

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

15th Jan 2021

News Highlights

Protection from past Covid-19 infection lasts at least five months

Those previously infected with coronavirus may be protected from reinfection for at least five months, according to a Public Health England study. [An individual has an 83% lower risk of contracting Covid-19 if they have previously had it, compared to those who have not.](#) While the results are promising, scientists are urging caution and vigilance as reinfection and transmission is still possible.

Warp Speed head leaves job ahead of new Biden administration

Moncef Slaoui, Ph.D. the head of Operation Warp Speed, has resigned his post at the request of president-elect Joe Biden. Warp Speed is the U.S. government's taskforce for research and development of Covid-19 vaccines. [Saloui has been praised for his role in supporting the speed of Covid vaccine development.](#) However, he has weathered criticism due to the underperformance of the vaccine rollout phase in the USA - resulting in inoculation targets by the end of the year being missed.

UK to trial fourth vaccine candidate

The UK will trial a fourth vaccine candidate in the UK. Sixty million doses of the Valneva vaccine have already been ordered by the UK government. [Trials will take place at the National Institute for Health Research sites in Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Southampton, targeting 150 volunteers in the first phase.](#) The news comes amidst numerous controversies over vaccine rollout in the UK, including inconsistent supply to GPs.

Blood plasma therapy reduced death rate says Mayo Clinic

The use of convalescent blood plasma therapy reduces mortality among those infected with the novel coronavirus. [This is according to a study by the Mayo Clinic, which found patients given antibody-rich blood plasma donated by those previously infected saw their risk of dying cut by a quarter.](#) Experts at the Clinic said the treatment will be relied upon until vaccines allow societies to reach herd immunity.

Lockdown Exit

Three dozen mayors ask Biden for direct shipments of COVID-19 vaccine

Mayors of some three-dozen U.S. cities have asked the incoming Biden administration to send COVID-19 vaccine shipments directly to them, bypassing state governments, saying local officials were best positioned to ramp up lagging inoculations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa/three-dozen-mayors-ask-biden-for-direct-shipments-of-covid-19-vaccine-idINKBN29J2TP>

Returning Australians could be sent to remote mining camps

Remote mining camps have been earmarked as possible quarantine facilities for Australians returning from overseas, after a COVID outbreak at a Brisbane hotel put millions at risk of

contracting the disease. Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk is pushing the national cabinet to consider shifting quarantine sites out of capital cities to avoid a widespread outbreak. Ms Palaszczuk said her government would investigate whether sending returning Australians to quarantine in mining camps "stacks up" before putting forward a model for other states to copy.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/returning-australians-could-be-sent-to-remote-mining-camps-20210114-p56u0m.html>

Brazil's Amazonas state running out of oxygen as COVID-19 surges

The Brazilian state of Amazonas is running out of oxygen during a renewed surge in COVID-19 deaths, its government said on Thursday, with media reporting that people on respirators were dying of suffocation in hospitals. The state has made a dramatic appeal to the United States to send a military transport plane to the capital city Manaus with oxygen cylinders, Amazonas Congressman Marcelo Ramos said. "They took my father off the oxygen," Raissa Floriano said outside the 28 de Agosto hospital in Manaus, where people protested that relatives suffering serious cases of COVID-19 were being unhooked from ventilators for lack of oxygen.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-brazil-amazon/brazils-amazonas-state-running-out-of-oxygen-as-covid-19-surges-idUSKBN29J2Sj>

Siouxie Wiles: Any new Covid variants 'would spread like wildfire'

The new variants of the virus can spread like wildfire, and all of us have a role to play in keeping them out of the community. I have to admit, when I first heard UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson talking about a new, more transmissible strain of SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for Covid-19, part of me did wonder whether he was doing a bit of his trademark exaggerating to help explain away he and his government's woeful pandemic response. Within days many countries were restricting travel from the UK to stop the new variant from spreading. But the horse had already bolted. The B.1.1.7/501Y.V1 variant has now been reported in over 50 countries. It's all well and good expecting everyone working in MIQ to be doing their bit to keep New Zealand safe from Covid-19. But the rest of us have a role to play in this too. If any variants of the virus got out, never mind these more infectious ones, they would spread like wildfire. The cost of living at alert level one is that we still need to be doing all we can to ensure that any outbreak can be contained as quickly as possible.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/siouxie-wiles-any-new-covid-variants-would-spread-like-wildfire/YJ2M3NMGLFUU6MQHWWWF32GOLY/>

Covid-19: Mysterious cluster in Brisbane a warning to stop using hotels for managed isolation, experts say

Australian health authorities have evacuated a Queensland hotel and are considering alternative isolation facilities - including mining camps - following an outbreak of the highly contagious UK strain of Covid-19, prompting questions about New Zealand's response. On Wednesday 129 hotel guests were transferred from the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Brisbane to an undisclosed facility and required to isolate for another 14 days after six previously identified cases from the hotel were found to be linked. Australian-based New Zealand epidemiologist professor Tony Blakely said the guests were moved from the building because the cause of the outbreak had not been confirmed. The further isolation was needed because they could have been exposed to the virus through the hotel's ventilation system.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300203698/covid19-mysterious-cluster-in-brisbane-a-warning-to-stop-using-hotels-for-managed-isolation-experts-say>

Exit Strategies

The future of the Covid vaccine: Inside New York City's pop-up clinics

On a normal weekday, Hillcrest High School in Queens, New York, would be filled with students congregating in the hallways and attending classes. But the school has instead faced a pandemic

transformation, becoming one of the latest vaccination pop-ups to open up across New York City. When eligible residents arrive on the site, which officially opened on Sunday, they are asked to confirm their online appointment with a staff member before they are guided along a stickered path through the hallways of the high school.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/new-york-covid-vaccine-clinics-b1786795.html>

COVID-19: Success of vaccine rollout will remain a mystery so long as government keeps key data under wraps

The COVID vaccine rollout is the biggest in the history of the NHS, but we're not being given the information to judge how well it's going. Yes, we know how many people are getting their first dose, so we can track progress towards the government's target of protecting the 15 million people most vulnerable disease. But the rollout isn't happening anywhere near fast enough.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-success-of-vaccine-rollout-will-remain-a-mystery-so-long-as-government-keeps-key-data-under-wraps-12186846>

COVID-19: Disruption to vaccine rollout as people trek for miles in snow for jabs - and others told to stay at home

Heavy snow has battered parts of the country, with people trekking for miles in freezing conditions to receive COVID jabs and others told to rebook and avoid the poor weather. GPs in Leeds have been "frantically" trying to fill cancelled vaccination appointments - but elderly people due to receive a jab in Newcastle today were told to rebook and stay at home. The disruption to the vaccine rollout comes after parts of the North saw snowfall overnight and today. Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said there was "no need to risk travelling in the bad weather".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-elderly-people-in-newcastle-told-not-to-travel-in-snow-to-get-vaccine-jabs-12187491>

Pope Francis, 84, receives his first dose of Pfizer coronavirus vaccine

Vatican began vaccinating its population of 800 against Covid on Wednesday Pope Francis, 84 and with only one lung, was among the first to get a shot Pope Emeritus Benedict, 93, received his jab early on Thursday, Vatican said Francis told Catholics it is their 'moral duty' to be vaccinated against the virus

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9146875/Pope-Francis-ex-Pope-Benedict-Covid-19-vaccine-Vatican.html>

Fourth coronavirus vaccine to be trialled in Birmingham as UK orders 60 million

A fourth Covid vaccine is undergoing a trial in the UK as the government orders 60 million doses. The Valneva coronavirus vaccine is being developed in West Lothian and will initially be tested on 150 volunteers at four National Institute for Health Research sites across the UK. Trials are set to begin within months at sites in Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Southampton. Alok Sharma said: "Today we have more welcome news that life-saving clinical trials will begin across the country to test the safety and effectiveness of Valneva's coronavirus vaccine, which is being clinically developed right here in the UK.

<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/fourth-coronavirus-vaccine-trialled-birmingham-19624979>

Mayor: Chicago opening 6 mass COVID-19 vaccination sites

The city of Chicago is opening six mass COVID-19 vaccination sites that'll be able to deliver roughly 25,000 weekly shots once operational, Mayor Lori Lightfoot said Thursday. Lightfoot visited one of two new sites that opened Thursday but said Chicago needs many more first doses to protect all Chicagoans quickly. The last three sites are expected to open in the next week. Most are at City Colleges of Chicago campuses. "We are frustrated by the federal government's response to COVID-19 overall, but particularly the vaccine rollout which is not delivering on its promises of the quantities that we've seen," Lightfoot said after touring a Richard J. Daley College site.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/mayor-chicago-opening-6-mass-covid-19-vaccination-sites/ar-BB1cKYtu>

Quebec says some regions running out of COVID-19 vaccine, but new shipments coming

Quebec will wait up to 90 days before giving a COVID-19 vaccine booster to people who have received a first shot, Health Minister Christian Dubé said Thursday. That delay goes far beyond the recommendation of vaccine manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna, which propose intervals of 21 and 28 days, respectively, and is more than double the 42-day maximum delay proposed by Canada's national vaccine advisory committee. Dubé told a news conference that the decision was made in order to vaccinate as many vulnerable people as possible and to reduce the pressure on the health system. "In our context, this is the best strategy, because we have to contend with (having) very few vaccines, and we're in a race against the clock," Dubé told a news conference.

<https://www.thestar.com/politics/2021/01/14/quebec-says-some-regions-running-out-of-covid-19-vaccine-but-new-shipments-coming.html>

Covid-19: High Street chemists start vaccinations in England

Some High Street pharmacies in England will start vaccinating people from priority groups on Thursday, with 200 providing jabs in the next two weeks. Six chemists in Halifax, Macclesfield, Widnes, Guildford, Edgware and Telford are the first to offer appointments to those invited by letter. But pharmacists say many more sites should be allowed to give the jab, not just the largest ones. More than 2.6 million people in the UK have now received their first dose. Across the UK, the target is to vaccinate 15 million people in the top four priority groups - care home residents and workers, NHS frontline staff, the over-70s and the extremely clinically vulnerable - by mid-February.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55649947>

No need to extend lockdown in Ukraine - deputy minister

Ukraine's health ministry expects the country's strict lockdown will end as scheduled on Jan 25, Interfax Ukraine news agency quoted the deputy minister as saying on Thursday. Ukraine closed schools, restaurants and gyms last week. Viktor Lyashko said the ministry expected to exit the lockdown on Jan. 25 and not have to introduce any further strict measures in the future. The number of new COVID cases dropped in early January to less than 10,000 a day from record levels in mid-December. The country has registered more than 1.1 million coronavirus cases with 20,376 deaths as of Jan. 14.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/lifestyle/wellbeing/no-need-to-extend-lockdown-in-ukraine-deputy-minister/ar-BB1cKz3K>

Airlines face more turbulence before vaccine relief

For a year expected to mark a turning point for pandemic-stricken European airlines, 2021 is off to a rough start. A resurgence of COVID-19 lockdowns has killed off a fragile bookings upturn, executives and analysts said, as insolvent Norwegian Air finally axed its long-haul operations on Thursday. The setbacks deal a blow to airline hopes that the promise of vaccines would put the worst of the crisis behind them, and set the stage for a summer rebound. New outbreaks and travel restrictions - some designed to curb the spread of a highly infectious virus variant detected in Britain - have hit forward bookings that are usually relied upon to bring in vital cash during the thin winter months. Global airline industry body IATA believes a return to positive cash flow "might not arrive before the end of the year," Chief Economist Brian Pearce said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-airlines-risks/airlines-face-more-turbulence-before-vaccine-relief-idUKKBN29J1A2>

Australian scientists suggest delaying AstraZeneca vaccine as infections fall

Some Australian scientists have proposed delaying mass inoculation using AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine with a view to considering a different shot instead. Questions surrounding the vaccine in Australia, which recorded just one new local case of the novel coronavirus on Wednesday, have cast a cloud over its immunisation plans, with 53 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine already on order. Experts cited data showing the AstraZeneca shot, co-developed with Oxford University, had

62% efficacy compared with more than 90% for a vaccine developed by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech. "The question is really whether it (AstraZeneca) is able to provide herd immunity. We are playing a long game here. We don't know how long that will take," said Professor Stephen Turner, president of the Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology (ASI).

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/australian-scientists-raise-doubts-over-052706418.html>

Outrage as people in Coventry offered Covid jab over 100 miles away

People in Coventry are being invited to travel more than 100 miles for their first Covid-19 jab, prompting politicians and GPs in the city to criticise the government's national programme of vaccinations. Residents aged over 80 received letters over the weekend saying they could travel to Manchester to get the jab, despite government policy that patients should not have to drive more than 45 minutes to a centre. The Coventry North MP, Taiwo Owatemi, said: "I was ecstatic that Coventry was the first in the world to administer the vaccine but it has been wholly disappointing that progress has stunted since. "I am outraged that patients in the high-risk category are having to choose between putting themselves at risk and travelling over 100 miles to Manchester or delay their receipt of the vaccine."

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/outrage-as-people-in-coventry-asked-to-travel-100-miles-for-covid-jab?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

GPs in England say inconsistent supply of Covid vaccine causing roll-out issues

Inconsistent vaccine supply is making it difficult for GPs in England to book patient appointments more than a few days in advance, experts have warned, as the prime minister admitted there were significant disparities in local immunisation rates. Doctors, NHS specialists and MPs told the Guardian that batches of the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine frequently arrived with only a couple of days' notice, requiring last-minute planning and creating uncertainty for patients. Insiders said the distribution system was operating on a "push model" meaning that doctors could not order the vaccine but simply had to be ready to receive batches whenever the NHS was able to deliver them.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/gps-in-england-say-inconsistent-supply-of-covid-vaccine-causing-roll-out-issues?CMP=share_btn_tw

Boots and Superdrug start dishing out Covid vaccines as six high street pharmacies are recruited and No10 says it's on track to do 3m jabs a week — but independent chemists fear UK will fail to hit target unless it uses 'many more, much sooner'

MailOnline revealed this week Boots in Halifax and Superdrug branch in Guildford would join vaccine effort. Chains are among six high street pharmacies across England to be converted into Covid hubs this morning. Calls for ministers to go further and use England's 11,500 pharmacies to deliver round-the-clock vaccinations

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9146215/Boots-Superdrug-start-dishing-Covid-vaccines.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK

Vaccination drive against coronavirus begins with health care workers in Turkey

Turkey moved on to a new chapter in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic as health care workers started taking jabs of CoronaVac, developed by China's Sinovac, in an inoculation drive that began Thursday. The country's Medicines and Medical Devices Agency (TITCK) on Wednesday approved the emergency use of the vaccine. The approval came after a 14-day testing period, which began when the first shipment of the vaccine, containing 3 million doses, arrived in the country on Dec. 30. "Following scientific inspections and evaluations, the vaccine has been authorized for emergency use," the TITCK said in a statement. The samples of the vaccine were tested in accordance with the routine quality control processes applied all over the world, the Ministry of Health previously said in a statement. Analyses were conducted to check the expected quality,

effectiveness and reliability of the vaccine when it is stored and applied under conditions defined by the company throughout its shelf life.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/vaccination-drive-against-coronavirus-begins-with-health-care-workers-in-turkey/news>

With Covid-19 approvals, 'vaccine nationalism' is a worrisome trend

Just after New Year's Day, regulators in India granted authorization for restricted use to Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, adding another Covid-19 vaccine to the list of those that have been approved for use in various countries around the world. New vaccines against Covid-19 are sorely needed worldwide, especially in low-income countries, which are being left behind as high-income countries adopt "vaccine nationalism" and snatch up doses at the expense of those with less means. The Covaxin rollout, however, illustrates another worrisome trend. Regulators in India gave the vaccine the go-ahead before data from large-scale clinical trials are available, just as Russian and Chinese regulators did for their own homegrown vaccine candidates.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/14/with-covid-19-vaccine-nationalism-is-a-worrisome-trend/>

Amid last minute changes and funding shortfalls, Biden adviser predicts a slow start to the '100 million vaccines in 100 days' goal

President-elect Joe Biden is promising to administer 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine in his first 100 days — but some of his top advisers are already warning that the early days of that effort are going to be rocky. The 100-day goal, which would require the Biden team to administer 1 million doses a day, each day, for his first 100 days, would represent a significant ramp-up from the pace set by the Trump administration, which has vaccinated roughly 10.2 million Americans over the course of 30 days. "The first days of that 100 days may be substantially slower than it will be towards the end," said Michael Osterholm, a member of Biden's Covid-19 task force who called the goal "aspirational ... but doable." "It's not going to occur quickly ... you're going to see the ramp-up occurring only when the resources really begin to flow."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/14/biden-slow-start-vaccine-goal/>

Warp Speed chief Slaoui resigns at Biden's request as COVID-19 shots are unleashed: report

Despite the slower-than-promised rollout of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, the tenure of Moncef Slaoui, Ph.D., as co-leader of the government's Operation Warp Speed effort has largely been deemed a success. Slaoui, after all, is credited with fostering a speedy R&D process so the companies could get their mRNA vaccines on the market so quickly. But now, Slaoui has one foot out the door as the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden draws near. Slaoui submitted his resignation at Biden's request, CNBC reported Tuesday, citing anonymous sources. Slaoui appeared on CNBC this morning and confirmed the report. Slaoui said it is time for him to "move on and go back to my private life and private business." He added that he plans to stay for 30 days to ease the transition.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/warp-speed-chief-slaoui-resigns-at-biden-s-request-as-covid-19-vaccines-are-unleashed-report>

Partisan Exits

Italy political crisis erupts over EU Covid spending

The coalition government of centrist Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is in chaos after ex-PM Matteo Renzi withdrew his tiny party from it. Mr Renzi objects to Mr Conte's plans for spending €209bn (£186bn; \$254bn) of EU recovery funds - part of a huge EU aid package for the Covid crisis. The political instability adds to Italy's current woes, with the nation mired in its worst recession since World War Two because of the pandemic. More than 80,000 people have died from Covid-19 in Italy - the worst toll in Europe after the UK.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55661781>

Italy's government falls into chaos, further complicating the covid response

Italy now has a political crisis on top of a resurgent pandemic. A rickety truce in the country's ruling coalition broke apart Wednesday when former prime minister Matteo Renzi withdrew his small party's support for the government, plunging the country into political chaos. Italy has long been used to fragile governments. Faced with a coronavirus emergency, the parties in this center-left coalition were willing to overlook their differences. But it is now clear the pandemic has outlasted the political goodwill. Italy is preparing to spend an unprecedented flow of European Union recovery money, and the argument over how to use it helped deepen personal enmity between Renzi and Conte, centrists who are competing for the same voters.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/italy-government-renzi-conte/2021/01/13/dd65f6bc-55c6-11eb-acc5-92d2819a1ccb_story.html

About 150 anti-lockdown protestors, some bearing Trump flags, gather at Parliament

About 150 protestors have descended onto Parliament this afternoon, calling for an end to Covid-19 lockdowns in New Zealand. Members of the group held Donald Trump flags, anti-CCP trade agreement banners and also held signs that were against face masks. One of the protest organisers, Billy Te Kahika, addressed the crowd, accusing the Government of tyrannical behaviour. In response to the protest, Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said he respected people's right to protest, but added there had been "deliberate misinformation" spread and there were no plans to lock the country down unless there was a "very good health reason to do so, and at the moment there isn't".

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/150-anti-lockdown-protestors-some-bearing-trump-flags-gather-parliament>

Skiers stopped at Eurostar for trying to escape lockdown with Swiss holiday

A group attempting to travel to Switzerland for a ski holiday were stopped from boarding a Eurostar train at London St Pancras in breach of coronavirus restrictions. Train manager Justin, who did not give his surname, posted on Twitter that French border police deployed at the station had turned the travellers away on Wednesday morning. A photograph shows the group was carrying at least one large bag of winter sports equipment.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/14/skiers-stopped-at-eurostar-for-trying-to-escape-lockdown-with-swiss-holiday-13900927/>

Continued Lockdown

Furlough for 71% of working mothers rejected by bosses, survey reveals

More than 70 per cent of working mothers who asked to be furloughed had their requests denied by bosses, a new survey has revealed. The survey of 50,000 women was undertaken by the TUC and shows that a "lack of support" for working parents is causing "huge" financial problems, the trade union umbrella body said. The job retention scheme currently allows bosses to furlough parents due to childcare issues, but the poll showed 71 per cent of working mothers had requests turned down after the recent school closures, as reported by the Daily Mirror. It also indicated that 78 per cent of working parents had not been offered furlough by their employers at all.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/furlough-coronavirus-tuc-b1787010.html>

Huge crowds seen boarding Tube trains despite Covid lockdown

Footage from the London Underground has shown large crowds of people continuing to use the tube network despite the current Covid lockdown. A clip filmed on the platform of Canning Town, in East London, revealed masses of commuters boarding trains during peak hours this week. It comes as unions warn that thousands of people are still being made to travel for jobs they can't do from home, or under the guise of being a 'key worker'. Sharing the video on social media, BBC transport

correspondent Tom Edwards said Tube drivers were becoming increasingly worried about the number of travellers still using the network. But Transport for London have since said the crowds were caused by trains being cancelled, and are not indicative of the rest of the Underground service. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/14/huge-crowds-seen-boarding-tube-trains-despite-covid-lockdown-13904792/>

COVID-19: Schools in England may not reopen after February half-term, Boris Johnson suggests

Schools in England may not reopen after the February half-term, the prime minister has suggested. Boris Johnson said the government's priority was to get pupils back in the classroom "as soon as possible", but that whether this would happen after half-term in the middle of next month depended on a "number of things". The PM told MPs on the Liaison Committee that the determining factors would be the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the effect of new variants, any other possible changes in the virus, and the success of lockdown measures.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-schools-in-england-may-not-reopen-after-february-half-term-boris-johnson-suggests-12186997>

Coronavirus lockdown: 1 in 4 people in the UK drinking more than usual under Covid restrictions

A quarter of people in the UK drank more than usual during the first lockdown, with younger women and those suffering from anxiety especially prone, a UCL study has found. More than 30,000 adults were questioned about their drinking behaviour between 21 March and 4 April for the study, published in Drug and Alcohol Dependence. Just over a third (34.3 per cent) were not drinking but among people who drank, 48.1 per cent reported drinking about the same, 26.2 per cent reported drinking more and 25.7 per cent reported drinking less than usual.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/1-in-4-drinking-more-alcohol-during-lockdown-828761>

Germany's economy contracted by 5% in 2020 as coronavirus lockdowns hit growth

Coronavirus cases have prompted several lockdowns on public life and economic activity in Germany. Chancellor Angela Merkel announced last week that the latest lockdown would be extended until the end of the month.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/14/germany-full-year-2020-gdp-data.html>

In victory for privacy activists, France is banned from using drones to enforce coronavirus rules

France's privacy watchdog has banned the use of drone cameras to enforce coronavirus restrictions and for other law enforcement purposes, marking a victory for groups arguing that the pandemic has given rise to excessive surveillance. France's Interior Ministry had conducted drone flights "outside of any legal framework," the official privacy watchdog, known as CNIL, said in its strongly worded rebuke, which was released Thursday. France imposed some of Europe's toughest measures in response to the virus last year and initially deployed helicopters and drones to monitor adherence to the rules. The drones were equipped to spot lockdown violators, guide teams on the ground and broadcast warnings via loudspeakers.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-victory-for-privacy-activists-france-is-banned-from-using-drones-to-enforce-covid-rules/2021/01/14/b384eb40-5658-11eb-acc5-92d2819a1ccb_story.html

French watchdog condemns police for unlawful use of drones to patrol lockdown

French data privacy watchdog CNIL condemned the Interior Ministry for the unlawful use of drones to oversee demonstrations and make sure people were respecting the COVID-19 lockdown. In a decision made public on Thursday, the authority stressed that the use of such tools by the police nationwide broke the law in the absence of any regulatory framework. In a statement, the interior ministry said it acknowledged the CNIL's decision, and would respect its terms.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-drones/french-watchdog-condemns-police-for-unlawful->

[use-of-drones-to-patrol-lockdown-idUSKBN29J15Z](#)

UPDATE 1-More UK companies shuttered by COVID clampdown last month

The proportion of businesses in Britain open during the second half of December fell sharply in the second half of December as COVID-19 restrictions tightened across the country, an official survey showed on Thursday. The Office for National Statistics said 71% of businesses were operating, down from 84% in the first half of the month and the lowest proportion since late June, when Britain's economy was emerging from its first COVID-19 lockdown. The proportion of workers furloughed, based on the responses of businesses, rose to 14% in the latest survey from 11% previously. The figures are likely to reinforce expectations that the economy entered a double-dip recession in late 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-economy/update-1-more-uk-companies-shuttered-by-covid-clampdown-last-month-idUSL8N2JP2G2>

Denmark extends lockdown to combat more contagious coronavirus variant

Denmark on Wednesday extended hard lockdown measures by at least three weeks to limit the spread of the coronavirus, in particular a more transmissible variant of the virus that is spreading in the Nordic country. Denmark has so far registered 208 cases of the new variant dubbed cluster B 1.1.7., which was first registered in Britain and has spread across Europe. "It is the growth that is extremely worrying," Health Minister Magnus Heunicke told a news conference late on Wednesday. "This means that we will see a situation with sharply increasing infection rates later in the winter, if the situation continues as it is now," he said

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-denmark/denmark-extends-lockdown-to-combat-more-contagious-coronavirus-variant-idUSKBN29I239?il=0>

Scientific Viewpoint

Pfizer coronavirus jab has stopped 50% of infections - NOT just symptoms - Israeli study finds

Israel has given first dose of the Pfizer jab to almost 20 percent of its population Preliminary studies show that the vaccine cuts transmission, not just symptoms Expert warned initial studies not enough to conclude transmissions are stopped Data from hundreds of thousands of people offers extensive view of efficacy But experts have warned that people must stay vigilant despite having first dose Two other studies were also done, with varying results. One found the vaccine cuts infection risk by 60 percent, while another found it was cut by 33 percent Full 95 percent immunity is only achieved when a person is given second dose

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9146189/Israel-vaccine-60.html>

Future coronavirus vaccines may harness nanoparticles

A nanoparticle-based COVID-19 vaccine may be cheap, safe, and effective. Preclinical study suggests that a single dose of a nanoparticle-based vaccine could provide robust immunity. It may be easier to store and transport than currently available vaccines.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/future-coronavirus-vaccines-may-harness-nanoparticles>

Recovering from Covid gives similar level of protection to vaccine

People who recover from coronavirus have a similar level of protection against future infection as those who receive a Covid vaccine - at least for the first five months, research suggests. A Public Health England (PHE) study of more than 20,000 healthcare workers found that immunity acquired from an earlier Covid infection provided 83% protection against reinfection for at least 20 weeks. The findings show that while people are unlikely to become reinfected soon after their first infection, it is possible to catch the virus again and potentially spread it to others. "Overall I think this is good news," said Prof Susan Hopkins, a senior medical adviser to PHE. "It allows people to feel that prior

infection will protect them from future infections, but at the same time it is not complete protection, and therefore they still need to be careful when they are out and about.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/14/recovering-from-covid-gives-similar-level-of-protection-to-vaccine>

What should I know about COVID-19 vaccines if I'm pregnant?

What should I know about COVID-19 vaccines if I'm pregnant? Vaccination is likely the best way to prevent COVID-19 in pregnancy, when risks for severe illness and death from the virus are higher than usual. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says COVID-19 vaccinations should not be withheld from pregnant women and that women should discuss individual risks and benefits with their health care providers. The U.S. government's emergency authorization for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines being rolled out for priority groups doesn't list pregnancy as a reason to withhold the shots.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/what-should-i-know-about-covid19-vaccines-if-im-pregnant-vaccines-vaccination-women-women-covid19-b1787126.html>

Blood plasma transfusions with high levels of COVID-19 antibodies reduced the number of patient deaths by 25%, Mayo Clinic study finds

Convalescent plasma infusions can help reduce the number of coronavirus deaths, a new study suggests. Researchers looked at people ill with COVID-19 who received blood plasma from recovered coronavirus patients. When given early enough, patients who received antibody-rich plasma had a one-quarter lower risk of death than those given plasma with low concentrations of COVID-19 antibodies. The team, from the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, says the treatment could be a stopgap until enough people receive coronavirus vaccines for herd immunity to be achieved.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/blood-plasma-transfusions-reduce-the-number-of-coronavirus-deaths/arcBB1cK09K>

COVID-19: How long are you protected for if you've already had coronavirus - and are you still a risk to others?

People who've had COVID are likely to be protected from reinfection for at least five months and have a similar defence to someone who's been vaccinated, according to a UK study. But does it mean those who have recovered are no longer a risk to others? And could the protection last any longer? Here's what you need to know.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-how-long-are-you-protected-for-if-youve-already-had-coronavirus-and-are-you-still-a-risk-to-others-12187743?dcmp=snt-sf-twitter>

Lancaster scientists developing Covid-19 vaccine nasal spray

The researchers administered two doses of the vaccine via a nasal spray in animal trials which are the first stage in vaccine development. This elicited robust antibodies and T cell responses which were enough to be able to neutralize SARS-CoV-2. There was also a significant reduction in lung pathology, inflammation and clinical disease in the rodents who received the vaccine. The vaccine is based on a common poultry virus called the Newcastle Disease Virus (NDV), which can replicate in humans but is harmless. The scientists engineered NDV to produce the spike proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes Covid-19, tricking the body into mounting an immune response against SARS-CoV-2.

<https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/health/coronavirus/lancaster-scientists-developing-covid-19-vaccine-nasal-spray-3100379>

Interim Results of a Phase 1-2a Trial of Ad26.COV2.S Covid-19 Vaccine

After the administration of the first vaccine dose in 805 participants in cohorts 1 and 3 and after the second dose in cohort 1, the most frequent solicited adverse events were fatigue, headache, myalgia, and injection-site pain. The most frequent systemic adverse event was fever. Systemic adverse events were less common in cohort 3 than in cohort 1 and in those who received the low

vaccine dose than in those who received the high dose. Reactogenicity was lower after the second dose. Neutralizing-antibody titers against wild-type virus were detected in 90% or more of all participants on day 29 after the first vaccine dose (geometric mean titer [GMT], 224 to 354) and reached 100% by day 57 with a further increase in titers (GMT, 288 to 488), regardless of vaccine dose or age group. Titers remained stable until at least day 71. A second dose provided an increase in the titer by a factor of 2.6 to 2.9 (GMT, 827 to 1266). Spike-binding antibody responses were similar to neutralizing-antibody responses. On day 14, CD4+ T-cell responses were detected in 76 to 83% of the participants in cohort 1 and in 60 to 67% of those in cohort 3, with a clear skewing toward type 1 helper T cells. CD8+ T-cell responses were robust overall but lower in cohort 3.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2034201>

Convalescent Plasma Antibody Levels and the Risk of Death from Covid-19

Of the 3082 patients included in this analysis, death within 30 days after plasma transfusion occurred in 115 of 515 patients (22.3%) in the high-titer group, 549 of 2006 patients (27.4%) in the medium-titer group, and 166 of 561 patients (29.6%) in the low-titer group. The association of anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibody levels with the risk of death from Covid-19 was moderated by mechanical ventilation status. A lower risk of death within 30 days in the high-titer group than in the low-titer group was observed among patients who had not received mechanical ventilation before transfusion (relative risk, 0.66; 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.48 to 0.91), and no effect on the risk of death was observed among patients who had received mechanical ventilation (relative risk, 1.02; 95% CI, 0.78 to 1.32).

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2031893>

The Remaining COVID-19 Journey

I'm sure I wasn't alone when I breathed a sigh of relief at the much ballyhooed arrival of COVID-19 vaccines at the end of 2020. We're in the midst of a dark and grief-stricken pandemic winter, and the sooner the vaccine gets us to herd immunity—and, pray, a semblance of normalcy—the better. But the well-worn trope that life is a journey, and not a destination, has an epidemiological application as well. As of this writing, the U.S. just suffered a record-breaking day of thousands of fatalities caused by the novel coronavirus. So in the interim months while most Americans wait their chance to be vaccinated, our goal certainly must be to minimize deaths from COVID-19. In this issue's cover story, Charles Schmidt takes a comprehensive look at the latest developments in clinical treatments for COVID-19 infection, many of which still need research to bolster their effectiveness

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-remaining-covid-19-journey/>

Past Covid-19 infection may provide 'months of immunity'

Most people who have had Covid-19 are protected from catching it again for at least five months, a study led by Public Health England shows. Past infection was linked to around a 83% lower risk of getting the virus, compared with those who had never had Covid-19, scientists found. But experts warn some people do catch Covid-19 again - and can infect others. And officials stress people should follow the stay-at-home rules - whether or not they have had the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55651518>

WHO team arrives in China to investigate Covid origins as country sees new case spike

A team of World Health Organization (WHO) researchers have arrived in China to probe the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic - following months of political wrangling with President Xi Jinping's government. A 10-member team has now landed in Wuhan to conduct a politically sensitive investigation into the origins of the pandemic, amid uncertainty about whether Beijing might try to prevent embarrassing discoveries. Scientists suspect the virus - that has killed 1.9 million people since late 2019 - jumped to humans from bats or other animals, most likely in China's southwest.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-01-14/who-team-arrives-in-china-to-investigate-covid-origins-as-country-sees-new-case-spike>

W.H.O. Finally Lands in China to Begin Tracing the Coronavirus

More than a year after a new coronavirus first emerged in China, a team of experts from the World Health Organization arrived on Thursday in the central city of Wuhan to begin hunting for its source. But in a sign of Beijing's continuing efforts to control the investigation, the team of scientists and W.H.O. employees almost immediately ran into obstacles. Two scientists were unable to enter China at the last minute and remained in Singapore because they had tested positive for coronavirus antibodies, the W.H.O. said on Twitter. The Chinese authorities required the remaining 13 experts to undergo two weeks of quarantine in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in late 2019.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus>

J&J's one-shot Covid vaccine is safe and generates promising immune response in early trial

J&J scientists randomly assigned healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 55 and those 65 and older to receive a high or low dose of its vaccine — called Ad26.COV2.S — or a placebo. Most of the volunteers produced detectable neutralizing antibodies, which researchers believe play an important role in defending cells against the virus, after 28 days, according to the trial data. By day 57, all volunteers had detectable antibodies, regardless of vaccine dose or age group, and remained stable for at least 71 days in the 18-to-55 age group.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/covid-vaccine-johnson-johnson-one-shot-safe-generates-immune-response.html>

Regeneron inks big new coronavirus antibody supply deal worth up to \$2.6B

Pharma companies worldwide scrambled to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic early last year, but so far only a few have advanced therapies and vaccines through to the market. Regeneron is one, and now the drugmaker's antibody cocktail could bring a multibillion-dollar windfall in 2021. After previously agreeing to supply the U.S. government with 300,000 doses of its antibody cocktail, Regeneron this week inked a much larger supply deal for up to 1.25 million doses. If the company is able to supply all doses, the deal will come out to \$2.63 billion. Under the agreement, the government will pay Regeneron for any doses it's able to produce by the end of June. The government can also purchase any additional doses past that point at its discretion.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/regeneron-inks-sizable-new-coronavirus-antibody-supply-deal-worth-up-to-2-6-billion>

Marketing Moderna hitches a ride with Uber to boost vaccine confidence—and, of course, drive access

COVID-19 vaccine maker Moderna is looking for a lift from Uber—a collaboration lift, that is. The two companies say they're planning to work together to promote vaccine confidence and ease access to coronavirus shots. Early ideas include promoting vaccine safety on the Uber network and through in-app messages as well as incorporating Uber rides into the vaccination scheduling process. While those details are still in the works, the appeal of Uber as a partner for Moderna is not only its nationwide network and connections but also the diversity of its 1.2 million drivers. "Uber has broad access across the United States—its ride-sharing platform is used by Americans everywhere, and its drivers represent a wide variety of the population," Michael Mullette, Moderna's vice president of commercial operations in North America, said. "There's a great opportunity for us to think about educating the population about how do you get immunized ... but also how do you access credible information about vaccines."

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/moderna-inks-deal-uber-to-drive-covid-19-vaccine-confidence-and-access>

COVID: Turkey launches Chinese vaccine drive despite concerns

Turkish doctors and nurses rolled up their sleeves on Thursday as the nation of 83 million people

launched a mass coronavirus vaccination drive with China's Sinovac jab. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca received the first shot of CoronaVac live on television after formally approving the vaccine on Wednesday despite contradictory data about its efficacy rate. He was followed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who received the vaccine at a hospital in Ankara, according to state-owned Anadolu news agency. Preliminary studies involving more than 7,000 volunteers in Turkey showed CoronaVac to be 91.25 percent effective. The shot, however, came under scrutiny from regulators after the latest data from Brazil showed it to be just more than 50 percent effective - slightly above the benchmark that the World Health Organization fixed for a vaccine to be effective for general use. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/14/vaccination-drive-kicks-off-in-turkey-despite-efficacy-concerns>

Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine production lags goals as data readout nears: NYT

Amid slower than expected rollouts for the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S., Johnson & Johnson's vaccine could serve as a key boost for the nationwide immunization push. But the pharma giant has fallen behind on its initial manufacturing goals, The New York Times reports, just as its first big data readout looms. Under J&J's original \$1 billion contract with Operation Warp Speed, the company was set to deliver 12 million vaccine doses by the end of February and 100 million by the end of June. Now, sources told the NYT, federal officials have been informed the company is behind its original manufacturing timeline. During a press briefing last week, Operation Warp Speed chief adviser Moncef Slaoui told reporters he thought the company would be able to deliver doses in the "single-digit" millions by the end of February, the NYT reports. J&J was "trying to make that number get as close to a double-digit number as possible, and then a larger number in March and a much larger number in April," Slaoui added, as quoted by the newspaper.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/as-johnson-johnson-nears-coronavirus-vaccine-data-readout-production-lags-nyt>

Coronavirus Resurgence

U.S. military base in Seoul reports multiple COVID-19 cases

A large U.S. military base in central Seoul is reporting multiple COVID-19 cases as South Korea struggles to keep up with the novel coronavirus. U.S. Forces Korea said Thursday seven USFK-affiliated people at Yongsan Garrison tested positive for the novel coronavirus Wednesday. Five out of the seven people, who were not identified by name, work for the U.S. Department of Defense. "All five have been in self-quarantine at their separate off-installation residences since Jan. 8 following their direct contact with an individual who recently tested positive for COVID-19," USFK said.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2021/01/14/US-military-base-in-Seoul-reports-multiple-COVID-19-cases/8951610641647/

Another 4,000 in U.S. die of COVID-19; 40K deaths so far this month

Another 4,000 people in the United States have died of COVID-19, according to updated data Thursday from Johns Hopkins University -- not too far off the record toll seen one day earlier. There were about 3,960 coronavirus deaths on Wednesday. On Tuesday, 4,500 died, a single-day record, according to the research university's updated tracking data -- making the total over the past two days roughly 8,500. About 40,000 patients in the United States have died of COVID-19 since the start of 2021, the data shows. Meanwhile, another 230,000 coronavirus cases were added nationwide on Wednesday, a slight increase from the day before.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2021/01/14/Another-4000-in-US-die-of-COVID-19-40K-deaths-so-far-this-month/9721610642498/

COVID-19: Ban on all arrivals from 15 South American countries and Portugal over Brazil variant

Travel to the UK from every country in South America, as well as Portugal, has been banned due to fears over the coronavirus variant first identified in Brazil. The government's COVID-19 operations

committee met at lunchtime to discuss the issue - and the ban will come into effect from 4am on Friday.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-ban-on-all-arrivals-from-15-south-american-countries-and-portugal-over-brazil-variant-12187484>

Number of London transport staff dying with Covid-19 increases to 60

The number of London transport staff dying with Covid has increased to 60, including 46 bus workers, it was revealed today. The figure, up three from earlier this week, came as Sadiq Khan and his Tory mayoral rival Shaun Bailey said London key workers most at risk of contracting Covid should be the next to be prioritised for vaccination. In separate interventions, the Mayor and Mr Bailey said the second phase of the rollout should focus on higher-risk essential workers such as police, teachers and transport staff once vulnerable elderly Londoners and health and care staff were inoculated. The total figure, up three from 57 revealed earlier this week, includes staff working for the private bus firms contracted by Transport for London to run the capital's buses, plus Tube and rail staff and TfL head office workers. The death toll includes 37 bus drivers and nine other bus workers, such as bus station staff.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/london-transport-staff-death-toll-number-covid-b893089.html>

Covid: Infections levelling off in some areas - scientist

The coronavirus growth rate is slowing in the UK and the number of infections is starting to level off in some areas, a top scientist has said. Prof Neil Ferguson told the BBC that in some NHS regions there is a "sign of plateauing" in cases and hospital admissions. But he warned the overall death toll would exceed 100,000. On Wednesday, the UK saw its biggest daily death figure since the start of the pandemic, with 1,564 deaths. It has taken the total number of deaths by that measure to 84,767. There were also 47,525 new cases. It comes after Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the national lockdown measures were "starting to show signs of some effect", but it was early days and urged people to abide by the rules.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55659065>

Covid-19: Brazil travel ban to be discussed over new variant

Travel from Brazil to the UK could be banned in response to the discovery of a new coronavirus variant. Ministers have met to discuss possible measures and a block on flights could also be extended to other South American countries in a bid to stop its spread. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said he is "concerned" about the new variant and "extra measures" were being taken. Arrivals from Brazil are currently required to self-isolate for 10 days. Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove chaired a meeting earlier to discuss whether measures should be put in place.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55660552>

Covid-19: Surge leaves key hospital services 'in crisis'

The surge in Covid hospital cases has left key hospital services in England in crisis, doctors are warning. NHS data showed A&Es were facing rising delays admitting extremely sick patients on to wards. Meanwhile, the total number of people facing year-long waits for routine treatments is now more than 100 times higher than it was before the pandemic. Cancer experts are also warning the disruption to their services was "terrifying" and would cost lives. Reports have emerged of hospitals cancelling urgent operations - London's King's College Hospital has stopped priority two treatments, which are those that need to be done within 28 days. And Birmingham's major hospital trust has temporarily suspended most liver transplants.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55575112>

Record daily German COVID deaths spark Merkel 'mega-lockdown' plan - Bild

Germany recorded a new record number of deaths from the coronavirus on Thursday, prompting calls for an even tighter lockdown after the country emerged relatively unscathed in 2020.

Chancellor Angela Merkel wanted a "mega-lockdown",

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/record-daily-german-covid-deaths-spark-merkel-mega-lockdown-plan-bild/ar-BB1cKLDW>

UK suffers record number of Covid deaths as Scotland tightens lockdown

The UK reported a daily record 1,564 deaths within 28 days of testing positive with coronavirus on Wednesday, as Boris Johnson warned that intensive care units in some hospitals could soon be overwhelmed. The prime minister told the liaison committee of MPs there was a "very substantial" risk of the NHS running out of ICU beds and no guarantee that schools would be allowed to reopen after the half term break in mid-February. But Mr Johnson said the numbers of people testing positive for the virus were falling, indicating that existing restrictions should be given a chance to work before tighter curbs are brought in.

<https://www.ft.com/content/3c6c2bdf-eb75-496c-842a-cb23530f181a>

German lockdown loopholes criticized as deaths hit new high

Germany has too many loopholes in its coronavirus lockdown rules, the head of the country's disease control agency said as figures published Thursday showed the highest number of daily deaths since the start of the pandemic. The Robert Koch Institute said 1,244 deaths from COVID-19 were confirmed in one day up to Thursday, taking the total number to 43,881. There were also 25,164 newly confirmed cases, putting Germany's total known infections close to 2 million. Lothar Wieler, president of the institute, said data indicated people in Germany are traveling more than during the first phase of the pandemic in spring, contributing to the virus' spread.

<https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-coronavirus-pandemic-0402c0497a156d9cca7550c6d0c59904>

Spain extends travel ban for Scots amid fears over mutant coronavirus strain

Scots have been banned from entering Spain for a further period of time amid concerns over the mutant strain of coronavirus. No one will be allowed to enter the country from Scotland via air or sea until 6pm on February 2 under the new restrictions.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/travel/news/spain-extends-travel-ban-for-scots-amid-fears-over-mutant-coronavirus-strain/ar-BB1cKNLu>

Coronavirus variant from UK 'must not get out of hand' warns EU

The EU has warned that the highly contagious coronavirus variant first found in Britain is now having "a significant impact" in other European countries, and said its spread "must be stopped at all costs". "We cannot be complacent," Stella Kyriakides, the bloc's health commissioner, said on Wednesday. "We cannot let it get out of hand. So we are ready to help member states in the area of genomic sequencing of samples. There is no way around this." Concerns were also shared during the virtual meeting of EU health ministers of a "significant under-reporting" of the new variant by member states, with the commission urging health ministries to make detection of the mutation a priority.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/coronavirus-variant-from-uk-must-not-get-out-of-hand-warns-eu>

Spain extends travel ban for Brits due to mutant Covid strain in UK

Spain has extended its travel ban for Brits because of the mutant coronavirus strain currently found in the UK. The Spanish government has extended the restrictions until February 2, at 5pm UK time. The rules apply to anyone arriving to Spain from the UK by air or sea, with exceptions being made only for Spanish nationals or residents of Spain returning to the country. The travel ban was first introduced back in December 2020 when the mutant strain was detected, and originally was planned to last until January 9. It had already been extended once until January 19. This goes alongside existing restrictions and rules in Spain during the pandemic, such as travellers arriving in the country being required to provide proof of a negative Covid-19 test taken up to 72 hours before their departure

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/travel/europe/spain-extends-travel-ban-brits-23317496>

France braces for new Covid curbs but set to avoid lockdown

The French government is expected Thursday to announce new restrictions to stave off a rise in coronavirus cases but unlike some of its neighbours a full lockdown appears off the agenda for now. Among the measures floated to try to avert a much-feared third wave of infections include expanding a 6:00 pm curfew in place in parts of the east to the whole country. Most of France is still subject to an 8:00 pm curfew imposed in mid-December when a second national lockdown was lifted.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210114-france-braces-for-new-covid-curbs-but-set-to-avoid-lockdown>

Japan widens virus emergency to 7 more areas as cases surge

Japan expanded a coronavirus state of emergency to seven more prefectures Wednesday, affecting more than half the population amid a surge in infections across the country. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga also said Japan will suspend fast-track entry exceptions for business visitors or others with residency permits, fully banning foreign visitors while the state of emergency is in place. Suga's announcement comes less than a week after he declared a state of emergency for Tokyo and three nearby prefectures. The new declaration, which adds seven other prefectures in western and central Japan, takes effect Thursday and lasts until Feb. 7.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/japan-widens-virus-emergency-areas-cases-surge-75217042>

China records its first coronavirus death since MAY and the most new cases in more than 10 months

The patient, a woman from northern China's Hebei, died yesterday afternoon. Apart from suffering the virus, she also had a serious heart disease, officials said. Hebei, the new epicentre, has locked down several cities amid the fresh crisis. The latest coronavirus death is the first one reported in China since May 16. China also reported its biggest daily jump in Covid-19 cases in around 10 months. National Health Commission said 138 infections noted, up from 115 a day earlier.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9145233/China-reports-new-COVID-19-cases-10-months.html?ci=68222&si=24286636>

'At 6 pm, life stops': Europe uses curfews to fight virus

As the wan winter sun sets over France's Champagne region, the countdown clock kicks in. Laborers stop pruning the vines as the light fades at about 4:30 p.m., leaving them 90 minutes to come in from the cold, change out of their work clothes, hop in their cars and zoom home before a 6 p.m. coronavirus curfew. Forget about any after-work socializing with friends, after-school clubs for children or doing any evening shopping beyond quick trips for essentials. Police on patrol demand valid reasons from people seen out and about. For those without them, the threat of mounting fines for curfew-breakers is increasingly making life outside of the weekends all work and no play.

<https://apnews.com/article/international-news-europe-coronavirus-pandemic-france-economy-0bf7ee470baca48c9f189acc4d4ef0a5>

Swedish COVID-19 cases cross 500,000 mark as hospitals near limit

Sweden has registered 17,395 new coronavirus cases since Friday, taking the total above 500,000 cases since the start of the pandemic, as hospitals struggled to cope with a rampant second wave of the virus, Health Agency statistics showed on Tuesday. The statistics showed that Dec. 17 was the deadliest day since the start of the pandemic with 116 deaths, surpassing a previous peak of 115 daily deaths set in April. More people are being treated for COVID-19 at hospitals in Sweden now than at any time during the pandemic. While Sweden still has around 20% spare capacity at intensive care units, there are worries the spread will accelerate again as people return to work and schools after the holidays.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-sweden-cases-idUSKBN29H1MQ?taid=5ffe2d7f5dad480001ae1>

Global COVID rise continues; 50 nations report B117 variant

In its weekly snapshot of global COVID-19 trends, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday that after lower reporting over the 2-week holiday period, cases and deaths are on the rise again in all but one of its regions and that 50 countries have now detected the more transmissible B117 variant first detected in the United Kingdom. In a separate announcement today, the WHO said its COVID-19 emergency committee will meet tomorrow for the sixth time to discuss the latest developments and tweak their recommendations.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/global-covid-rise-continues-50-nations-report-b117-variant>

New Lockdown

Semi-lockdown to stave off third Covid wave, says Swiss health minister

In Switzerland, Health Minister Alain Berset has defended further Covid-19 restrictions as a preemptive attempt to prevent a third wave of the pandemic. Shops will be closed and gatherings further restricted from Monday. In addition, existing restrictions will be extended until the end of February. Speaking to Swiss public broadcaster SRF, Berset defended the move to enhance a semi-lockdown despite falling cases of infection in Switzerland. He said that the decision was informed by watching a devastating variant strain take hold in Britain and other countries.

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/semi-lockdown-to-stave-off-third-covid-wave--says-swiss-health-minister/46285782>

Lebanon enters full lockdown to stem virus uptick

A full lockdown started in Lebanon today, with residents barred even from grocery shopping and dependent on food deliveries, in a bid to slow a surge in novel coronavirus cases. The new restrictions were only loosely respected in some areas of the country, however, after mass protests in recent years against a political elite held responsible for a deepening economic crisis. The lockdown, ordered after some hospitals started to run out of intensive care beds, includes a 24-hour curfew until 25 January.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0114/1189610-coronavirus-global/>

China reports first death in months; 22 million people placed under lockdown

China reported its first death from covid-19 after it recorded its biggest daily jump of Covid-19 cases in more than 8 months. The Chinese National Health Commission reported a total of 115 new confirmed cases on the mainland. China denied entry to two members of a WHO team investigating the origins of the novel coronavirus after both tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies, the Wall Street Journal reported. More than 22 million people are under lockdown in the north of the country and one province has declared an emergency as daily Covid-19 numbers climb after months of reporting only a handful of daily cases. This is double the number affected in January 2020 when China's central government locked down Wuhan, where the virus was first reported.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/china-reports-first-death-in-months-22-million-people-placed-under-lockdown/707186>

Malaysia, once praised by the WHO as 'united' against COVID, has gone back into lockdown

The Malaysian Government announced a renewed lockdown across much of the country, banning interstate travel, as daily coronavirus case numbers hit a new record. A day later, the country's King Al-Sultan Abdullah declared a months-long state of emergency as requested by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin — the first in half a century. "The Government can be said to [be prioritising] the nation's health security at the expense of democracy," Tengku Nur Qistina, a senior researcher at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, told the ABC.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-14/malaysia-covid-19-outbreak-state-of-emergency-case-numbers/13036038>