Health Organisation (WHO) mission of foreign experts to investigate the coronavirus, a year after the first reports emerged of a mystery disease sweeping the central city of Wuhan. The stakes could not be higher in the hunt for the origins of the greatest public health challenge of our era, amid persistent warnings that the world needs to prepare for much more deadly pandemics. But the mystery has become even harder

to solve. Beijing has delayed the arrival of the WHO team for months with a barrage of logistical demands and rules.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/scientists-cast-doubt-on-whos-china-mission-to-find-virus-origin-ftbtbnj9t?shareToken=ee6d53d9560c2351284534bd5351f4ed>

Experts Debate Wisdom of Delaying Second COVID-19 Vaccine Dose

The two experts state that supply constraints, distribution bottlenecks, and hundreds of thousands of new infections daily prompted them to change their stance on administering COVID-19 vaccines according to the two-dose clinical trial regimen. Furthermore, they cite a study in the New England Journal of Medicine that suggests 80% to 90% efficacy for preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection following one dose of the Moderna vaccine. Not everyone agrees one dose is a good idea. "Clinical trials with specific schedules for vaccine dosing — that's the whole basis of the scientific evidence," Maria Elena Bottazzi, PhD, associate dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, told Medscape Medical News. After one dose "the immune system is learning, but it's not ideal. That's why you need the second dose," Bottazzi said. "I appreciate the urgency and the anxiety...but the data support [that] clinical efficacy requires two doses."

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/943533>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 rates falling in most parts of Wales except in the north

Covid-19 case rates have dropped in a majority of areas in Wales, with the biggest falls in Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent. Rates have risen in parts of North Wales, however, with the biggest jump in Flintshire where the rate is up from 349.8 to 559.9. The figures, for the seven days to December 31, are based on tests carried out in NHS Wales laboratories and those conducted on Welsh residents processed in commercial laboratories. They show that the number of new cases per 100,000 people in Neath Port Talbot has dropped sharply week-on-week from 724.3 to 478.7, while in Merthyr Tydfil the rate has decreased from 901.8 to 669.7. In Blaenau Gwent, the rate is down from 740.0 to 543.9.

<https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2021-01-04/covid-19-rates-falling-in-most-parts-of-wales-except-in-the-north>

Covid-19: The areas in England seeing a surge in cases and hospital patient numbers

Covid-19 case rates are increasing in all parts of England and the prime minister has warned there is "no question" tougher measures are needed to control the virus. NHS hospitals are under increasing pressure with a rising number of coronavirus patients requiring care. Most areas around the country are reporting a record number of Covid-19 patients in hospital, beyond the peaks seen in April. Here's a rundown of the case rate in your area and the number of Covid patients in your local hospitals.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-01-04/covid-19-the-areas-in-england-seeing-a-surge-in-cases-and-hospital-patient-numbers>

Boris Johnson warns of tougher Covid-19 restrictions for England

Boris Johnson has put England on alert for tougher Covid-19 restrictions and possible further school closures as ministers raced to deploy a vaccine ahead of a chaotic return to the classroom. The UK prime minister's plan to reopen most primary schools in England on Monday morning was in disarray, with unions and some councils calling for them to remain closed and some schools shutting their doors unilaterally. In an attempt to regain control of the pandemic response, ministers have now deployed more than 5,000 armed forces personnel to the UK-wide pandemic effort — Britain's biggest ever homeland operation in peacetime.

<https://www.ft.com/content/6abfd02c-e2c6-4ca1-944a-1b962af6dead>

US daily COVID-19 hospitalizations have topped 100,000 for a month

Saturday marked one month of more than 100,000 consecutive, daily coronavirus hospitalizations in the US. Those numbers likely reflect people who were infected before the Christmas holiday. Experts anticipate that hospitalizations will continue to climb, meaning the pandemic's worst days may still be ahead.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/us-daily-coronavirus-hospitalizations-record-christmas-holiday-2021-1>

Mexico COVID-19 cases surge after influx of American tourists

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have flocked to Mexico to vacation or to settle, according to multiple reports. In November, more than half a million Americans traveled to Mexico, The New York Times reported. The influx of Americans has been partly due to relaxed restrictions at the Mexican border: While many countries require proof of a negative coronavirus test or a quarantine upon arrival, Mexico does not ask for either. But the influx has contributed to a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country. Mexico has recently reported new highs in daily cases.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/americans-escape-mexico-avoid-coronavirus-restrictions-now-surg-ing-2021-1>

Spain's Andalusia detects 1,077 COVID-19 cases Monday as it convenes expert committee to decide future of current restrictions

Andalusia has detected 1,077 new coronavirus cases on Monday. While it is 1,143 fewer than the number reported on Sunday, the figure represents a significant increase from last Monday, when 567 cases were detected. However deaths have decreased, with 10 people losing their lives to the virus in the past 24 hours, four fewer than the day before.

<https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2021/01/04/spains-andalusia-detects-1077-covid-19-cases-monday-as-it-convenes-expert-committee-to-decide-future-of-current-restrictions/>

Japan PM says government will consider state of emergency for Tokyo area

Japan said on Monday it would consider declaring a state of emergency for the Greater Tokyo metropolitan area as coronavirus cases climb, casting fresh doubt over whether it can push ahead with the Olympics and keep economic damage to a minimum.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan/japan-pm-says-to-consider-state-of-emergency-for-tokyo-area-idUKKBN29900Y>

UK's Johnson to outline new restrictions to slow COVID-19

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday a new national lockdown for England until at least mid-February to combat a fast-spreading new variant of the coronavirus, even as Britain ramped up its vaccination program by becoming the first nation to start using the shot developed by Oxford University and drugmaker AstraZeneca. Johnson said people must stay at home again, as they were ordered to do so in the first wave of the pandemic in March, this time because the new virus variant was spreading in a "frustrating and alarming" way. "As I speak to you tonight, our hospitals are under more pressure from COVID than at any time since the start of the pandemic," he said in a televised address.

<https://apnews.com/article/uk-1st-oxford-astrazeneca-vaccine-virus-013f538e8ec3a153a4d2e39601961472>

A year since Covid first emerged in China, the world battles its deadliest surge yet

It's been a year since the coronavirus emerged from a seafood market in Wuhan, China. The coronavirus is still surging, but not so much in those early countries that were forced into lockdowns at the beginning of 2020 to contain the disease. The initial vaccines, which were produced and authorized in record time, have been slow to roll out as the U.S. misses its year-end goal.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/31/one-year-since-covid-19-first-emerged-the-us-is-battling-a-deadly-winter-outbreak-as-vaccines-trickle-out.html>

Boris Johnson to decide today on nationwide lockdown 'lasting until April'

Boris Johnson is reportedly set to decide today whether to implement tougher Covid-19 restrictions

lasting for months, as he faces urgent calls to introduce a national lockdown. The Government's key 'Covid-O' committee, which oversees coronavirus restrictions, is reportedly set to meet today to decide changes to the tier system. According to the Daily Mail, a Government source last night said ministers are considering putting yet more areas of England under the strictest tier four measures. Currently, 44 million people – about three-quarters of the country – are living under the restrictions which include a strict 'stay at home' message, with only essential retail permitted to open.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/04/boris-to-decide-today-on-nationwide-lockdown-lasting-until-april-13841955/>

Will there be a national lockdown? Why Boris Johnson has warned of new Covid rules as cases soar in England

The Prime Minister has hinted tougher new restrictions could be implemented in England following a surge in Covid-19 cases, while the Health Secretary has said the Government will not rule out a new lockdown to bring the virus under control.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/national-lockdown-covid-rules-new-full-tier-restrictions-boris-johnson-england-cases-latest-816219>

US COVID deaths top 350,000 as vaccine rollout continues

Over the New Year weekend, the United States reported that 350,000 Americans had died from the novel coronavirus—a grim milestone as state leaders and officials from Operation Warp Speed continue to try to roll out millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Though it's too soon to tell how or if New Year's celebrations will affect daily case totals, in the last week the US reported an average of 213,437 new daily COVID-19 cases and 2,637 virus-related deaths, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/us-covid-deaths-top-350000-vaccine-rollout-continues>

New Lockdown

New lockdown could send Rishi Sunak's furlough scheme soaring through £50billion barrier

The job retention scheme (JRS) reached £46.4billion before Christmas. There was a sharp upturn in payouts following November lockdown. Likely to reignite the row over the economic impact of coronavirus. Union leaders demanded parents be paid to stay at home while schools are shut

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9111877/New-lockdown-send-Rishi-Sunaks-furlough-scheme-soaring-50billion-barrier.html>

Tougher UK Covid-19 lockdown measures discussed at Stormont

The Stormont executive is meeting this evening to discuss the possibility of further coronavirus restrictions in Northern Ireland. First Minister Arlene Foster said she would be joining a call with the British government at 5pm to discuss the "Coronavirus response across the four nations". "There will be an Executive meeting at 6pm immediately afterwards," she tweeted. Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill said an "urgent executive meeting" had been called to discuss the "fast moving and volatile Covid situation". "Urgent decisive action is required to respond," she added in a tweet. British prime minister Boris Johnson will tonight make a televised address setting out new emergency measures to control the spread of coronavirus in England, Downing Street has said.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/01/04/news/tougher-uk-covid-19-lockdown-measures-discussed-at-stormont-2177274/>

Coronavirus in NI: Stormont executive to discuss UK lockdown moves

There will be an extended period of remote learning for schools in Northern Ireland, the executive has said. Ministers met on Monday night as other parts of the UK tightened their coronavirus restrictions. The Stormont executive also plans to give its stay at home guidance legal force, with new restrictions on travel. Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill said details would be formalised on

Tuesday. The health and education ministers will bring separate papers on the issues to the executive at the meeting, she added.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-55533410>

UK to move to highest coronavirus alert level as full lockdowns loom

The government is expected to announce new steps to control the spread of coronavirus, as the chief medical officers recommended that the UK move to the highest coronavirus alert level. Boris Johnson is due to make a TV address on Monday evening where he is set to announce mass school closures and tight lockdown restrictions. MPs will be recalled to parliament from Wednesday. In a joint statement, the UK's four chief medical officers said the alert level should be moved to the maximum of five, warning that without action there was a risk of the NHS "in several areas" being overwhelmed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/04/no-10-resists-pressure-to-step-up-england-covid-19-lockdown>

As post-holiday infections surge, Lebanon gears for lockdown

Lebanon will begin a 25-day nationwide lockdown Thursday to battle a surge in coronavirus infections during the holiday season that has challenged the country's already battered health care sector

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/post-holiday-infections-surge-lebanon-gears-lockdown-75032308>

Catalonia imposes perimetral lockdown in municipalities in bid to slow coronavirus spread

The Catalan regional government on Monday approved new restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus. The new plan will see a perimetral lockdown for municipalities, preventing movement between them, as well as the closure of shopping malls and other non-essential stores. The measures will come into force on Thursday, January 7 - the day after a national holiday for Kings' Day.

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-01-04/catalonia-imposes-perimetral-lockdown-in-municipalities-in-bid-to-slow-coronavirus-spread.html>

Coronavirus pandemic: Scotland to impose lockdown for rest of January

Scotland is to impose a nationwide coronavirus lockdown for the rest of January because of a surge in cases, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced on Monday. FRANCE 24's International Affairs Editor Philip Turle tells us more.

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20210104-coronavirus-pandemic-scotland-to-impose-lockdown-for-rest-of-january>

Netanyahu to convene ministers within 48 hours to decide on new lockdown steps

Top officials say rise in patients steeper than ever, many of them trending young; health officials said to warn of 10,000 cases a day if nothing done to curb disease

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog-january-4-2021/>

'Just stay home' - Thai PM urges compliance as virus cases hit record

The government has declared 28 provinces, including Bangkok, as high-risk zones and asked people to work from home and avoid gathering or travelling beyond provincial borders, as infection numbers climb after an outbreak was detected last month at a seafood market near the capital. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said the government was mindful of the potential economic damage from strong containment measures. "We don't want to lock down the entire country because we know what the problems are, therefore can you all lock down yourselves?" he told reporters.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-thailand-idUKKBN2990JW>

UK needs tougher restrictions to tackle coronavirus, health minister says

Scotland on Monday imposed the most stringent COVID-19 lockdown since last March and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he would shortly impose tougher curbs in England to contain a rapidly spreading outbreak of a new variant of the coronavirus. The United Kingdom has the world's sixth-highest official coronavirus death toll - 75,024 - and the number of new infections is soaring across the country. As Johnson mulled tougher measures for England, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the new variant accounted for nearly half of new cases in Scotland and is 70% more transmissible. Scots, she said, would be legally required to stay at home for January from midnight. Schools will close for all but the children of essential workers.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-hancock/uk-needs-tougher-restrictions-to-tackle-coronavirus-health-minister-says-idUKKBN2990M0>

UK health minister does not rule out new national lockdown

Scotland on Monday imposed the most stringent COVID-19 lockdown since last March and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he would shortly impose tougher curbs in England to contain a rapidly spreading outbreak of a new variant of the coronavirus. The United Kingdom has the world's sixth-highest official coronavirus death toll - 75,024 - and the number of new infections is soaring across the country. As Johnson mulled tougher measures for England, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the new variant accounted for nearly half of new cases in Scotland and is 70% more transmissible.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-hancock/uk-health-minister-does-not-rule-out-new-national-lockdown-idUKKBN2990M0?il=0>

'Stay at home': Sturgeon imposes new Scottish lockdown from midnight

Scotland will go into a new lockdown with people ordered to stay at home for January to tackle the escalating COVID-19 crisis, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Monday. Sturgeon told the Scottish parliament that from midnight on Monday people would face a legal requirement to stay at home except for essential purposes, similar to the lockdown imposed at the start of the pandemic in March last year. "The situation ... is extremely serious," she said.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-scotland-idUKKBN2991K9>

COVID variant-fueled surge, health system pressure trigger new UK lockdown

Amid a third surge of COVID-19 in Europe, likely fueled by holiday gatherings and made worse by a more transmissible UK coronavirus variant (B117), Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson today announced a new lockdown, following recent announcements by Ireland and Scotland. Cases in the region continued to soar, with Britain today reporting a new record daily high of 58,784 new cases, according to Public Health England, and Ireland reporting a single-day high of 6,110 cases.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/covid-variant-fueled-surge-health-system-pressure-trigger-new-uk-lockdown>