

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 6th Jan 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **CDC advisory panel in favor of Pfizer vaccine booster for ages 12 to 15**

A panel of outside experts advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Wednesday voted to recommend booster shots of Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE's COVID-19 vaccine be made available to 12- to 15-year-olds. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted 13 to 1 to recommend that the U.S. health agency support booster shots for those aged 12 to 15 at least five months after their second dose. The panel also said the CDC should strengthen its recommendation for boosters ages 16 and 17. The agency had previously made the shots available to those teenagers, but had stopped short of suggesting that all of them should receive the additional jab.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/cdc-advisory-panel-favor-pfizer-vaccine-booster-ages-12-15-2022-01-05/>

#### **England to suspend PCR confirmation of positive rapid COVID tests**

People who test positive for COVID-19 on rapid lateral flow tests will not need to confirm their results with a follow-up PCR test if they are not showing symptoms, the UK Health Security Agency said on Wednesday. Britain is reporting record daily case numbers, and the UKHSA said that the high prevalence meant the chance of a false positive from a lateral flow device (LFD) was low. The move could also reduce the burden on the testing system, and reduce confusion if the test results contradict each other. At current levels of prevalence, officials say a positive LFD result is likely to be accurate, even if a follow-up PCR were negative.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/england-suspend-pcr-confirmation-positive-rapid-covid-test-results-2022-01-05/>

#### **COVID testing policy put under the microscope as Omicron sweeps world**

Britain and Israel are overhauling their COVID-19 testing policies as governments seek to reduce the burden on laboratories and struggle with tight supplies of kits amid soaring infection rates fuelled by the Omicron variant. This time last year, vaccines offered hope that the pandemic could be over by now. But Omicron has brought new challenges, including overloading public health systems, even if - as many scientists say - it leads to less severe illness than the earlier Delta variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/covid-testing-policy-put-under-microscope-omicron-sweeps-world-2022-01-05/>

#### **Italy extends COVID vaccine mandate to everyone over 50**

Italy on Wednesday made COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for people from the age of 50, one of very few European countries to take a similar step, in an attempt to ease pressure on its health service and reduce fatalities. The measure is immediately effective and will run until June 15. Italy has registered more than 138,000 coronavirus deaths since its outbreak emerged in February 2020, the second highest toll in Europe after Britain.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-make-covid-jab-mandatory-over-50s-tighten-curbs-draft-2022-01-05/>

#### **Portugal could ease isolation rules by Jan. 30 vote as infections soar**

Portugal's authorities said on Wednesday that isolation rules for quarantined voters may need to be eased ahead of a snap general election on Jan. 30 as the country reported a daily record of 39,570 COVID-19 infections. As the Omicron variant sweeps the country that has one of the world's highest vaccination rates, hospital admissions and mortality remain well below levels seen in the previous peak of the disease in early 2021.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/portugal-could-ease-isolation-rules-by-jan-30-vote-info>

[ctions-soar-2022-01-05/](#)

### **Thailand fears "tens of thousands" of new COVID-19 cases, weighs curbs**

Thailand is considering measures such as limiting large gatherings and banning alcohol sales in restaurants to discourage customers to avert a wave of coronavirus infections, a health official said on Wednesday. The country reported 3,899 cases on Wednesday, up from an average of 2,600 daily cases towards the end of last year, and the Omicron variant itself has tripled from last month's holiday period, government data showed. If measures like wearing masks and regular testing were not followed, infections could reach the "tens of thousands in the next two weeks," Sumanee Watcharasin, a spokeswoman for the country's coronavirus taskforce, said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/thailand-fears-tens-of-thousands-of-new-covid-19-cases-weighs-curbs/ar-AASs8yE>

### **Australia's health system under pressure as COVID-19 cases hit fresh records**

Australia's daily COVID-19 cases hit a record high for a third day on Wednesday, further straining hospital resources and testing facilities as public anger grew over the handling of the fast-moving outbreak of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. Many Australians, already unhappy about long queues at public testing centres and a shortage of at-home tests, were further incensed when news broke that tennis world number one Novak Djokovic had been given a medical exemption to enter the country. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, under pressure at the start of an election year, announced a further relaxing of testing requirements to shorten long lines, and provided access to free rapid antigen tests for pensioners, the poor and veterans.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/australias-health-system-under-pressure-as-covid-19-cases-hit-fresh-records/ar-AASr4sD>

### **Germany could reduce COVID isolation periods to keep country running**

Germany is considering shortening COVID-19 self-isolation periods over fears that critical services could grind to a halt as the highly infectious Omicron variant takes hold, a health ministry plan showed on Wednesday. Workers in critical sectors, such as hospitals or electricity suppliers, would be able to end their isolation after five days, provided they test PCR negative for the virus, under the draft proposals being sent to regional leaders. The current isolation period is 14 days for everyone. For the general population, the isolation period would be reduced to seven days with a negative PCR test, according to the draft document prepared for the leaders, who will meet Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Friday to discuss how to respond to the spread of the Omicron variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-minister-wants-avoid-lockdown-infections-jump-2022-01-05/>

### **Bank of America to staff: Get a booster, we'll give a food bank \$100**

Bank of America Corp told workers on Wednesday it will donate \$100 to local food banks for every one of its employees who gets a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot and notifies the bank before Jan. 31, according to a memo seen by Reuters. It is a new spin on the \$100 financial incentives that some cities and states offered newly vaccinated residents, and comes as companies look for ways to protect staff and ultimately return to work in offices. Bank of America, the United States' second-largest bank, said it would donate up to \$10 million for workers who get booster shots this month or who have already gotten the shot if they register that information with the bank.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/bank-america-staff-get-booster-well-give-food-bank-100-2022-01-05/>

### **Shares in COVID-19 vaccine developer Valneva extend fall**

Shares in biotech company Valneva fell again on Wednesday, declining for the seventh day in a row due to a growing belief amongst investors that the COVID-19 Omicron variant might lessen the need for mass vaccination. Valneva shares were down 3% at 17.10 euros, meaning the stock has now lost close to 40% since its Dec. 27 close of 26.38 euros. It did gain more than 200% a year in 2021 and 2020 as Valneva's COVID-19 vaccine candidate came increasingly closer to approval. It is still

awaiting a green light for its shot in the European Union and Britain.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/finance/companies/shares-in-covid-19-vaccine-developer-valneva-extend-fall/ar-AASrXkq>

### **One in 10 Londoners Had Covid-19 at the End of 2021**

Covid-19 afflicted one in 10 people in London by the end of 2021, according to estimates by the Office for National Statistics. That's the highest infection rate of any part of the U.K., where omicron is now the dominant variant. Infections increased everywhere across the country, reaching over 3.7 million in total.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/around-one-in-10-londoners-had-covid-19-at-the-end-of-2021>

### **Scarce At-Home Covid Tests Leave Some Consumers Paying \$40 a Pop**

High prices for at-home Covid-19 tests are hitting the wallets of U.S. families who need them to get back to school and work — if they can find any to buy at all. One restaurant worker in New York said she paid an acquaintance double the retail price in a sidewalk exchange for a test kit. A mom in Missouri said she's rationing her last two-pack for if her kids show serious symptoms. Another parent is keeping her daughter home from school, where tests are required before returning after the holiday, until an in-person appointment later this week because the \$80 price tag she saw in online community groups was too steep.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/scarce-at-home-covid-tests-leave-some-consumers-paying-40-a-pop>

### **Italy to Require Covid Shots for Those Over 50 to Blunt Record Cases**

Italy made vaccination compulsory for people over 50 and further reduced what the unvaccinated can do in its latest bid to fight the surge in Covid-19 cases. "We want to slow down the growth of the contagion curve and push Italians who still aren't vaccinated to do so," Prime Minister Mario Draghi said during the cabinet meeting, according to a statement. "We are acting in particular on age groups that are most at risk of hospitalization, to reduce pressure on hospitals and save lives."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/italy-introduces-vaccine-mandate-for-people-aged-over-50>

### **Inside a Covid-19 School Closing: A Pennsylvania Superintendent Agonizes Over Going Remote**

Teachers calling in sick from Covid-19 are prompting superintendents across the country to close schools and move classes online, forcing parents to scramble for child care and reorder work schedules. Nationally, more than 4,500 schools will be closed at least one day this week due to the pandemic, the highest number this academic year, according to Burbio Inc., a Pelham, N.Y., data company that tracks K-12 school closures. On Wednesday, Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third-largest district, canceled classes after the teachers union said the classrooms presented unsafe conditions. City leaders called the vote by the Chicago Teachers Union an illegal job action and said teachers who didn't report to work wouldn't receive pay. Districts in other cities such as Atlanta and Milwaukee moved over the weekend to shift classes online as the highly contagious Omicron variant has driven a surge in cases.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-a-covid-19-school-closing-a-pennsylvania-superintendent-agonizes-over-going-remote-11641416872>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **U.S. CDC backs previous advice for 5-day isolation; no test needed**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday backed its week-old guidance for people seeking to end their COVID-19 isolation at five days, adding they could take a rapid antigen test if they want to and can access one, but is not requiring that. The agency had been pressured by health experts to institute a test requirement after it cut in half its guidance last week for people to isolate after a COVID-19 infection to 5 days from 10. It said the move was based on

science around transmission of the virus. On Tuesday, the CDC added an explanation on its website, saying that a review of 113 studies from 17 countries showed that most transmission occurs early in the course of infection. It said the average period of infectiousness and risk of transmission was "between 2-3 days before and 8 days after symptom onset."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/update-3-u-s-cdc-backs-previous-advice-for-5-day-isolation-no-test-need/ar-AA5swmW>

### **China's Henan hit by COVID curbs after sporadic cases**

Central Chinese cities including Yuzhou and Zhengzhou imposed varying degrees of travel curbs after sporadic COVID-19 cases, in line with a national strategy that has taken on extra urgency as the Winter Olympics and Lunar New Year holiday approach. The city of Yuzhou in the central province of Henan has ordered its 1 million residents not to leave town since Jan. 2, although the caseload for the city and the entire province remained tiny. Henan reported four domestically transmitted cases and 18 local asymptomatic infections for Tuesday. China's strategy demands that officials act to contain clusters of infections as quickly as possible.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/chinas-henan-hit-by-covid-curbs-after-sporadic-cases/ar-AA5rg5g>

### **Covid-19: Demand for lateral flow tests 'outstrips supply'**

People in Northern Ireland who get a positive lateral flow test no longer need a PCR test to confirm that result. The Department of Health has said those who receive a positive lateral flow test should assume that they have Covid-19 and self-isolate immediately. It comes amid business closures and health service pressures due to staff absences caused by self-isolation. Pharmacists have warned the demand for lateral flow tests in Northern Ireland is outstripping supply. Northern Ireland has reported 12% of its total number of positive Covid-19 cases since in the start of the pandemic in just the last seven days.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-59879280>

### **Facing criticism, CDC updates Covid-19 isolation recommendations with guidance on testing**

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance on the recommended Covid-19 isolation period Tuesday, telling people that if they have access to a Covid-19 test and want to take it, the best approach is to use a rapid test toward the end of their five-day isolation period. The agency has faced pressure over the past week from outside medical experts to include a testing component in its new shortened isolation period. The updated recommendations do not advise a test for isolated people, but they offer guidance on how those people should respond to a test result if they choose to take one. If the test is positive, isolated people are advised to continue their isolation until 10 days after their symptoms started. If the test is negative, isolated people can end their isolation but are advised to wear a mask around other people until day 10.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/health/cdc-updated-guidance-covid-isolation/index.html>

### **Say it with sheep? Flock forms syringe shape in COVID jab push**

A German campaigner is hoping the emotional appeal of 700 sheep forming the shape of a giant syringe will reach the hearts and minds of people hesitating to take a COVID-19 injection. Germany has lower vaccination rates most other Western European nations, although some are simply unsure if they should get a jab rather than vehemently opposed to vaccination. "Sheep are popular with people and carry positive emotional connotations. So perhaps they can reach many people emotionally when logic and scientific reasoning don't do the job," the organiser of the campaign, Hanspeter Etzold, told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/say-it-with-sheep-flock-forms-syringe-shape-covid-jab-push-2022-01-04/>

### **Pfizer to supply U.S. with 10 mln more courses of COVID-19 pills**

The Biden administration doubled its order for Pfizer Inc's oral COVID-19 antiviral treatment, the

company and the White House said on Tuesday, providing the government a total of 20 million courses as it fights a record surge in COVID-19 cases. The White House now expects some 4 million treatment courses of the pills to be available by the end of January and 10 million by June, three months sooner than previously planned, according to an administration official. "We're getting them as soon as they come off the line," the official said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-supply-10-mln-additional-courses-covid-19-pill-us-govt-2022-01-04/>

### **Israel earmarks COVID PCRs for high-risk groups, expands home-testing**

Israel changed its COVID-19 quarantine and testing policy on Wednesday as part of efforts to husband resources and ensure continued protection for vulnerable people amid a surge in infections fueled by the Omicron variant. PCR tests will be earmarked for people aged 60 and over or with weak immune systems, while those at lower risk will be checked with rapid antigen tests, the health ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-ear-marks-covid-pcrs-vulnerable-groups-expands-home-testing-2022-01-05/>

### **Ireland to drop COVID-19 test requirement for vaccinated arrivals**

Ireland will drop its requirement for vaccinated arrivals to have proof of a negative COVID-19 test and return to seeking a proof of vaccination or recent infection upon entry, Prime Minister Micheál Martin said on Wednesday. Ireland introduced the measure a month ago to slow the spread of the new Omicron coronavirus variant. Omicron now accounts for almost all Irish infections, which have rocketed to record levels in the last two weeks. Martin also said he believed Ireland's current restrictions to slow the spread of infection are effective and that it remained to be seen whether health chiefs will suggest any changes later this week.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/ireland-drop-covid-19-test-requirement-vaccinated-arrivals-media-2022-01-05/>

### **Hong Kong bans flights from 8 countries, tightens COVID curbs**

Hong Kong has announced a two-week ban on incoming flights from eight countries and tightened coronavirus restrictions after detecting cases of the Omicron variant. Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong, told reporters on Wednesday that incoming flights from Australia, Canada, France, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States, including interchanges, would be banned from January 8 to January 21.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/5/hong-kong-bans-flights-from-8-countries-tightens-covid-curbs>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Pandemic-wary U.S. Supreme Court to weigh Biden vaccine mandates**

The U.S. Supreme Court, which has restricted its own operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, is preparing to decide whether to block President Joe Biden's vaccine mandates for large businesses and healthcare workers in a test of presidential powers to address an unyielding public health crisis. The court will hear in-person arguments on Friday on emergency requests in two separate cases by challengers including business groups, religious entities and various Republican-led U.S. states for orders blocking the vaccine requirements, with rulings expected in short order. The challengers maintain that Biden and his administration have overstepped their authority. The court's 6-3 conservative majority in the past has shown skepticism toward sweeping actions by federal agencies.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/pandemic-wary-us-supreme-court-weigh-biden-vaccine-mandates-2022-01-05/>

### **French parliament suspends COVID debate amid anger over Macron remark**

The government on Wednesday defended President Emmanuel Macron's use of coarse language in a

stepped-up campaign against France's unvaccinated, after his words drew condemnation from the opposition and mixed reactions from voters. Macron said he wanted to "piss off" unvaccinated people by making their lives so complicated they would end up getting jabbed. He was speaking in an interview with Le Parisien newspaper in which he also called unvaccinated people irresponsible and unworthy of being considered citizens.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/macrons-piss-off-comments-trigger-new-covid-law-debate-suspension-media-2022-01-05/>

### **Tempers fray in Australia as COVID-19 cases hit new highs**

Australia's daily COVID-19 cases hit a record high for a third day on Wednesday, further straining hospital resources and testing facilities as public anger grew over the handling of the fast-moving outbreak of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. Many Australians, already unhappy about long queues at public testing centres and a shortage of at-home tests, were further incensed when news broke that tennis world number one Novak Djokovic had been given a medical exemption to enter the country. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, under pressure at the start of an election year, announced a further relaxing of testing requirements to shorten long lines, and provided access to free rapid antigen tests for pensioners, the poor and veterans.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australias-health-system-under-pressure-covid-19-cases-hit-fresh-records-2022-01-05/>

### **Djokovic's Vaccine Exemption for Australian Open Stokes Anger**

Tennis star Novak Djokovic was challenged by Prime Minister Scott Morrison to prove why he can't be vaccinated after a decision to exempt some Australian Open players from virus rules sparked criticism in host city Melbourne, which endured one of world's longest lockdowns. Djokovic, who has previously criticized vaccine mandates, is among a handful of competitors granted medical exemptions for the tournament, the first of the four annual Grand Slam events, which begins Jan. 17, according to organizers. Morrison told reporters that Djokovic must "provide acceptable proof" when he arrives in Australia that he cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/djokovic-s-vaccine-exemption-for-australian-open-stokes-anger>

### **Macron slammed for saying he wants to 'piss off' unvaccinated**

President Emmanuel Macron has faced anger from opponents and chaos in parliament after issuing a provocative warning to people in France not yet vaccinated against COVID-19 that he would pressure them as much as possible by limiting access to key aspects of life. Macron, who has not yet formally declared his candidacy for re-election in April, came under fire from challengers already in the race, accusing him of overstepping the line with his remarks.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/5/macron-slammed-for-saying-he-wants-to-piss-off-unvaccinated>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Cuba's vaccine success story sails past mark set by rich world's Covid efforts**

The island nation struggles to keep the lights on but has inoculated 90% of population with home-developed vaccines. General Máximo Gómez, a key figure in Cuba's 19th-century wars of independence against Spain once said: "Cubans either don't meet the mark - or go way past it." A century and a half later, the aphorism rings true. This downtrodden island struggles to keep the lights on, but has now vaccinated more of its citizens against Covid-19 than any of the world's major nations. More than 90% of the population has been vaccinated with at least one dose of Cuba's homegrown vaccines, while 83% have been fully inoculated. Of countries with populations of over a million, only the United Arab Emirates has a stronger vaccination record.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/05/cuba-coronavirus-covid-vaccines-success-story>

### **Omicron estimated to be 95.4% of coronavirus variants in U.S. - CDC**

The Omicron variant was estimated to be 95.4% of the coronavirus strains circulating in the United States as of Jan. 1, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Tuesday. The variant has swiftly spread across the country since its detection on Dec. 1, replacing Delta as the dominant strain and sparking a new wave of infections that pushed daily cases near the 1 million mark on Monday. The CDC said the variant accounted for an estimated 77% of cases in the week ended Dec. 25, up from the 58.6% projection it had disclosed last week.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/omicron-estimated-be-954-coronavirus-variants-us-cdc-2022-01-04/>

### **COVID case counts may be losing importance amid omicron**

The explosive increase in U.S. coronavirus case counts is raising alarm, but some experts believe the focus should instead be on COVID-19 hospital admissions. And those aren't climbing as fast. Dr. Anthony Fauci, for one, said Sunday on ABC that with many infections causing few or no symptoms, "it is much more relevant to focus on the hospitalizations as opposed to the total number of cases." Other experts argue that case counts still have value. As the super-contagious omicron variant rages across the U.S., new COVID-19 cases per day have more than tripled over the past two weeks, reaching a record-shattering average of 480,000. Schools, hospitals and airlines are struggling as infected workers go into isolation.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-anthony-fauci-9444d63b650b98e235ed2595b0ebe844>

### **Fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose boosts antibodies five-fold in Israeli study, 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.

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

### **Novavax gathers its COVID-19 vaccine data for long-delayed FDA filing**

Novavax spent much of 2021 working to file its COVID-19 vaccine with U.S. regulators but falling short of its own deadlines. As the year came to a close, the company celebrated the fact that it was nearly there. Friday, Novavax said it "completed submission of the final data package, including the complete chemistry, manufacturing and controls module, to fulfill the prerequisites for emergency use authorization (EUA) application request." This step is not an official emergency use application. Novavax plans to complete that process by the end of this month, the company said. The news comes after a 2021 filled with missed deadlines for the Gaithersburg, Maryland-based biotech. The company originally hoped to file for an EUA by 2021's second quarter, but later pushed that deadline to the third quarter thanks to a manufacturing issue. By October, Novavax said it was eyeing an end-of-year deadline to submit its "complete regulatory package" to the FDA

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/novavax-clinches-eleventh-hour-fda-data-submission-for-covid-19-vaccine-emergency-use>

### **Pfizer carries pandemic momentum into 2022, scoring another huge Paxlovid deal with the US**

With two COVID-fighting antiviral pills now on tap, the U.S. government is calling for a second helping of Pfizer's treatment. The U.S. has doubled its order for Pfizer's COVID-19 antiviral Paxlovid from 10 million courses to 20 million, the company said Tuesday. At the same time, the government aims to speed up the delivery of those treatments, a senior Biden administration official told Fox News. Roughly 10 million treatment courses of the antiviral, also known as nirmatrelvir tablets and

ritonavir tablets, are set for delivery by the end of June, Pfizer said in a release. The remaining 10 million courses are pegged for delivery by the end of September, Pfizer said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-to-double-order-covid-19-pill-paxlovid-us-report>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **Queensland records 6,781 new Covid-19 cases as health chief says most will have 'mild' symptoms**

Queensland has recorded 6,781 new Covid-19 cases, a significant uptick from the 5,699 cases detected on Tuesday. There are now 32,000 active cases across the Sunshine State, but health authorities say the figure is much higher due to queues at testing clinics and the time it is taking to receive results. There are currently 265 people in hospital with the virus including 10 patients in ICU, a positive sign the number of admissions remains steady. Chief health officer Dr John Gerrard reassured Queenslanders that the majority would only experience mild symptoms as case numbers explode across the state.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10369903/Queensland-records-6-781-new-Covid-19-cases.html>

### **Singapore sees Omicron coronavirus wave outpacing Delta**

Singapore expects the Omicron coronavirus variant to cause a bigger wave of infections than Delta, the health ministry said on Wednesday, adding a booster dose will soon be required for adults to maintain their fully vaccinated status. From Feb. 14, eligible persons aged 18 years and above should have received a booster dose no later than 270 days after the last dose in the primary vaccination series to continue to be considered fully vaccinated, the ministry said. The city-state of 5.5 million people allows only those counted as fully vaccinated to enter malls or dine in restaurants or at hawker stalls.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-sees-omicron-coronavirus-wave-outpacing-delta-2022-01-05/>

### **Rio cancels Carnival street parades due to rising COVID-19 cases, Omicron threat**

Rio de Janeiro has canceled street parades and parties during its world-famous Carnival for a second year due to an increase in COVID-19 cases and the threat from the arrival of the Omicron coronavirus variant, the city's mayor said on Tuesday. However, the spectacular parade by Rio's samba schools, which the public watches from the stands of the city's Marquês de Sapucaí Sambadrome, will go ahead, unlike last year, with health precautions to prevent spreading the virus, he said. Rio mayor Eduardo Paes announced after a meeting with health authorities that the city would call off the street events that draw hundreds of thousands of Carnival revelers each year.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/rio-de-janeiro-cancels-carnival-parade-due-rising-covid-19-cases-omicron-threat-2022-01-05/>

### **Thailand fears "tens of thousands" of new COVID-19 cases, weighs curbs**

Thailand is considering measures such as limiting large gatherings and banning alcohol sales in restaurants to discourage customers to avert a wave of coronavirus infections, a health official said on Wednesday. The country reported 3,899 cases on Wednesday, up from an average of 2,600 daily cases towards the end of last year, and the Omicron variant itself has tripled from last month's holiday period, government data showed. If measures like wearing masks and regular testing were not followed, infections could reach the "tens of thousands in the next two weeks," Sumanee Watcharasin, a spokeswoman for the country's coronavirus taskforce, said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-fears-tens-thousands-new-covid-19-cases-weighs-curbs-2022-01-05/>

### **COVID-19 infects 214 on five cruise ships in Brazilian waters**

Five cruise ships in Brazilian waters have reported 214 cases of COVID-19 among their crew and passengers, including two ships that are in quarantine in the port of Santos, health regulator Anvisa

said on Tuesday. Two ships run by the Swiss-Italian cruise line MSC Cruises, each with more than 3,000 passengers are due to arrive in Rio de Janeiro and Santos this week, the regulator said. The MSC Seaside arriving on Thursday in Santos has reported 65 cases among crew members and 25 among passengers, while the MSC Preziosa due in Rio on Wednesday has 25 crew with COVID-19 and 8 passengers infected, Anvisa said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/covid-19-infected-214-five-cruise-ships-brazilian-waters-2022-01-04/>

### **Japan's Okinawa sees doubling of COVID-19 cases, considers emergency steps**

The southern Japanese island chain of Okinawa emerged on Wednesday as the epicentre of a new coronavirus surge, with cases more than doubling from the previous day and officials were considering imposing emergency curbs. New infections in the prefecture jumped to 623 from 225 on Tuesday, the highest since August when Japan was in the midst of its fifth and biggest wave of COVID-19. Governor Denny Tamaki on Tuesday told reporters the region had entered a sixth wave of infections and the highly transmissible Omicron variant was responsible.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/japan-declare-quasi-emergency-covid-hit-okinawa-paper-2022-01-04/>

### **Hungary reports 5270 new COVID-19 cases in sharp rise**

Hungary reported 5,270 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, a sharp rise from the 3,005 recorded a week ago, as the Omicron variant spreads. Omicron accounted for more than 11% of new cases, the government said. Despite the rise in cases, the number of coronavirus patients being treated in hospital was 3,090, down from 3,854 a week ago. In Hungary, a country of close to 10 million people, 39,599 people have died of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government, which faces elections in April, and opposes lockdowns for fear of stifling the economy, has stepped up its vaccination campaign since November.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hungary-reports-5270-new-covid-19-cases-sharp-weekly-rise-2022-01-05/>

### **U.S. reports nearly 1 mln COVID-19 cases in a day, setting global record**

The United States reported nearly 1 million new coronavirus infections on Monday, the highest daily tally of any country in the world and nearly double the previous U.S. peak set a week ago as the spread of the Omicron variant showed no signs of slowing. The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has risen nearly 50% in the past week and now exceeds 100,000, according to data collected by Reuters, marking the first time that threshold has been reached in a year. The latest surge, which forced waves of cancellations from commercial airlines flights to Broadway shows in recent weeks, was disrupting plans for public schools to welcome students back from winter vacation.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-reports-nearly-1-mln-covid-19-cases-day-setting-global-record-2022-01-04/>

### **Germany considers more contact limits as infections jump**

Germany is considering shortening COVID-19 self-isolation periods over fears that critical services could grind to a halt as the highly infectious Omicron variant takes hold, a health ministry plan showed on Wednesday. Workers in critical sectors, such as hospitals or electricity suppliers, would be able to end their isolation after five days, provided they test PCR negative for the virus, under the draft proposals being sent to regional leaders. The current isolation period is 14 days for everyone.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-minister-wants-avoid-lockdown-infections-jump-2022-01-05/>

### **Amid Omicron surge, UK PM Johnson resists another lockdown**

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/>

### **'Third wave has set in': India's new COVID cases double in 4 days**

India has reported 58,097 new daily COVID-19 cases, twice the number seen only four days ago, with a top health official in the national capital saying the pandemic's third wave in the country "has set in". Deaths rose by 534, including the southern state of Kerala's updated death toll of 423, lifting the national total to 482,551, according to the health ministry data on Wednesday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/5/third-wave-india-new-covid-cases-double-omicron>

## **New Lockdown**

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### **China's Henan hit by COVID curbs after sporadic cases**

A few central Chinese cities imposed varying degrees of travel curbs after sporadic COVID-19 cases, in line with a national strategy that has taken on extra urgency due to the upcoming Winter Olympics and Lunar New Year holiday. The city of Yuzhou in the central province of Henan has ordered its 1.1 million residents not to leave town since Jan. 2, although the caseload for the city and the entire province remained tiny. Henan reported four domestically transmitted cases and 18 local asymptomatic infections for Tuesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/chinas-henan-hit-by-covid-curbs-after-sporadic-cases-2022-01-05/>

### **Yuzhou: Second Chinese city forced into Covid lockdown**

China has put a second city into total lockdown after just three asymptomatic Covid cases were discovered. Yuzhou - which has a population of 1.1 million - saw its transport system shut down and all but essential food stores closed overnight. It follows a similar lockdown in Xi'an, where 13 million have been confined to their homes since 23 December. The strict measures come ahead of the Lunar New Year and the Winter Olympics due to be held in Beijing.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-59871325?at\\_medium=RSS&at\\_campaign=KARANGA](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-59871325?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA)

### **China's Health Code App Crashes in Xi'an, Spiking Lockdown Chaos**

China's Covid-19 health code system that strictly governs people's movements crashed in Xi'an this week, worsening conditions in the locked-down city where the country's worst outbreak since Wuhan has been unfolding. The crash has complicated efforts to weed out cases through mass testing, created hurdles for people seeking care at hospitals and led to the suspension of a top official, the latest among a slew of bureaucrats to be punished as Beijing fumes over the situation. Liu Jun, head of Xi'an's big-data bureau, was temporarily dismissed over performance failures, the municipal Communist Party Committee said in a statement. While the committee didn't explicitly lay out the reason behind its decision, it came after Xi'an's health code system -- which is under Liu's purview and tracks individuals' movements and vaccination status -- broke down on Tuesday.

[https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/china-s-health-code-app-crashes-in-xi-an-spiking-lockdown-chaos?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=bd&cmpld=google](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-05/china-s-health-code-app-crashes-in-xi-an-spiking-lockdown-chaos?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpld=google)

### **China reports major drop in virus cases in locked-down Xi'an**

China on Wednesday reported a major drop in COVID-19 infections in the northern city of Xi'an, which has been under a tight lockdown for the past two weeks that has sharply disrupted the lives of its 13 million residents. The National Health Commission announced just 35 new cases in Xi'an, home to the famed Terracotta Warriors statues along with major industries, down from 95 the day before. Health officials said they have basically achieved the goal of halting community transmission

because the new cases were among people already quarantined.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-winter-olympics-sports-health-beijing-a91fff9b1312e2e5bea4f4ed789e9d4f>