

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 5th Jan 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **Germany needs 15 million additional boosters to slow Omicron**

Germany needs to offer booster shots to an additional 15 million people to slow the spread of the Omicron strain and hopefully avoid a rush on intensive care units, its health minister said in remarks published on Wednesday. Karl Lauterbach told the RND group of newspapers that modelling by the Robert Koch Institute for public health showed that more than 80% of people who have already received two vaccination shots against the coronavirus would need a third.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-needs-15-million-additional-boosters-slow-omicron-2022-01-04/>

#### **Lockdown of Chinese City Leaves 13 Million Stranded**

A week and a half into one of the biggest pandemic lockdowns in China, residents of Xi'an voiced desperation online about challenges in getting food and medical care. China's Covid-19 count remains low in comparison with other countries, hovering at around 100 a day. In the past few days, about 90% of cases have been in Xi'an, the city of terracotta-warrior fame in China's northwest, which has confirmed 1,758 total Covid-19 infections since Dec. 9, a high number for China. Most of the cases have been mild, officials said. No deaths related to Covid-19 have been reported anywhere in China in the past 11 months, including Xi'an.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/lockdown-of-chinese-city-leave-13-million-stranded-11641314909>

#### **WHO Official Downplays Coronavirus Variant Found in France**

The World Health Organization said a coronavirus variant found in France hasn't become much of a threat since it was first identified in November. The variant "has been on our radar," Abdi Mahamud, a WHO incident manager on Covid, said at a press briefing in Geneva on Tuesday. "That virus had a lot of chances to pick up." The variant was identified in 12 people in the southern Alps around the same time that omicron was discovered in South Africa last year. The latter mutation has since traveled the globe and kindled record levels of contagion, unlike the French one that researchers at the IHU Mediterranee Infection -- helmed by scientist Didier Raoult -- nicknamed IHU.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-04/who-official-downplays-coronavirus-variant-found-in-france-ky08hmpe>

#### **India's Political Parties Campaign On With Huge Rallies Despite Omicron**

Covid-19 cases are surging in India. Still, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his political opponents are on the campaign trail. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party plans the "biggest ever political rally" in the northern state of Punjab (which is also under a range of virus curbs). As many as 300,000 people are expected at Wednesday's gathering, organizers told local media. Meanwhile, the capital, New Delhi, is under a strict nighttime and weekend curfew. Its Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who belongs to a rival party and is just back from a heavy few days of campaigning across the north, announced on Tuesday he'd tested positive for the virus.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-01-04/india-s-political-parties-campaign-on-with-huge-rallies-despite-omicron>

#### **France vows to go ahead with vaccine pass despite parliamentary glitch**

French government officials on Tuesday vowed to enact by mid-January as planned a law to block unvaccinated people from hospitality venues, despite the legislation hitting a procedural hitch in parliament overnight. "January 15 remains our goal," for the law coming into force, European Affairs

Minister Clement Beaune told LCI television. Until now France has enforced a COVID-19 health pass, which means in order to get into restaurants, cafes or cinemas or board trains, people need to either show a fresh negative test, or proof of vaccination. The legislation will remove the option of showing a negative test, effectively barring unvaccinated people from hospitality venues or trains.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/frances-lower-house-suspends-review-covid-19-vaccine-pass-bill-2022-01-04/>

### **South Korea court exempts private schools from vaccine passes**

A South Korean court ordered that private educational facilities, including cram schools, should be temporarily excluded from government COVID-19 vaccine pass mandates, the health ministry said on Tuesday. The injunction is one of the first legal obstacles to South Korea's vaccine mandates, which require passes or testing for entry to facilities including restaurants, cafes, gyms, and bars, as well as privately-run schools. A Seoul administrative court ruled that the mandate at private education facilities such as tuition centres, libraries and study cafes should be blocked while it considers a legal challenge filed against the Ministry of Health by federations of private education and parents' groups, the ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-court-bars-plan-private-education-covid-19-vaccine-pass-yonhap-2022-01-04/>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Covid Plan B is working, says Vaccines minister after several hospitals declare critical incidents**

The Government continues to insist that no further Covid restrictions are needed in England with Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup saying "Plan B is working". She cited the number of Covid hospitalisations as evidence the current measures are sufficient. "Plan B is working, as you can see from a number of hospitalisations - it's far, far fewer than this time last year," she said.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/covid-plan-b-is-working-vaccines-minister-maggie-throup-hospitals-declare-critical-incident-1381279>

### **Israel embarks on fourth Covid vaccination campaign**

Israel has become the first country in the world to embark on a fourth Covid-19 vaccination campaign as part of efforts to stem rapidly rising infection rates caused by the Omicron variant. People over the age of 60 and healthcare workers who received their third shot more than four months ago became eligible for a second booster of Pfizer-BioNTech on Monday, after a limited rollout began last week for elderly people and those with compromised immune systems. Officials had previously said they would wait for more data on the efficacy of a fourth shot before making it more widely available. The Israeli health ministry said on Tuesday, however, that even though it believes the threat posed by Omicron is minimal, it had been forced to act more quickly in the face of skyrocketing infection rates.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/israel-embarks-on-fourth-covid-vaccination-campaign>

### **Parents can now register children aged five to 11 for Covid-19 vaccine**

Parents can now register children aged five to 11 for Covid-19 vaccines, with the rollout set to begin imminently. Registration can be done online, and parents will receive a text message confirming their appointment. The HSE has urged the public to consider bringing their children forward for vaccination. "Clinical trials showed that this vaccine was highly effective at preventing Covid-19 in children," a statement said.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/hse-registration-children-pfizer-james-ward-b1985852.html>

### **Covid-19 testing system to remain under pressure for weeks, health official says**

The Covid-19 testing system in Ireland is expected to remain under major pressure in the coming

days, a senior health official has said. The comment comes as one teaching union has called for a re-think on the full reopening of schools, ahead of a meeting with Education Minister Norma Foley. The Government's party leaders will on Tuesday discuss the ongoing Covid-19 situation.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/omicron-tui-government-green-party-b1986324.html>

### **UK PM Johnson to hold COVID-19 briefing amid Omicron surge**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday said that England could withstand a surge in COVID-19 infections without shutting down the economy as Britain reported another record daily high in cases, fuelled by the Omicron variant. Johnson has resisted imposing stringent lockdown measures in England, betting that a vaccine booster drive and caution among the population would be enough to constrain the latest wave. The United Kingdom reported 218,724 new COVID cases on Tuesday, a new record for the number of cases reported on a single day - although a figure that also was skewed by reporting lags over the holidays.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/covid-patients-showing-less-severe-symptoms-uk-vaccine-minister-says-2022-01-04/>

### **Dutch to reopen schools despite high infection rates**

The Netherlands, under a strict COVID-19 lockdown for the past two weeks, will reopen primary and secondary schools on Jan. 10 despite coronavirus infections remaining high, the government announced on Monday. The government stressed that hospital admissions were down considerably since the country went into a lockdown in December, which included schools closing a week earlier than planned for winter holidays. "This is good news for students and it's important for their development and their mental well-being that they can go to school," Education Minister Arie Slob said at a press conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/dutch-reopen-schools-despite-high-infection-rates-2022-01-03/>

### **Australia to push ahead with reopening amid record COVID-19 cases**

Australia's government said the milder impact of the Omicron strain of COVID-19 meant the country could push ahead with plans to reopen the economy even as new infections hit a record of more than 37,000 and the number of people hospitalised rose. Record daily case numbers were reported on Monday in the states of Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, as well as the Australian Capital Territory. In New South Wales, there were 20,794 cases, higher than Sunday's figure but below the daily record of 22,577 set on Saturday, with testing numbers lower over the New Year's holiday weekend.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australia-push-ahead-with-reopening-amid-record-covid-19-cases-2022-01-03/>

### **UK government seeks to mitigate workforce disruption from Omicron**

The British government has asked public sector managers to test their contingency plans against a worst-case scenario of 25% staff absence as part of efforts to minimise disruption from the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. With daily infection numbers at a record high and people who test positive required to self-isolate for at least seven days, the government expects businesses and public services to face disruption in the coming weeks, it said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-government-seeks-mitigate-workforce-disruption-omicron-2022-01-01/>

### **France Hits Another Covid Infection Record as Cases Top 270,000**

France hit another record in Covid-19 infections on Tuesday as President Emmanuel Macron tries to contain the fast-spreading omicron variant without imposing a lockdown. Daily Covid-19 cases totaled 271,686, according to data from the public health office, topping the 232,200 infections logged on Friday. The country reported an additional 351 deaths. The coronavirus surge has become a headache for Macron four months before the presidential election.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-04/france-hits-another-covid-infection-record-as-cases-top-270-00>

### **Fourth Pfizer Dose Spurs Sharp Jump in Antibodies, Early Results From Israel Show**

Early data from Israel suggests a fourth dose of the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE will provide safe and effective protection against infection and severe illness for those with waning immunity. There was a fivefold increase in antibodies of individuals one week after they got their fourth shot, according to data from Israel's Sheba Medical Center, which provided the dose to 154 medical workers of various ages. The personnel who took part in the trial had taken a third shot by Aug. 20 and their tests showed they lacked sufficient antibodies for good protection. The findings were announced on Tuesday by Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett during a visit to the medical center located in central Israel.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/fourth-pfizer-dose-spurs-sharp-jump-in-antibodies-early-results-from-israel-show-11641322072>

### **Partisan Exits**

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#### **U.S. judge blocks Pentagon from punishing Navy SEALs who refused COVID-19 vaccine**

A federal judge on Monday barred the U.S. Department of Defense from punishing a group of Navy SEALs and other special forces members who refused COVID-19 vaccines on religious grounds. U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor, acting in response to a lawsuit filed on behalf of 35 special forces service members, issued a preliminary injunction blocking the Navy and Defense Department from enforcing the mandate. Reed, who was appointed to the federal bench in Texas by President George W. Bush, said the Navy had not granted a single religious exemption to the vaccine rule.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-judge-blocks-pentagon-punishing-navy-seals-who-refused-covid-19-vaccine-2022-01-04/>

#### **Texas Sues U.S. to Block Vaccine Requirement for National Guard**

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott sued the Biden administration Tuesday, seeking to halt a requirement that National Guard members be vaccinated against Covid-19. Earlier in the day, Mr. Abbott sent a letter to the Texas Military Department, ordering it not to force Texas Guardsmen to receive vaccines. "Unless President Biden federalizes the Texas National Guard...he is not your commander-in-chief," the letter said. "I will not tolerate efforts to compel receipt of a Covid-19 vaccine." U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III ordered in August that all service members be vaccinated for Covid-19, saying that healthy forces are necessary for a national defense.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/texas-sues-u-s-to-block-vaccine-requirement-for-national-guard-11641340383>

#### **Spanish students to go back to school after Christmas break, despite Omicron**

Students at Spanish schools and universities will return to class in-person when the new term begins on Jan. 10, the Health Minister said on Tuesday, ending speculation that record COVID-19 infections might trigger a return to distance learning. Cases have hit new highs since the highly contagious Omicron variant of the coronavirus was detected. Omicron accounted for around 43% of cases in the week before Christmas, Spanish health authorities said on Monday. The nationwide infection rate as measured over the past 14 days rose to a new record of 2,433 cases per 100,000 people on Tuesday, a more than 10-fold increase since the beginning of December

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spanish-students-go-back-school-after-christmas-break-despite-omicron-2022-01-04/>

#### **Johnson Says U.K. Can Ride Out Covid Wave Without Tighter Rules**

Boris Johnson said the U.K. can weather a record wave of Covid-19 sweeping the country without tighter restrictions, even as he warned the National Health Service is under growing strain. A record 218,724 new cases of the virus were reported on Tuesday, driven by the fast-spreading omicron variant, and the prime minister warned that the weeks ahead will be "challenging" for the U.K. But

he also said that the country's booster vaccination program and the rules in place since before Christmas appear sufficient for now. "We have a good chance of getting through the omicron wave without the need for further restrictions, and certainly without the need for another lockdown," he said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-04/johnson-says-u-k-can-ride-out-covid-wave-without-tighter-rules>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Why are so many vaccinated people getting COVID-19 lately?**

Why are so many vaccinated people getting COVID-19 lately? A couple of factors are at play, starting with the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant. Omicron is more likely to infect people, even if it doesn't make them very sick, and its surge coincided with the holiday travel season in many places. People might mistakenly think the COVID-19 vaccines will completely block infection, but the shots are mainly designed to prevent severe illness, says Louis Mansky, a virus researcher at the University of Minnesota. And the vaccines are still doing their job on that front, particularly for people who've gotten boosters.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-health-travel-coronavirus-vaccine-69b19dcb2cf9527e22083e9547d70228>

### **JCVI to consider expanding Covid vaccine rollout to all primary-age school children**

Experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will be considering whether to expand the Covid jabs programme to all primary-age school children as part of their work, the Prime Minister's official spokesman said. The Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine was approved for use in vulnerable primary school children in December. The JCVI updated its advice after the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved the jab for five to 11-year-olds following a robust review of safety data. The Prime Minister's spokesman said: "Obviously this is something the JCVI would keep under constant review. "They only relatively recently made that decision to move to vulnerable children.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/jcvi-consider-expanding-covid-vaccine-22640326>

### **Multivalent Covid-19 vaccine booster shows promise, early trial data suggests**

A Covid vaccine booster aimed at tackling multiple variants shows promise in inducing a comprehensive immune response, early data suggests. The first results of a phase one trial, launched in Manchester in September 2021, reveal the jab has strong levels of neutralising antibodies. They are similar to approved mRNA vaccines (like Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna), but at up to a 10-fold lower dose in the first 10 individuals, the research indicates.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/nhs-england-data-manchester-covid-moderna-b1986418.html>

### **50-second Covid test designed for use in schools and airports submitted to UK regulator for approval**

A 50-second Covid-19 test that has been designed for use in schools, airports and at entertainment events has been submitted to the UK's medicines regulator for approval, it has learned. The testing device, which is portable and around the size of a desktop-computer, is able to detect Covid infected particles in saliva samples in under a minute, according to creator Kidod Science and Technology. The firm claims it can provide results comparable to a PCR test and that it could be approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) within weeks.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/covid-test-50-second-use-schools-travel-airports-uk-regulator-approval-1379701>

### **COVID-19: Worst of the pandemic is 'absolutely behind us', says scientist behind Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine**

Speaking a year on from the first time the AstraZeneca vaccine was administered to a member of the public, Professor Sir Andrew Pollard says: "The worst is absolutely behind us. We just need to get

through the winter."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-worst-of-the-pandemic-is-absolutely-behind-us-says-scientist-behind-oxford-astrazeneca-vaccine-12508612>

### **FDA clears Pfizer, BioNTech COVID booster for younger teens**

The FDA has authorised the first COVID-19 booster vaccine for teenagers in the 12 to 15 age group, giving the okay for wider use of Pfizer and BioNTech's Comirnaty shot as it tries to keep the Omicron variant under control. The US regulator has also reduced the time between completion of the first two doses of Comirnaty and a third dose to five months from six as a wave of new COVID-19 cases caused by Omicron has started washing over the country. That's still longer than some other countries, including the UK which has pared down the time between the second and third doses to three months. The number of new COVID-19 cases in the US has doubled in the last few days to an average of around 418,000 a day, according to Reuters, while figures suggest there were more than a million new cases in the country yesterday, the highest number recorded since the start of the pandemic.

<https://pharmaphorum.com/news/fda-clears-pfizer-biontech-covid-booster-for-younger-teens/>

### **WHO sees more evidence that Omicron causes milder symptoms**

More evidence is emerging that the Omicron coronavirus variant is affecting the upper respiratory tract, causing milder symptoms than previous variants and resulting in a "decoupling" in some places between soaring case numbers and low death rates, a World Health Organization official said on Tuesday. "We are seeing more and more studies pointing out that Omicron is infecting the upper part of the body. Unlike other ones, the lungs who would be causing severe pneumonia," WHO Incident Manager Abdi Mahamud told Geneva-based journalists.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-sees-more-evidence-that-omicron-affects-upper-respiratory-tract-2022-01-04/>

### **Israeli study finds fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose boosts antibodies five-fold, PM says**

A fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine boosts antibodies five-fold a week after the shot is administered, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Tuesday, citing preliminary findings of an Israeli study. "A week into the fourth dose, we know to a higher degree of certainty that the fourth dose is safe," Bennett said at Sheba Medical Center, which is giving second booster shots in a trial among its staff amid a nationwide surge in Omicron variant infections. "The second piece of news: We know that a week after administration of a fourth dose, we see a five-fold increase in the number of antibodies in the vaccinated person," he told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-study-finds-fourth-dose-covid-19-vaccine-boosts-antibodies-five-fold-pm-2022-01-04/>

### **Australia regulator to review price hike in COVID-19 antigen tests**

Australia's antitrust regulator said on Tuesday it has contacted suppliers of COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits to examine pricing pressures in the market, as calls grow louder for the government to make the tests free amid a severe shortage of the kits. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) said it will review information received from suppliers, retailers and the public to determine any potential misconduct. Australia approved more than a dozen rapid antigen test kits and a majority of them are from China.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australian-regulator-review-price-hike-covid-19-antigen-tests-2022-01-04/>

### **Covid Science: Virus leaves antibodies that may attack healthy tissues**

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Coronavirus leaves survivors with self-attacking antibodies Months after recovering from SARS-

CoV-2 infection, survivors have elevated levels of antibodies that can mistakenly attack their own organs and tissues, even if they had not been severely ill, according to new findings.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/virus-leaves-antibodies-that-may-attack-healthy-tissue-s-b-cell-antibodies-2022-01-03/>

### **Dr Reddy's to launch generic COVID-19 Merck drug at about 50 cents a pill**

Indian drugmaker Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd will launch its generic version of Merck's antiviral COVID-19 pill, molnupiravir, and price it at 35 rupees per capsule, a company spokesperson said on Tuesday. The overall cost for a patient treated with a 5-day course of 40 capsules of the generic drug, to be sold under brand name 'Molflu', will come up to 1,400 rupees (\$18.77). In comparison, the treatment with Merck's pill in the United States costs \$700. "Molflu is expected to be available from early next week in pharmacies throughout (India) with particular focus on states with high caseload of COVID-19," the company spokesperson said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indias-dr-reddys-launch-generic-covid-19-merck-pill-about-50-cents-2022-01-04/>

### **COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy not linked to complications at birth -U.S. study**

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy was not associated with preterm delivery or underweight newborns, in a study published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday. Rates of preterm birth were 4.9% among more than 10,000 women who received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, compared to 7.0% for roughly 36,000 unvaccinated women, researchers said on Tuesday in The CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. The difference was not deemed to be statistically significant.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-19-vaccination-during-pregnancy-not-linked-complications-birth-us-study-2022-01-04/>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **More than 100,000 people hospitalized with Covid-19 in US for first time in nearly four months**

More than 103,000 people are currently hospitalized with Covid-19, the first time the total has reached six figures in nearly four months, according to the latest data from the US Department of Health and Human Services. Covid-19 hospitalizations reached a record high of more than 142,000 about a year ago, on January 14, 2021, and last topped 100,000 on September 11. The total fell to about 45,000 hospitalizations in early November, but increased steadily since then, and surged in the last week. Just last Monday, HHS reported 71,000 Covid-19 hospitalizations.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/03/health/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

### **Hong Kong to expand 'vaccine bubble' from Feb. 24 to combat COVID-19 spread**

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said on Tuesday the government will expand a "vaccine bubble" from Feb. 24 to include venues such as gyms, cinemas and libraries as the city steps up its fight against the spread of coronavirus. Only vaccinated people would be allowed into those venues. Lam was speaking at a weekly press conference a day after health authorities confirmed a fifth case of Omicron in the local community.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-expand-vaccine-bubble-feb-24-combat-covid-19-spread-2022-01-04/>

### **Taiwan urges vigilance after first Omicron coronavirus cases**

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen on Tuesday urged vigilance against the spread of the coronavirus after the island detected its first cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant spreading in the community. Taiwan has kept the pandemic well under control because of early and effective prevention, including largely closing its borders. Most cases of its cases have been imported from

abroad, though the island did see an outbreak of domestic infections in the middle of 2021. After months of relative safety, Taiwan this week reported its first two cases of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, both linked to a quarantine hotel.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-urges-vigilance-after-first-omicron-coronavirus-cases-2022-01-04/>

### **COVID-19 infections soar in U.S. Congress amid Omicron surge**

The U.S. Congress is experiencing an unprecedented rise in COVID-19 cases, with the seven-day positivity rate at a congressional test site surging to 13% from just 1% in late November, the Capitol's attending physician said on Monday. Most coronavirus infections on Capitol Hill have been occurring among the vaccinated, with the Omicron variant representing about 61% and the Delta variant 38%, based on a limited sample as of Dec. 15, Dr. Brian Monahan told lawmakers and staff in a Jan. 3 letter. The surge comes as the number of new COVID-19 cases in the United States has doubled in the last seven days to an average of 418,000 a day, according to a Reuters tally.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/covid-19-infections-soar-us-congress-amid-omicron-surge-2022-01-03/>

### **Daily COVID cases top 1000 in Japan for first time in three months -Jiji**

The number of new COVID-19 infections in Japan rose above 1,000 on Tuesday for the first time in three months, the Jiji news agency reported. Japan had seen fewer cases in recent months, but experts had warned of a potential sixth wave of infections during the winter.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/daily-covid-cases-top-1000-japan-first-time-three-months-jiji-2022-01-04/>

### **Sweden sets new daily COVID-19 case record as fourth wave grows**

Sweden set a new daily record for COVID-19 cases, registering 11,507 cases on Dec. 30, health agency data showed on Tuesday, as a fourth wave of the virus swept across the country and put healthcare under renewed pressure. The daily infection figures are typically revised up somewhat as any delayed records of additional cases are added to the national total for a given day. The previous record of 11,376 cases was set in late December 2020. The fresh wave of COVID-19 cases, in part driven by the more contagious Omicron variant, hit Sweden later than its Nordic neighbours, but has in recent weeks resulted in a sharp rise in cases and hospitalisations.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-sets-new-daily-covid-19-case-record-fourth-wave-mounts-2022-01-04/>

### **Australia COVID-19 cases surge, overloading testing system**

Australian COVID-19 cases soared to a pandemic record on Tuesday as the Omicron variant ripped through most of the country, driving up hospitalisation rates as the once-formidable testing regime buckled under lengthy wait times and stock shortages. The country which for a year and half used a system of constant testing, contact tracing and lockdowns to squash most outbreaks, clocked 47,799 new infections, up nearly a third on Monday's number which was also a record. Political leaders have pointed to a largely successful, if slow, vaccination rollout and few deaths, relative to new case numbers - four on Tuesday. But hospitalisations, another closely watched measure, are higher than at any other time in the pandemic: 1,344 in the most populous state New South Wales.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-covid-19-cases-surge-hospitalisations-hit-pandemic-high-nsw-2022-01-03/>

### **Romania's daily COVID-19 infections double after holiday**

The number of daily COVID-19 infections more than doubled in Romania on Tuesday following an easing of restrictions during the winter holidays, and officials estimate the fifth wave of the pandemic could see twice as many cases as the previous one. Romania is the European Union's second-least vaccinated state, with roughly 40% of the population fully inoculated amid distrust in state institutions and poor vaccine education.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/romania-daily-covid-19-infections-double-after-holiday-2022-01-04/>

## **Pakistan sees most COVID-19 cases in two months; concern about Omicron**

Pakistan reported on Monday more than 700 COVID-19 cases in a single day, its highest tally in two months, as authorities warned of a fifth wave of infections and made preparations to try to contain the fast-spreading Omicron variant. At least 708 cases in the past 24 hours pushed the positivity ratio to 1.55%, the highest since Oct. 24, according to data from the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC), which is overseeing the pandemic response. "There is clear evidence now of a beginning of another COVID wave which has been expected for the last few weeks," Asad Umar, the minister in charge of supervising anti-COVID-19 operations, wrote on Twitter.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pakistan-sees-most-covid-19-cases-two-months-concern-about-omicron-2022-01-03/>

## **COVID activity ramps up in India, Middle East**

Ever since it battled a catastrophic COVID-19 surge last spring, India has been bracing for another round of infections and making preparations. Over the past few days, cases have sharply risen, but hospitalizations remain low, New Delhi health officials said yesterday, according to Reuters. Cases had dropped to about 6,000 a day, but daily totals have risen sharply for 5 days in a row, with 33,750 reported today, with much of the activity from New Delhi and Mumbai. So far, the country has reported 1,700 Omicron cases.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/01/covid-activity-ramps-india-middle-east>

## **New Lockdown**

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### **Delhi imposes weekend curfew as COVID cases multiply, chief minister tests positive**

Authorities in India's capital Delhi on Tuesday ordered people to stay home over coming weekends, with COVID-19 cases quadrupling in a week. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the most senior elected official in the capital's administration, was one of the 37,379 new COVID-19 cases reported in India in the space of 24 hours. Kejriwal, who announced his infection the day after addressing an election rally without a mask, is among scores of political leaders - including Prime Minister Narendra Modi - holding events across India in front of large crowds.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-most-covid-19-cases-since-early-september-2022-01-04/>

### **China's Yuzhou locks down 1.1 mln residents on COVID fears**

A Chinese city has locked down its 1.1 million residents after reports of new coronavirus cases as officials rushed to contain even small outbreaks just over four weeks before the Winter Olympics begin. The curbs in the city of Yuzhou, in the central province of Henan, are similar to those imposed for nearly two weeks in the industrial hub of Xian, which has become China's latest COVID-19 epicentre.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/chinas-xian-vows-strict-implementation-covid-curbs-even-cases-decline-2022-01-04/>

### **In locked down Chinese city, some complain food hard to get**

Residents of the Chinese city of Xi'an are enduring a strict coronavirus lockdown, with business owners suffering yet more closures and some people complaining of difficulties finding food, despite assurances from authorities that they are able to provide necessities for the 13 million people largely confined to their homes. Stringent measures to stem outbreaks are common in China, which still maintains a policy of stamping out every COVID-19 case long after many other countries have opted to try to live with the virus. But the lockdown imposed Dec. 23 in Xi'an is one of the harshest in the country since a shutdown in 2020 in and around Wuhan, after the coronavirus was first detected there.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-winter-olympics-sports-health-business-5837199c372d60220ca58408ecd7d9b2>