

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 9th Feb 2021

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### News Highlights

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#### **AstraZeneca secures backing from health officials worldwide**

The vaccine developed by Oxford University and [AstraZeneca has been backed by global health officials](#). Data indicated it had little efficacy against mild or moderate cases of the new Covid-19 variant first detected in South Africa, where rollout of the vaccine has been put on pause. It has also faced concerns over its suitability for those over 65. [However, Richard Hatchett, CEO of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, said 'It is too early to be dismissing this vaccine.'](#)

#### **Testing to be scaled up in the UK**

Nearly one in four British people have been vaccinated against COVID-19, according to health secretary Matt Hancock. [The government has backed the AstraZeneca vaccine due to concerns over efficacy](#), though Britons may be given a booster shot. Meanwhile, the country intends to scale up testing - particularly in Manchester, where cases of the new South African variant have been detected among international arrivals forced to quarantine, who will now be tested twice.

#### **U.S. vaccine plans on track**

The [U.S. has administered 4.7 million vaccines to 3.8 million of its most vulnerabel people, putting 'those who were dying in large numbers last year...on the path to protection'](#) according to senior coronavirus advisor Andy Slavitt. [More than one on four Americans signalled they are unwilling to be vaccinated based on a recent survey](#), albeit with a sharp partisan divide, with those considered right-leaning on the political spectrum less willing to get a shot compared to those who are left-leaning or apolitical.

#### **Israel begins to ease out of its third lockdown**

Israel is relaxing its lockdown rules. It has permitted some businesses who were forced to shutter their doors during its third lockdown to reopen, as well as nature reserves and public parks. [People are no longer restricted to within a kilometre of their homes. The country saw its deadliest month of the pandemic in January, with over 1,000 deaths](#). However, there is optimism due to the speed of the vaccination programme, which has reached more than 3.4 million out of the country's more than 9.4 million citizens.

### Lockdown Exit

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#### **Global health officials back AstraZeneca vaccine after South Africa study rings alarm**

Health officials around the world gave their backing to the AstraZeneca vaccine against COVID-19, after a study showing it had little effect against mild disease caused by the variant now spreading quickly in South Africa rang global alarm. The prospect that new virus variants could evolve the ability to elude vaccines is one of the main risks hanging over the global strategy to emerge from the pandemic by rolling out vaccines this year. South Africa, where a new variant now accounts for the vast bulk of cases, initially announced a pause in its rollout of a million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. But it said on Monday it could still roll it out in a "stepped manner", giving out 100,000 doses and monitoring it to see if it prevents hospitalisations and deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain/global-health-officials-back-astrazeneca-vaccine-after-south-africa-study-rings-alarm-idUSKBN2A80ME>

### **Britons set for a post-Covid spending binge, says Bank chief**

The Bank of England is braced for the possibility that a mood of national depression that engulfed Britain as it plunged into a third national lockdown will end with a spending spree when restrictions are lifted. In an interview with the Observer, the Bank's governor, Andrew Bailey, said there was a chance after being cooped up for so long people would "go for it" once the vaccine programme allowed the economy to reopen. Bailey said that while the crisis of the past 12 months had accelerated the shift to online shopping and would change working patterns, the long-term structural impact on the economy would be less pronounced than the shift from manufacturing to services in the 1980s and 1990s. "It won't be as fundamental as that", he added.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/07/britons-set-for-a-post-covid-spending-binge-says-bank-chief>

### **Bad online experiences for children 'invisible' to parents during lockdown**

When Australia's online safety investigators are investigating coercive child sex abuse material, which involves children being urged to perform sexual acts for the camera, there is often a concerning common factor: parents are having a conversation just metres away. "Our investigators can hear the parents' voices in the next room," said Julie Inman Grant, the country's eSafety commissioner. "This is happening under parents' noses, in the home." The commissioner is ramping up calls for parents to improve awareness of their children's digital lives, as young people's reports of negative online experiences - including unwanted contact, cyberbullying and harassment - have spiked during the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/bad-online-experiences-for-children-invisible-to-parents-during-lockdown-20210208-p570hl.html>

### **Man arrested for allegedly threatening to spit on Perth coronavirus hotel quarantine guard**

Police in Western Australia have charged a returning overseas traveller with failing to comply with a COVID-19 quarantine direction and threatening to spit on security staff. South Australian man Dariusz Tarnowski allegedly left his quarantine hotel room last night and entered the emergency stairwell where he threatened to spit in the face of a security guard. The 48-year-old travelled into Perth from Poland via Doha on January 28 and was ordered to quarantine in the hotel for 14 days. WA Police Commissioner Chris Dawson said he was arrested after security allegedly saw him leave his room.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-08/man-arrested-for-allegedly-threatening-hotel-quarantine-guards/13131578>

### **Sharp rise in smoking linked to loneliness in lockdown**

People who felt distressed and lonely during the country's lockdown last autumn were three times more likely to smoke more, a new study has found. The results of the survey, undertaken by University of Otago, Wellington researchers professor Janet Hoek, Dr Philip Gendall, associate professor James Stanley, Dr Matthew Jenkins and Dr Susanna Every-Palmer, have been published in the international journal, Nicotine and Tobacco Research. Dr Every-Palmer said people who felt lonely or isolated almost all the time were more than three times more likely to increase their cigarette intake than those who were never lonely

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/sharp-rise-in-smoking-linked-to-loneliness-in-lockdown/UYGHDFRDLBGJ45FXMEPMPTDQI/>

### **New Zealand's Māori tribes deserve recognition for their part in vanquishing Covid-19**

Global business leaders and others rightly rate New Zealand's Covid-19 response as the best in the world. But is it equally right to simply credit Ardern and her government for this success? Partly, of course, but another group deserve credit too - iwi. When the country went into lockdown in March

2020 iwi on the East Coast of the North Island, its west coast, and its northerly tip swung into action distributing masks, sanitizer, written advice, and food parcels to vulnerable people in their region. Crucially, they also set up checkpoints to regulate movement in and out of their territory, ensuring the virus had no chance to transmit as the country went about its restrictions. In the early days some New Zealanders were furious with that particular intrusion on their movements. But despite the small yet vocal backlash, the government came around to the iwi initiatives.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/feb/06/new-zealands-maori-tribes-deserve-recognition-for-their-part-in-vanquishing-covid-19>

### **What recovery? Clothes retailers cut orders while factories fight to survive**

Clothes retailers in Europe and America sit on excess inventory and cut back on spring orders. Sourcing agents face late payments. Garment factories in Bangladesh are on the rack. The global apparel industry, reeling from a punishing 2020, is seeing its hopes of recovery punctured by a new wave of COVID-19 lockdowns and patchy national vaccine rollouts. The pain is consequently flowing to major garment manufacturing centres like Bangladesh, whose economies rely on textile exports. Factories are struggling to stay open.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-retail-apparel-orders-focus/what-recovery-clothes-retailers-cut-orders-while-factories-fight-to-survive-idUSKBN2A80KO>

### **'It's all open!': French flock to Madrid cafes for pandemic reprieve**

French tourists weary of their strict national lockdown are flocking over the border to Madrid, where bars and restaurants are open and people can stay outdoors until 10 p.m., even as COVID-19 batters Europe in a virulent third wave. Though it made mask-wearing mandatory and slashed occupancy of public spaces by half, Madrid's conservative regional government has set one of Spain's loosest curfews, defying national recommendations to shut hospitality venues and non-essential shops. The city's counter-current policies stand out in Spain which, like France, is being pummelled by a third infection wave.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-tourists-idUSKBN2A80UG>

### **Pfizer expects to cut COVID-19 vaccine production time by close to 50% as production ramps up, efficiencies increase**

Pfizer expects to nearly cut in half the amount of time it takes to produce a batch of COVID-19 vaccine from 110 days to an average of 60 as it makes the process more efficient and production is built out, the company told USA TODAY. As the nation revs up its vaccination programs, the increase could help relieve bottlenecks caused by vaccine shortages. "We call this 'Project Light Speed,' and it's called that for a reason," said Chaz Calitri, Pfizer's vice president for operations for sterile injectables, who runs the company's plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan. "Just in the last month we've doubled output."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/pfizer-expects-to-cut-covid-19-vaccine-production-time-by-close-to-50-25-as-production-ramps-up-efficiencies-increase/ar-BB1dsMWG>

### **WHO backs AstraZeneca vaccine after South Africa delays jabs**

The AstraZeneca shot has run into several setbacks, including concerns about its efficacy against a Covid-19 variant, and its suitability for people over 65. The vaccine accounts for almost all of the 337.2 million vaccine doses the WHO-led Covax scheme is preparing to begin shipping to some 145 countries

<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/article/3121071/coronavirus-who-says-dont-dismiss-astrazeneca-vaccine-after-south-africa>

### **AstraZeneca's Covid-19 Vaccine Defended by World Health Officials**

World Health Organization officials expressed confidence that AstraZeneca PLC's Covid-19 vaccine can prevent severe cases of the disease, as well as hospitalizations and deaths, despite questions

about the protection it offers against a fast-spreading strain of the virus first detected in South Africa. The remarks followed a release of information over the weekend about a small clinical trial of the vaccine in South Africa, which prompted the government there to halt a planned rollout of the shot. The preliminary data, which hasn't been published in detail, suggested the vaccine may not prevent mild and moderate cases of Covid-19 from a new variant that has become the dominant version of the virus in South Africa and the broader southern African region. The WHO's director-general, Tedros Ghebreyesus, said the trial's findings were "clearly concerning news," but stressed that they came with "important caveats."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/astrazenecas-covid-19-vaccine-defended-by-world-health-officials-11612821292>

### **UK defends AstraZeneca vaccine after South Africa halts roll-out**

The Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID vaccine prevents death and serious illness and is effective against the main variants of the virus in the United Kingdom, a government official has said after South Africa suspended its roll-out of the shots. Pointing out that the dominant strains in the UK were not the so-called South African variant, junior health minister Edward Argar told UK broadcaster Sky News on Monday that the vaccine was highly effective and there was no evidence that it was not preventing hospitalisations and severe illness in the country.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/8/uk-says-astrazeneca-jab-prevents-covid-19-death-as-sa-halts-shots>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Cambodia gets first COVID-19 vaccine from key ally China**

Cambodia on Sunday received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine, a donation of 600,000 doses from China the country's biggest ally. Prime Minister Hun Sen his senior Cabinet members and Chinese Ambassador Wang Wentian were at Phnom Penh International Airport for a reception ceremony for the Sinopharm vaccine carried by a Chinese Air Force flight. Hun Sen had announced that he would be the first person to be vaccinated, but backtracked last week, saying the Chinese-made Sinopharm vaccine was effective only for people aged between 18 and 59, while he is 68. He said Sunday at the airport that he would urge younger members of his family, as well as top officials and generals under 60, to get vaccinated Wednesday as an example to the public

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/cambodia-gets-first-covid19-vaccine-from-key-ally-china-cambodia-hun-sen-china-vaccine-vaccine-b1798802.html>

### **COVID-19: Undocumented migrants 'likely to remain fearful' despite govt's vaccine amnesty offer**

The government's "vaccine amnesty" has been criticised for not giving enough assurance to those who are too scared to access healthcare in the UK. The Home Office has promised no action will be taken against people in the UK illegally if they register with a GP to be vaccinated. It is part of a government effort to get as many people as possible vaccinated against the virus, which has already caused the deaths of more than 112,000 people in the UK.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-undocumented-migrants-likely-to-remain-fearful-despite-govts-vaccine-amnesty-offer-12212357>

### **Confusion and chaos: Inside the vaccine rollout in D.C., Maryland and Virginia**

The first precious boxloads of the frozen elixir arrived in December, bearing great promise for curtailing the pandemic that has paralyzed the region and the world. Nurses and firefighters got injections on live TV. Some of them cried. Watching at home, many hopeful people cried, too. But in the weeks that followed, that hope was mixed with frustration, then anger, as it became clear that getting the potentially lifesaving vaccine would not be easy — not nationally, and not in the District, Maryland and Virginia.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/vaccine-rollout-dc-maryland-virginia/2021/02/07/11d8c4a0-656d-11eb-8c64-9595888caa15\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/vaccine-rollout-dc-maryland-virginia/2021/02/07/11d8c4a0-656d-11eb-8c64-9595888caa15_story.html)

### **Covid: BAME communities urged to have coronavirus vaccine**

"I'd shout it from the street - please have your vaccinations, you don't know what we're going through." This is a plea from Shamim Abbas of Newport, who lost husband Ghulam and brother-in-law Raza to Covid. The brothers died within hours of each other last April. Concerns have been growing in recent weeks about an apparent hesitancy from some people in black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) communities to have the Covid-19 vaccine. And even though the virus has had such a devastating impact on Shamim's family, some relatives have been unsure about having it.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55956997>

### **Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta begin relaxing COVID-19 restrictions**

Several provinces began relaxing COVID-19 restrictions on Monday amid what Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam described as "hopeful signs of declining COVID-19 activity." Loosened rules went into effect in Quebec, Alberta and Nova Scotia, while the Ontario government announced that restrictions in some parts of the province would start being eased on Wednesday. The number of new cases reported daily across the country is continuing to trend down, Tam said in a statement. But she warned that these trends could reverse quickly and that new variants "could rapidly accelerate transmission of COVID-19 in Canada."

[https://www.thestar.com/politics/2021/02/08/quebec-nova-scotia-and-alberta-begin-relaxing-covid-19-restrictions.htm](https://www.thestar.com/politics/2021/02/08/quebec-nova-scotia-and-alberta-begin-relaxing-covid-19-restrictions.html)

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### **Of course Covid-19 vaccination certificates are discriminatory - that's the whole point**

Boris Johnson's statement, as quoted by Nadhim Zahawi (News, 7 February), that this government won't be issuing Covid-19 vaccination certificates because it is discriminatory and "that's not how we do things in the UK, we do them by consent", is as fatuous as one would expect from him. I hereby publicly voice my consent to receiving a Covid-19 vaccination certificate. I own a yellow fever vaccination certificate, and have carried a variety of other vaccination certificates for travel purposes throughout my life. They do, indeed, discriminate between those who have had vaccinations and those who haven't. That is precisely their public health purpose where international travel is concerned.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/covid-vaccine-certificate-travel-ban-b1799358.html>

### **Covid-19: Minister urges vaccine confidence, as South Africa stops AstraZeneca jab rollout**

The public should have "confidence" in the UK vaccination programme, the vaccines minister says - despite a study showing the AstraZeneca jab may be less effective against the South African variant of Covid-19. The study involved about 2,000 people, with an average age of 31. It showed the jab offered "minimal protection" against mild and moderate disease from the South African variant. AstraZeneca said it did not know whether the jab would stop severe illness, because the study was predominantly on younger people. But the company said it could still be effective. Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi says the jabs "appear to work well" against the variants currently dominant in the UK. On Sunday, he told the BBC that a booster in the autumn, and annual vaccines, could be needed to combat variants.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55976703>

### **Covid: Boris Johnson 'very confident' in vaccines being used in UK**

Boris Johnson says he is "very confident" in the Covid vaccines being used in the UK, amid concerns about the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab's effectiveness against the South Africa variant. The vaccines are effective in delivering a high degree of protection against serious illness, the PM said. A small study found the Oxford jab gave "minimal protection" against mild disease from the South Africa variant. But scientists are confident it will protect against serious disease. Some 147 cases of the South

Africa variant have been found in the UK. However, the Oxford vaccine has shown to provide good protection against the so-called Kent variant, which remains the dominant strain in the UK.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55983453>

### **UK tries to allay vaccine concern**

The Biden administration's recent investment of \$230 million to expedite rapid production of the Ellume home Covid-19 test represents an audacious step forward in mitigating the pandemic. Some experts have criticized it as a "waste of money" because this kit costs more than other alternatives and because of the timing of the investment. I believe the test is worth the extra cost, due to its connectivity and the types of research it enables, though all of these tests need to be evaluated against the other options. Throughout the pandemic, public health officials have struggled to demonstrate the value and importance of measures such as mask wearing, social distancing, and vaccines. The ultimate result has been public skepticism, poor uptake of helpful interventions, and even outrageous conspiracy theories. We must learn from these missteps and design interventions that can be measured quickly and precisely.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p096d081>

### **Covid testing expanded to more workplaces in England**

Workplace Covid testing is being offered to more companies in England, for staff who cannot work from home during lockdown, the government says. Businesses with more than 50 employees are now able to access lateral flow tests, which can produce results in less than 30 minutes. Previously only firms with more than 250 staff qualified for testing. Health Secretary Matt Hancock urged businesses and employees to take up the offer to "stop this virus spreading". "When you consider that around one in three people have the virus without symptoms and could potentially infect people without even knowing it, it becomes clear why focusing testing on those without symptoms is so essential," he said, adding that firms should regularly test staff.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55967069>

### **What might the South African variant mean for plans to ease lockdown restrictions?**

What might the South African variant mean for plans to ease the lockdown? It's probably too early to say. It's important to remember that, according to the latest data, only 147 cases of the South African variant (B.1.351) have been found in the UK, according to health minister Ed Argar this morning. This is an increase of 42 on the 105 announced a week ago by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, which sparked the "surge testing" in nine locations across England, including West Ealing and Hanwell -where Mayor Sadiq Khan visited today - Tottenham Hale and Pollards Hill in Merton.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/south-african-variant-lockdown-restrictions-easing-when-b919009.html>

### **Revisiting Ischgl: Austria eases coronavirus lockdown, annoys Bavaria**

Austria is easing its coronavirus lockdown after six weeks, despite stubbornly high infection numbers. While the government is keeping bars, restaurants and hotels closed and a nighttime curfew in place, schools, hairdressers and museums reopened on Monday under strict hygiene rules as testing capacities were expanded. The move came amid growing pressure on Vienna to lift at least some restrictions, with data showing that Austria's economic downturn is particularly severe. In the fourth quarter of 2020, the economy contracted by 4.3 percent over the previous quarter amid slumping tourism, the worst performance of any EU country for that period.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/austria-eases-lockdown-annoys-bavaria/>

### **More testing as minister rules out vaccine passport**

Almost one in four adults in the UK have had their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, Matt Hancock has said. The Health Secretary speaking at a Downing Street press briefing after new data showed that coronavirus deaths in the UK had hit a six-week low. A further 333 fatalities and 14,104 infections were reported on Monday. People over-70 who have not yet received their first dose have been

asked to contact the NHS to arrange their jab.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-uk-coronavirus-live-update-lockdown-testing-south-africa-variant-b918881.html>

### **Israel begins exit from third virus lockdown**

Israeli barbershops and some other businesses reopened Sunday as the country began easing its third coronavirus lockdown Sunday amid an aggressive vaccination campaign. Early Friday, the government announced it was lifting some restrictions imposed since December, when the country saw a rise in Covid-19 infections. Jerusalem barber Eli Aroas was among those re-opening on Sunday morning, the start of the working week.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210207-israel-begins-exit-from-third-virus-lockdown>

### **I've been in Covid quarantine in South Korea - there's a lot Britain can learn**

The UK government's decision to require overseas arrivals from "high risk" countries to self-isolate in hotels has triggered a debate on the effectiveness of enforced quarantine in government-run facilities. Some have balked at its cost and restrictive character while others have dismissed the measure as half-baked and too little, too late. My experience in a quarantine facility for Covid-19 patients in South Korea might be illuminating in this regard. Last November, I flew into South Korea to spend a holiday with my family. To sum up the complicated arrival process at Seoul: I was required to download a Covid-19 tracking app, had my temperature checked and was whisked away by pre-approved taxis to the public clinic nearest to my home to take a PCR test. I was then required to self-isolate for more than two weeks at home.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/05/south-korea-covid-quarantine-britain-tested-positive>

### **What is needed to bring back freedom of movement**

As COVID-19 spread around the world, countries fought against the invisible threat by restricting people's movements — from entry bans and strict lockdowns to softer lockdowns like Japan's state of emergency. Each government took a completely different approach in how to restrict the freedom of movement domestically and internationally. But in the end, how should governments implement effective border control measures to restore the freedom of movement? China was initially reluctant to disclose the actual situation of the COVID-19 outbreak within the country, which allowed many people to continue to travel freely across national borders. But after China imposed a lockdown in Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, Beijing took extremely strict measures to curb the spread of the virus, almost ignoring the freedom of movement of its own citizens and mobilizing every possible technology. Its strong enforcement capabilities stunned many people around the globe.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2021/02/07/commentary/world-commentary/api-opening-borders/>

### **Annual vaccines and autumn 'booster' could be required to combat new Covid variants, minister says**

The minister responsible for the coronavirus vaccine rollout has suggested annual jabs or a "booster in the autumn" could be required to combat new variants of the disease. Nadhim Zahawi's remarks came as official government data showed on Sunday that over 12 million people in Britain had now received a first dose of a Covid vaccine — putting the government on course to reach the 15 February target of inoculating 15 million in high priority groups. As Boris Johnson prepares to tell the nation how the government will begin unwinding the lockdown in two weeks, Mr Zahawi insisted he was confident the NHS would be able to reach the new "tough" target of immunising all those over the age of 50 by May.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nadhim-zahawi-covid-oxford-vaccine-b1798878.html>

### **Western Australia to make masks mandatory for high school students and teachers in rigorous post-lockdown ruling - after recording another day of ZERO cases**

Masks will be mandatory for teachers and senior school students in the Perth, Peel and South West

regions. Western Australia recorded no new cases of Covid on Sunday, both within the community and in hotel quarantine.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9232905/Western-Australia-make-masks-mandatory-high-school-students-teachers.html>

### **WA moves to ban coronavirus hotel quarantine security guards from taking second jobs**

The WA Government has moved to restrict hotel quarantine security staff to one job only, a week after the state was plunged into lockdown when a guard tested positive to COVID-19. WA Premier Mark McGowan said letters stipulating the change in contract had gone out to the four security companies that provided staff to the nine quarantine hotels.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-08/wa-moves-to-stop-hotel-quarantine-guards-from-taking-second-jobs/13132486>

### **US administers more than 4 million Covid vaccines to most vulnerable: 'We are on the path to protection'**

The United States has administered more than 4.7 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to 3.8 million of its most vulnerable people in an effort to decrease hospitalisations and deaths caused by the novel virus. "Those who are dying in large numbers last year are now on the path to protection," said Andy Slavitt, Joe Biden's senior coronavirus adviser, during the White House Covid response team press briefing on Monday. People living in long-term care facilities, alongside healthcare workers, were prioritised above all others in the country to receive a Covid-19 vaccine. This was after the country witnessed deadly spreads of the novel virus within these facilities last year.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-covid-vaccine-doses-latest-b1799305.html>

### **Travellers to UK set to be tested after arrival**

Travellers entering the UK are set to be tested for coronavirus a few days after they arrive. The new, expanded testing regime will be announced shortly. Enhancing the testing regime "to cover all arrivals while they isolate" would add another level of protection, the Department of Health said. The move is designed to help to track any new cases which might be brought into the country and make it easier to detect new variants. It is in addition to the current rules which say travellers arriving in the UK, whether by boat, train or plane, must show proof of a negative Covid-19 test to be allowed entry. The test must be taken in the 72 hours before travelling, and anyone arriving without one faces a fine of up to £500.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55989921>

### **4 in 5 Americans ready for COVID-19 shot, but vaccine messages remain key, analysis finds**

Has the vaccine hesitancy tide turned into a wave of vaccine excitement? Possibly. A new W2O Group study using search and social data found that 80% of Americans are likely willing to get vaccinated. However, vaccine makers still have their work cut out for them—especially among certain groups of people—and messaging will be critical, W2O Chief Data Officer Seth Duncan said. Out of four groups of people established for the study, many of those who aren't inclined to get vaccinated are politically right-leaning. Among the group—defined as those who follow at least three right-leaning politicians, journalists or news outlets—only 41% show a willingness to get a vaccine. That compares with 95% of center left, 93% of the educated left and 91% of the apolitical groups who are ready to get vaccinated.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/social-media-analysis-finds-80-americans-ready-for-covid-jab-but-vaccine-messages-will-be>

### **A digital option is the right investment for at-home Covid-19 testing**

The Biden administration's recent investment of \$230 million to expedite rapid production of the Ellume home Covid-19 test represents an audacious step forward in mitigating the pandemic. Some

experts have criticized it as a “waste of money” because this kit costs more than other alternatives and because of the timing of the investment. I believe the test is worth the extra cost, due to its connectivity and the types of research it enables, though all of these tests need to be evaluated against the other options. Throughout the pandemic, public health officials have struggled to demonstrate the value and importance of measures such as mask wearing, social distancing, and vaccines. The ultimate result has been public skepticism, poor uptake of helpful interventions, and even outrageous conspiracy theories. We must learn from these missteps and design interventions that can be measured quickly and precisely.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/08/a-digital-option-is-the-right-investment-for-at-home-covid-19-testing/>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Facebook cracks down on anti-vaccine accounts amid COVID surge**

Facebook Inc. said it will take stronger steps to eliminate false information about Covid-19 and vaccines on its social network, a move that could remove major groups, accounts and Instagram pages for repeatedly spreading misinformation. The company is acting on advice from the World Health Organization and other groups to expand its list of false claims that are harmful, according to a blog post on Monday. Facebook will ask administrators of user groups to moderate such misinformation. Facebook-owned Instagram will also make it harder to find accounts that discourage vaccination, and remove them if they continuously violate the rules. The company this week will also include in its Covid-19 information center details from local health departments about when and where people can get vaccinated. If Facebook’s systems come across content that says the coronavirus is man-made or manufactured, that it is safer to get the disease than to get the vaccine, or that the shots are toxic, dangerous or cause autism, that content will be removed.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/2/8/facebook-instagram-to-ban-accounts-discouraging-vaccinations>

### **How Australia beat COVID-19 while the United States and Britain broke**

Australia is a fortress of hope in a world conquered by COVID-19. But, even as vaccines raise the prospect of relief, the siege is growing stronger. And the cracks in our defences are growing. Incompetence. Hesitance. Partisan politics. All are being blamed across the world for overwhelmed health systems, stalled economies and soaring death rates. Australia has dodged these bullets. So far.

<https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/health/how-australia-beat-covid19-while-the-united-states-and-britain-broke/news-story/cbea21e4e3b56f0cad76e2baf018cb62>

### **Britain is under lockdown. But one year into the Covid crisis, many are unable to keep to the rules**

Breaches of self-isolation rules are rampant across the UK. Up to 20,000 people a day are failing to stay home when instructed to, according to Dido Harding, who is in charge of the country's coronavirus Test and Trace scheme. "These numbers are moving a lot," Harding told a parliamentary committee this week, adding that "circa 20,000 people a day" were currently not isolating. Harding said she was also concerned about people who were experiencing symptoms but had avoided being tested. For the British government, the lack of compliance is a significant worry.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/07/uk/lockdown-breakers-covid-economy-gbr-intl/index.html>

### **Greek PM accused of flaunting lockdown rules**

Greece's left-wing opposition leader has accused the country's prime minister of showing contempt for lockdown rules after attending a large outdoor lunch gathering. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on a weekend visit to the Greek island of Ikaria attended an outdoor lunch hosted by a local lawmaker. A video of the event posted on social media showed at least 25 people in attendance, while traditional island music, with drums and bagpipes, could be heard in the background. The government toughened lockdown measures at the weekend, expanding curfew

hours to start at 6 pm in greater Athens and Greece's second-largest city, Thessaloniki, in response to a surge in COVID-19 infections that started in late January.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/greek-pm-accused-of-flaunting-lockdown-rules/2025920>

### **COVID-19: NHS staff fall victim to anti-Chinese hate crimes - amid fears violence will rise when lockdown ends**

Police chiefs have warned they will "respond robustly" to anti-Chinese hate crimes amid concerns there could be a surge in offences once lockdown ends. The COVID-19 Anti-Racism Group (CARG) has told Sky News it is witnessing worrying levels of hate speech online linked to the pandemic - and it fears this will turn into violence when coronavirus restrictions are eased. One Chinese health worker told the survey: "Patients and people in general say that COVID-19 originated from China and that being of Chinese descent is culpable for the pandemic."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-nhs-staff-fall-victim-to-anti-chinese-hate-crimes-amid-fears-violence-will-rise-when-lockdown-ends-12206686>

### **Man charged with incitement over lockdown protest wants case heard in higher court**

A 76-year-old man charged with inciting an anti-lockdown protest in Melbourne during Victoria's second wave of COVID-19 has argued his case should be heard in the High Court of Australia. Solihin Millin was arrested on August 28 last year and charged with incitement over a "freedom rally" protest against Victoria's lockdown restrictions held at the Shrine of Remembrance and Albert Park on September 5. Police raided his home and seized multiple items including two laptops, a computer and two mobile phones.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/man-charged-with-incitement-over-lockdown-protest-wants-case-heard-in-higher-court-20210208-p570jb.html>

## **Continued Lockdown**

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### **Boris won't rule out longer lockdown if South African variant spreads further**

Boris Johnson refused to rule out extending lockdown further if the South African variant of coronavirus continues to spread. The suggestion comes amid revelations the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is 'less effective' against the mutation - though scientists say it still protects against severe disease. Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) adviser Professor Mike Tildesley claimed this finding means 'more restrictions might be needed for longer'. And when pressed on whether there may need to be a delay to easing restrictions if the vaccine is proved to be less effective, the prime minister said vaccines are 'going to offer a way out' and 'remain of massive benefit to our country'.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/02/08/longer-lockdown-not-ruled-out-if-south-african-covid-variant-spreads-14043377/>

### **Covid-19 cases now back to pre-Christmas levels after lockdown**

Covid-19 case rates for the four nations of the UK have dropped to their lowest level since before Christmas, with some regions of England recording rates last seen in early December, new analysis shows. In London the seven-day rate has fallen to its lowest since December 8, while the figure for south-east England is at its lowest since December 7. While a handful of local areas across the UK have recorded a week-on-week rise in the latest figures, most of the increases are small.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-19-cases-now-back-19793503>

### **Dispatches from the U.K.'s toughest lockdown yet**

The U.K. is four weeks into its third and toughest lockdown since the start of the pandemic. The latest lockdown came into effect Jan. 6 as a variant of the coronavirus, first detected in September in Kent, rapidly became the most common form of the virus in England and spread to other countries. Valerie Hillier talks about life in lockdown Britain

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/uk-lockdown-valerie-hillier-1.5903014>

## **S Africa looking to roll out AstraZeneca jab in ‘stepped manner’**

South Africa is looking to roll out the Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine in a “stepped manner” to assess its ability to prevent severe illness, according to a key adviser to the country’s government. On Sunday, almost a week after receiving its first one million doses, the continent’s hardest-hit country said it would put on hold its use of the vaccine after research showed it was only minimally effective in preventing mild-to-moderate illness against a variant of the coronavirus now dominant in South Africa. Speaking to a briefing of the World Health Organization (WHO), Salim Abdool Karim, co-chair of the country’s Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19, said it was too early to say whether the vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and drugmaker AstraZeneca vaccine would still be effective in preventing serious disease, as there was not yet enough data on its effectiveness in older people against the variant. South Africa paused its roll-out of the AstraZeneca vaccine for now while determining the next steps, and could vaccinate 100,000 people with the shot to see how well it works on preventing hospitalisations and deaths.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/8/south-africa-to-roll-out-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-in-steps>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **China's CanSino Coronavirus Vaccine Shows 65.7% Efficacy**

CanSino Biologics Inc.’s experimental coronavirus shot has an efficacy rate of 65.7% at preventing symptomatic cases based on an analysis from late-stage trials, making it the latest vaccine candidate to show some protection against Covid-19. The shot co-developed by the Chinese military and the Tianjin-based biotech company proved effective against symptomatic Covid-19, based on a multi-country analysis first posted on Twitter by Faisal Sultan, Pakistan’s health adviser, on Monday. CanSino later forwarded Sultan’s announcement in a statement. The final stage trial included 30,000 participants and was also 90.98% effective in preventing severe disease, Sultan said. A vaccine needs to afford at least a 50% protection rate to be considered effective, as mandated by the world’s leading drug regulators and the World Health Organization.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-08/pakistan-says-cansino-s-covid-vaccine-shows-65-7-efficacy>

### **China approves Sinovac's coronavirus vaccine -**

China’s national regulator has approved Sinovac Biotech’s COVID-19 vaccine for use by the general public. This is the second vaccine approved by China’s National Medical Products Administration (NMPA). Both of the vaccines, along with another experimental vaccine from Sinopharm, have been used in China’s vaccination programme. More than 31 million doses have been administered, mainly targeting groups at higher infection risks, while a fourth experimental vaccine from CanSino Biologics has been given to military personnel. Brazilian clinical trial results published last month showed the vaccine, dubbed Coronavac, is just over 50% effective.

<https://pharmaphorum.com/news/china-approves-sinovacs-coronavirus-vaccine/>

### **More medical breakthroughs on the way thanks to BioNTech coronavirus vaccine**

Saving the world was, for Dr Katalin Kariko, always a sideline. After a busy year producing the world’s first, and currently most effective, coronavirus vaccine, she is keen to return to the day job. “We have very important projects, and many of them were pushed aside due to the pandemic,” she says. Patients, she adds, are waiting. Those projects — from personalised cancer medicine to curing allergies — have arguably become more important due to what she has done in the past 12 months. Because, today, a lot more people think they will actually work. In January 2020, Kariko was one of the team at BioNTech, a German pharmaceutical company. They had a technology that they thought could make a fast and simple vaccine.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/more-medical-breakthroughs-on-the-way-thanks-to-biontech-coronavirus-vaccine-xpn7ksdzs>

## **Covid: Scientists developing vaccine boosters to tackle variants**

Scientists are developing booster jabs to tackle Covid-19 variants, a health minister says, amid concerns about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine's efficacy against the South Africa strain. The vaccine provides good protection against the dominant 'Kent' variant in the UK. But a small study suggests it offers "minimal protection" against mild disease from the South Africa variant. Some 147 cases of this variant have been found in the UK. Health minister Edward Argar said the government was anticipating that an annual jab could be required to combat variants of coronavirus. He also said there was "no evidence" the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was not effective at preventing severe illness from the South African variant, which scientists have warned could become more widespread in the UK.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55976037>

### **New variants raise worry about COVID-19 virus reinfections**

Evidence is mounting that having COVID-19 may not protect against getting infected again with some of the new variants. People also can get second infections with earlier versions of the coronavirus if they mounted a weak defense the first time, new research suggests. How long immunity lasts from natural infection is one of the big questions in the pandemic. Scientists still think reinfections are fairly rare and usually less serious than initial ones, but recent developments around the world have raised concerns. In South Africa, a vaccine study found new infections with a variant in 2% of people who previously had an earlier version of the virus.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/new-variants-raise-worry-about-covid19-virus-reinfections-infection-study-people-training-infection-b1799314.html>

### **Astra Zeneca and Pfizer Covid-19 vaccines are effective and saving lives says NI Chief Medical Officer**

Northern Ireland's Chief Medical Officer has given his full backing to Northern Ireland's Covid-19 vaccine programme and said: "They are protecting people from Covid-19 - and saving lives." Dr Michael McBride was responding to differing reports on the effectiveness of the vaccines, in particular AstraZeneca's. But he urged people to be confident in the vaccines being rolled out in Northern Ireland right now and urged everyone eligible for the shot, to have it. Dr McBride said: "The AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are protecting people from Covid-19 - and saving lives.

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/health/astra-zeneca-pfizer-covid-19-19793824>

### **Web searches could help detect Covid-19 outbreaks early, study says**

Using symptom-related searches through Google could allow experts to predict a peak in cases on average 17 days in advance, a group from University College London (UCL) said. Analysing internet search activity is already used to track and understand the seasonal flu. Using data on Covid-19 web searches in a similar way alongside more established approaches could improve public health surveillance methods. "Adding to previous research that has showcased the utility of online search activity in modelling infectious diseases such as influenza, this study provides a new set of tools that can be used to track Covid-19," said lead author Dr Vasileios Lamos.

<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/uk/web-searches-could-help-detect-covid-19-outbreaks-early-study-says/>

### **Cambridge firms underpin game-changing lateral flow test for Covid-19**

Two Cambridge-based biotechnology companies have been instrumental in the development of a game-changing platform for lateral flow (LF) tests that could be vital in the fight against Covid-19. Large-scale Covid-19 antibody screenings with high specificity and sensitivity, such as the LF test, could provide public health authorities with reliable data to monitor the impact of regional and national lockdown restrictions and provide evidence of antibody generation after vaccine immunisations. The platform is underpinned by Activotec, a laboratory equipment supplier based in Comberton, while Excivion is developing novel vaccines from St John's Innovation Centre.

<https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/business/cambridge-firms-underpin-game-changing-lateral-flow-test-for-covid-19/>

[vid-19-9155758/](#)

### **Vaccines Alone Are Not Enough to Beat COVID**

The world's attention is rightly focused on news of COVID-19 vaccine updates, from eligibility to supply. But we will make a critical error if we ignore the need for treatments as well as vaccines. Vaccines may not reach everyone for many years. Vaccines will not protect everyone. And as infection surges threaten to overwhelm hospitals and nursing homes, immediate remedies are needed. So, it is vitally important we continue to research treatments to limit and cure COVID-19. Consider the flu, which is targeted annually with widely available and effective vaccines. But since no vaccine is perfect, there remains a significant need for flu therapies such as Tamiflu and Relenza because these drugs prevent hospitalizations and save lives. We need Tamiflu-like and Relenza-like drugs for COVID-19.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/vaccines-alone-are-not-enough-to-beat-covid/>

### **COVID-19: Shape-shifting coronavirus is knocking the confidence of scientists**

Another half a million or so people will today bare their shoulder and have a vaccine against COVID-19. It's a triumph of science and logistics. But will it end the pandemic? Just a few weeks ago the answer would have been an unqualified "yes". But the evolving virus has knocked the confidence of many scientists.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-shape-shifting-coronavirus-is-knocking-the-confidence-of-scientists-12212424>

### **Scientists to US: Act now to leash virulent COVID variant**

The B117 SARS-CoV-2 variant, identified in 33 states thus far, will dominate other strains in the coming weeks, triggering major COVID-19 surges such as those seen in Portugal and the United Kingdom—unless the United States immediately scales up surveillance and mitigation efforts, according to a study published yesterday on the preprint server medRxiv. A team led by scientists from the Scripps Research Institute sequenced SARS-CoV-2 genomes from 10 states using US COVID-19 testing facilities to track the emergence and spread of B117, the more transmissible and lethal variant that was first discovered in the United Kingdom in September and likely introduced to the United States during holiday travel.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/scientists-us-act-now-leash-virulent-covid-variant>

### **South Africa pauses AstraZeneca vaccine rollout amid variant COVID questions**

South Africa recently received 1 million doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine and was poised to start vaccinating healthcare workers, but yesterday, health officials announced a pause for the rollout to investigate early findings that it offered little protection against mild-to-moderate disease caused by the B1351 variant strain that's dominant in the country. New questions about the vaccine come as World Health Organization (WHO) advisers this week consider it for emergency use listing, which if approved, would pave the way for lower income countries to receive their first doses through the COVAX program. The first shipments through COVAX depend on 350 million doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/south-africa-pauses-astrazeneca-vaccine-rollout-amid-variant-covid>

### **Pfizer to nearly halve COVID-19 vaccine production timeline, sterile injectables VP says**

With an upsized production goal of 2 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses this year, Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech aren't resting on their laurels now that their shot, Comirnaty, has emergency nods in the U.S., Europe and beyond. As the companies continue to build out capacity, manufacturing efficiency is getting its own boost, Pfizer revealed. The time it takes the company to produce a COVID-19 vaccine batch could soon be cut from 110 days to an average of just 60, Chaz Calitri, vice president of sterile injectables, told USA Today. "We call this 'Project Light Speed,' and it's called that for a reason," he said. "Just in the last month, we've doubled output." One element teed up for

acceleration is DNA production—the first step in Pfizer’s vaccine manufacturing process, Calitri explained. Making that DNA originally took 16 days, but the process will soon take just nine or 10 days, he said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/pfizer-to-nearly-halve-covid-19-vaccine-production-timeline-sterile-injectables-vp>

### **India's Cadila saddled with more COVID-19 vaccine orders than it can fill**

Demand outpacing COVID-19 vaccine supplies has already been a problem for players with authorized products, including Pfizer and AstraZeneca. But an Indian drugmaker known for its generics is reporting similar issues over a shot still kicking around the clinic. Cadila Healthcare, also known as Zydus Cadila, has more orders for its plasmid DNA-based COVID-19 vaccine, ZyCoV-D, than it can make—and so far, it's still on the hunt for partners to hit a production target of 200 million doses, Indian outlet Moneycontrol reports. "We have always believed that this (DNA) platform offers the most safe and efficacious way of handling such a large pandemic and we are very happy to see the strong response we are getting from different countries," Sharvil Patel, managing director of Cadila Healthcare, said, according to Moneycontrol.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/india-s-cadila-hit-more-covid-19-vaccine-orders-than-it-can-fill>

### **Covid-19: The E484K mutation and the risks it poses**

What do we know about the E484K mutation? The E484K mutation is not a new variant in itself, it’s a mutation which occurs in different variants and has already been found in the South African (B.1.351) and Brazilian (B.1.1.28) variants. The mutation is in the spike protein and appears to have an impact on the body’s immune response and, possibly, vaccine efficacy. On 1 February, Public Health England (PHE) announced that the Covid-19 Genomics (COG-UK) consortium had identified this same E484K mutation in 11 samples carrying the UK variant B.1.1.7 (sometimes called the Kent variant), after analysing 214 159 sequences. Where has it been identified in the UK? PHE confirmed to The BMJ that they have now identified 11 cases of the UK B1.1.7 variant carrying the E484K mutation around the Bristol area and 40 cases of the original SARS-COV-2 virus carrying the same E484K mutation in the Liverpool area. Public health officials are carrying out enhanced contact tracing, additional laboratory analysis, and testing in these areas. Is this mutation something to worry about? E484K is called an escape mutation because it helps the virus slip past the body’s immune defences. Ravindra Gupta at the University of Cambridge and colleagues have confirmed that the new B.1.1.7 plus E484K variant substantially increases the amount of serum antibody needed to prevent infection of cells.<sup>2</sup> We already know that the B.1.1.7 variant is more transmissible so a combination of a faster spreading virus that is also better at evading immunity is worrying—if it isn’t stopped it would outcompete the older B.1.1.7 variant.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n359>

### **AstraZeneca, Oxford race to update COVID-19 vaccine as study flags weak action against variant**

It didn’t take long before a morale boost for AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine was overshadowed by disappointment over its waned protection against a newly emerged coronavirus variant. A new study has found AZ’s COVID-19 shot offered “minimal protection” against mild to moderate disease caused by the B.1.351 variant, which was first identified in South Africa, the University of Oxford, the original developer of the vaccine, said Sunday. The finding has prompted the pair to update their vaccine, dubbed AZD1222, to target variants of the coronavirus with mutations similar to B.1.351. In the meantime, South African authorities have halted rollout of the vaccine as they try to figure out the best way forward.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-oxford-race-to-update-covid-19-vaccine-as-study-flags-weak-action-against>

## **'What other variants might be out there?' An expert on viral evolution on what's happening with coronavirus mutations**

Variants" is the latest term to leap from the infectious disease lexicon to the general public as a result of the coronavirus, as the effects of mutations on transmission and vaccines have emerged as top global concerns. But researchers like Emma Hodcroft, a molecular epidemiologist at the University of Bern, have been looking out for genetic changes to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus since the beginning of the pandemic. The virus, like any virus, has picked up mutations as it spread, but it's only been in the past few months that it has been altered in ways that could dramatically shift the dynamics of the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/08/variants-expert-in-viral-evolution/>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **López Obrador's pandemic optimism falls flat after he catches Covid-19**

On his first day in isolation after contracting Covid-19, Mexico's president Andrés Manuel López Obrador had a call with Vladimir Putin. Whereas his first call with President Joe Biden, three days earlier, had been "friendly and respectful", López Obrador gushed about the "genuine affection" from the Russian president as Mexico prepared to receive 24m doses of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. Foreign diplomacy does not usually interest López Obrador, but this time it was urgent: Mexico, one of the world's worst-hit countries, faced a three-week halt in vaccines from BioNTech/Pfizer and needed more fast.

<https://www.ft.com/content/c9b329c3-b467-40c6-8565-e0abb961b206>

### **British COVID Variant Gaining Strong Foothold in the United States**

The highly contagious coronavirus variant that drove Britain into lockdown in December is now spreading quickly across the United States, a new study shows. What has been dubbed the B.1.1.7 variant is doubling its prevalence every nine days in this country,

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-02-08/british-covid-variant-gaining-strong-foothold-in-the-united-states>

### **UK facing even tougher lockdown rules if mutant Covid continues to spread**

A Sage scientist warned for further restrictions after a study found the Oxford/AstraZeneca jab was 'less effective' against the highly infectious South African variant.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/02/08/uk-could-face-tougher-restrictions-if-south-african-covid-continues-to-spread-14040733/>

### **Is Brazilian Covid variant en route to Britain? Troublesome strain spotted in France, Italy and Faroe Islands will inevitably end up in UK, experts warn**

The troublesome Brazilian variant of coronavirus will inevitably end up in Britain, scientists have warned amid fears it could make vaccines less effective. Cases of the mutant strain — which shares a mutation with the South African variant — have already been spotted in France, Italy, the Netherlands and the Faroe Islands. Health ministries in Germany and Spain claim to have also discovered cases of the dangerous strain. Experts now say it is only a 'matter of time' before the variant — dubbed P1 — lands on Britain's shores because ministers 'can't rely' on border controls to lock it out.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/brazilian-covid-strain-spotted-in-france-italy-and-faroe-islands/ar-BB1duOAY>

### **'I've Never Seen Such Sadness': Doctors' Burden Of Watching Daily Tragedies, Then Going Home To Lockdown**

Usually we would go home from an awful shift and maybe have a drink or a meal with a friend, maybe go to the gym, maybe play some music and laugh. And then we are recharged and ready for when we go back to our next shift and we are able to deal with all the awfulness again.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/evert-doctor-frontline-nhs-mental-health\\_uk\\_601be9a8c5b67cdd1a75d876](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/evert-doctor-frontline-nhs-mental-health_uk_601be9a8c5b67cdd1a75d876)

### **France reports fresh fall in number of new COVID-19 cases**

France reported a fall in new COVID-19 infections on Sunday for the fourth successive day. Health ministry data showed there had been 19,175 new confirmed COVID-19 infections in the past 24 hours compared with 20,586 the previous day. But the data also showed the number of patients being treated in hospital for the disease had risen to 27,694 from 27,369 the previous day, following a four-day decline. The number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care also rose, increasing to 3,272 from 3,225 the day before.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-france-casualties/update-2-france-reports-fresh-fall-in-number-of-new-covid-19-cases-idUSL1N2KD0FF>

### **UK care workers use up leave to avoid losing pay while sick with Covid**

Some UK care workers are having to take holiday when they are off sick with Covid or see already low wages fall to £96 per week, raising fears they may not self-isolate. Staff on the minimum wage claim to have been offered only statutory sick pay when ill with Covid or self-isolating. This contravenes government policy that they should be paid in full to limit infection spread. One care worker involved in an ongoing outbreak at a nursing home involving several fatalities told the Guardian the employer does not provide sick pay, so the worker and other infected colleagues had to take holiday to prevent their earnings falling. One colleague took holiday pay to maintain earnings while very ill with Covid in intensive care, the care worker said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/08/uk-care-workers-use-leave-avoid-losing-pay-sick-covid>

### **Daily COVID-19 cases fall below 100,000, but CDC head says stay vigilant**

According to the COVID-19 case tracker maintained by Johns Hopkins University, the United States reported 86,928 new cases yesterday, and 1,268 deaths, marking the first time since Nov 2 daily case counts have fallen below 100,000. "But daily cases are still higher than the average during the summer peak," warned Rochelle Walensky, MD, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during today's White House coronavirus task force briefing. Walensky said hospitalizations were also still at record levels. There are 81,439 COVID-19 patients in US hospitals, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/daily-covid-19-cases-fall-below-100000-cdc-head-says-stay-vigilant>

### **U.K. coronavirus variant spreading rapidly through United States, study finds**

The coronavirus variant that shut down much of the United Kingdom is spreading rapidly across the United States, outcompeting other strains and doubling its prevalence among confirmed infections every week and a half, according to new research made public Sunday. The report, posted on the preprint server MedRxiv and not yet peer-reviewed or published in a journal, comes from a collaboration of many scientists and provides the first hard data to support a forecast issued last month by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that showed the variant becoming dominant in the United States by late March.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/ukvariant-coronavirus-us-spread/2021/02/07/a197dbc2-680a-11eb-8468-21bc48f07fe5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/ukvariant-coronavirus-us-spread/2021/02/07/a197dbc2-680a-11eb-8468-21bc48f07fe5_story.html)

## **New Lockdown**

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### **Delaying French lockdown risks repeat of British 'tragedy', Macron is warned**

President Macron's reluctance to impose a third lockdown risks plunging France into the sort of "tragedy" that hit Britain in December, according to one of his top scientific advisers. Professor Arnaud Fontanet, director of the epidemiological research unit on emerging diseases at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, became the latest figure to warn that the country could pay a heavy price for Mr

Macron's insistence on keeping shops and schools open and travel unrestricted. Mr Macron has introduced some restrictions but stopped short of a lockdown of the sort brought in last spring and autumn. Members of Mr Macron's Scientific Council told him last month that the measures were unlikely to be sufficient and urged him to put France into full lockdown. Although Olivier Véran, the health minister, backed the advice, Mr Macron refused to heed it.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/delaying-french-lockdown-risks-repeat-of-british-tragedy-president-macron-is-warn-ed-99pk8xb8f>