

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

16th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

S.Korea reports record 400741 new daily COVID cases - KDCA

South Korea reported a record 400,741 new daily COVID-19 cases, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said on Wednesday, as the country seeks to further ease social distancing rules despite a wave of Omicron infections.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-reports-record-400741-new-daily-covid-cases-kdca-2022-03-16/>

U.S. Life Insurance Sales Rise on Covid-19 Fears

Americans went on a buying spree for life insurance in 2021, driven by concerns of death from the continuing coronavirus pandemic. Premium volume for new individual life-insurance policies surged 20% compared with 2020, while the number of policies issued rose 5%, the biggest year-over-year percentage gains since the 1980s, according to industry-funded research firm Limra. "As we zero in on one million Americans who tragically lost their lives, it's not a surprise that people are thinking about their own mortality and the impact on loved ones if anything were to happen to them," said David Levenson, Limra's chief executive.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-life-insurance-sales-spike-on-covid-19-fears-11647347494?mod=hp_lista_pos3

US Says WTO Covid Vaccine Talks Led to IP Compromise

World Trade Organization members have arrived at a compromise on intellectual property rules for Covid-19 vaccines, the Biden administration said. While there is no text for an agreement, there is an understanding that offers "the most promising path toward achieving a concrete and meaningful outcome," Adam Hodge, a spokesman for U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, said in a statement on Tuesday. The statement came after Politico Pro reported the compromise earlier Tuesday between the European Union, South Africa, India and the U.S. that covers only vaccines and still requires approval from the EU and WTO members. The USTR statement didn't provide details of the compromise.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-16/u-s-says-wto-vaccine-talks-have-resulted-in-compromise-outcome>

Ardern Opens Border to Foreigners as 'Fortress New Zealand' Ends

New Zealand will begin reopening its border to the world next month, bringing an end to the "fortress" settings that kept Covid-19 out for much of the pandemic. Vaccinated Australians will be allowed to enter without needing to isolate on arrival from 11:59 p.m. on April 12, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Wednesday in Wellington. The border will open to visitors from other visa-waiver countries such as the U.S., the U.K., Japan, Singapore and Germany from midnight May 1, she said. "We're ready to welcome the world back," Ardern told a news conference. "Now that we're highly vaccinated and predicted to be off our omicron peak, it's now safe to open up."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-15/ardern-opens-border-to-foreigners-as-fortress-new-zealand-ends>

Singapore's Chan Sees More Online School Learning in Covid Shift

Singapore plans to move more school lessons online and make better use of technology to improve the learning and teaching experience, Education Minister Chan Chun Sing said Wednesday. Transmission of knowledge can be done via digital channels, which will free up in-person school time for pupils to sharpen their collaborative skills and creativity, Chan said in an interview to be

broadcast as part of the Bloomberg Asean Business Summit. The minister also sees technology as “a great enabler” that helps lighten the workload of teachers and accelerate the pace of education. “We will move more and more of our lessons online, allowing our students to do more self-paced learning” Chan said, citing the experience from the Covid-19 pandemic. The city-state began preparations for virtual classrooms even before the start of the virus spread, he added.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-16/singapore-s-chan-sees-more-online-school-learning-in-covid-shift>

Will ‘open-source’ vaccines narrow the inequality gap exposed by Covid?

Over the past two years, global health authorities have consistently warned of inequitable access to tools to help counter the pandemic. High-income nations such as the UK, the US and those in Europe began their vaccine rollouts in December 2020, having reached substantial proportions of vulnerable groups by February 2021. The first shipment of vaccines — 600,000 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca version — delivered by Covax, only arrived in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, in late February 2021. Since then mRNA manufacturers, such as BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna, have booked record-breaking revenues and become key players in business and geopolitics. Yet, more than three-quarters of people in low-income countries aged 12 and over have still to receive a single dose, compared with 10 per cent in high-income countries. The Cape Town initiative is part of a new push by global health authorities, academics and philanthropists to address that and promote alternatives to “Big Pharma’s” business model, which relies on legally enforceable patent protections to raise investment to fund new drugs.

<https://www.ft.com/content/61e1d51e-b415-4161-b157-032e5207ab7f>

Mexico to uphold existing agreements for Russian COVID vaccine

Mexico will uphold its existing agreements with Russia for its Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine, as well as those made with other countries, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Monday. Speaking at a regular news conference, Lopez Obrador said he expected Mexico to have sufficient vaccines going forward, and reiterated that Mexico would not participate in sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/mexico-uphold-existing-agreements-russian-covid-vaccine-2022-03-14/>

Europe Is Getting Caught by a Covid Resurgence After Rushed Exit

Europe tried to leave Covid-19 behind, but the rush to unwind restrictions is now setting the stage for a revival of pandemic risks. Accelerated by the emergence of BA.2 -- a more-transmissible strain of the omicron variant -- the virus has spread rapidly. Germany on Tuesday set a fresh record for infection rates for the four straight day. Austria has also reached new highs, while cases in the Netherlands have doubled since lifting curbs on Feb. 25. Most authorities have shrugged off the surge, showing little appetite to re-impose curbs after easing measures just a few weeks ago. But the virus threatens to cause problems anyway, with businesses and schools disrupted as people call in sick.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-15/europe-is-getting-caught-by-a-covid-resurgence-after-rushed-exit>

Dutch to drop last remaining COVID-19 restrictions next week

The Dutch government will drop its last remaining COVID-19 restrictions next week despite a recent rise in infections as the nation learns to live with the coronavirus, officials said Tuesday. The Netherlands has already ended a nationwide lockdown and scrapped most virus measures. As of March 23, wearing a face mask on public transport will no longer be obligatory. Masks will still have to be worn on airplanes and behind security screening at airports. The government also is halting the use of a digital COVID-19 pass to get into nightclubs and other large-scale events, the only place where they were still required

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-european-union-netherlands-b1cfe5a4942f754cefc64ec489ac354d>

White House begs Congress for Covid funding amid concern about Omicron sister variant

The White House is begging Congress for more funds to help with Covid-19 surveillance, testing, and treatments — a call that could be bolstered by the emerging signs of an increase in Covid-19 cases in Europe. After lawmakers' plan to provide \$22.5 billion in Covid-19 funding imploded last week, the White House has been faced with cutting back on its pandemic response activities because its budget is nearly exhausted. It's unclear whether additional funding is on the way. The Biden administration on Tuesday laid out a roadmap of the cutbacks and shortages that could happen if no more funding is provided. Specifically, senior administration officials said they would need to wind down some Covid-19 surveillance investments, and that testing capacity could crater after June.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/03/15/white-house-begs-covid-funds-omicron-sister/>

Omicron sub-variant BA.2 is just as contagious as measles

Professor Adrian Esterman said it was 40 per cent more transmissible than BA.1. Britain's daily cases have risen continuously over the last two weeks. Some experts say BA.2 is the 'most important driver' behind this increase

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10614413/Omicron-sub-variant-BA-2-just-contagious-MEASLES.html>

U.S., EU, India, S.Africa reach compromise on COVID vaccine IP waiver text

The United States, European Union, India and South Africa have reached a consensus on key elements of a long-sought intellectual property waiver for COVID-19 vaccines, according to a proposed text reviewed by Reuters. Sources familiar with the talks described the text as a tentative agreement among the four World Trade Organization members that still needs formal approvals from the parties before it can be considered official. Any agreement must be accepted by the WTO's 164 member countries in order to be adopted.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-eu-india-s-africa-reach-tentative-pact-covid-vaccine-ip-waiver-sources-2022-03-15/>

UK to end all COVID-19 travel rules ahead of Easter break

Britain's government said Monday all remaining coronavirus measures for travelers, including passenger locator forms and the requirement that unvaccinated people be tested for COVID-19 before and after their arrivals, will end Friday to make going on holiday easier for the Easter school vacation. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the changes will mean people "can travel just like in the good old days." The passenger locator forms require people to fill in travel details, their address in the U.K. and their vaccination status.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-travel-health-business-england-5d3635d5fe26d48c2e3f934dc50156af>

Exit Strategies

New Zealand to reopen borders earlier than planned

New Zealand said on Wednesday it would open its border for some visitors earlier than previously forecast, hoping an influx of tourists will boost the economy. Vaccinated Australians can travel to New Zealand from April 12 and then from May 1 tourists from visa-waiver countries such as the United States and Britain will be able to visit, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said at a press conference. The border was not expected to fully reopen until October under the current plan but Ardern said this could be brought forward.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-pm-ardern-announces-border-reopening-earlier-than-previous-2022-03-15/>

Doctors should not fear liability for recommending Covid-19 vaccine

Medical practitioners in Hong Kong have been reluctant to recommend Covid-19 vaccines to patients with chronic health conditions for fear of the risk of adverse events. Significant numbers of doctors

have also been hesitant about openly discussing or recommending vaccination even for those with no relevant health issues. These are the conclusions from a study by the Chinese University of Hong Kong that received little attention when published last November. The findings, which should have raised alarm bells, offer an explanation for the city's stubbornly low vaccination rate among the elderly.

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3170354/doctors-concerns-about-covid-19-vaccine-liability-must-be-addressed>

GP vaccine sites offering 'value for money' to continue Covid jabs until September

GP-led Covid vaccination sites will be able to continue delivering jabs until September if they have 'sufficient capacity', NHS England has said. But some may be asked to suspend the service if they are not delivering 'value for money', it added. The enhanced service was due to expire at the end of this month, but NHS England had indicated it was expected to be extended until September – as long as delivery did not impact on 'core' GP services.

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/pulse-pcn/gp-vaccine-sites-offering-value-for-money-to-continue-covid-jabs-until-september/>

The Guardian view on rising rates of Covid: there's no plan beyond vaccines

Last month, Boris Johnson argued that the downward trends in Covid cases and hospitalisations meant that it was time to scrap restrictions. Now both are rising. But the government is ending testing and most surveillance studies. Sajid Javid, the health secretary, said that the rise was "to be expected" – though this foresight did not extend to having a plan to deal with the increase in infections. Instead, he dismissed the concern about the new Deltacron variant. The health secretary seemed nonchalant about the threat the virus now posed. Mr Javid may be right that the country has weathered the worst of the pandemic, but Covid is not yet in retreat. The Treasury's penny-pinching means that the UK is abandoning essential defences.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/14/the-guardian-view-on-rising-rates-of-covid-theres-no-plan-beyond-vaccines>

In Africa, a Mix of Shots Drives an Uncertain Covid Vaccination Push

In the tumbledown concrete room that has been commandeered as this sleepy African trading center's Covid-19 vaccination headquarters, a battered freezer holds stacks of boxes with dozens of small glass vials. Stuffed among shots for rotavirus and measles are four brands of Covid vaccines. The vaccination team gives Sinopharm, donated from China, to the youngest and healthiest people because they've been told it's the least effective of the vaccines, said Abdulai Conteh, who runs the operation. AstraZeneca, in which they have more faith, is normally just for people with underlying medical conditions. But the town recently received a big shipment that will expire soon, so the health workers are rushing to use it all up. Johnson & Johnson is given mostly to teachers, as a single shot.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/15/health/covid-vaccines-africa.html>

Scientists call for immediate rollout of Covid jab for UK primary school children

Scientists are calling for the immediate rollout of Covid vaccines to primary-aged children in the UK, as new data suggests that even a single dose of the Pfizer jab helps to prevent older children against infection, and shortens the duration and severity of symptoms if they do get infected. According to the latest data from the Office for National Statistics, 2- to 11-year-olds have the highest rate of infections of any UK age group, with 4.2% testing positive during the week ending 5 March. Secondary-aged children (up to Year 11) have the lowest rate of infections, with 2.4% testing positive.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/scientists-call-for-immediate-rollout-of-covid-jab-for-uk-primary-school-children>

Wilko apologises for saying staff could come to work if they had Covid

In the UK, Wilko has admitted it "got it wrong" for telling staff they could come into work if they tested positive for Covid-19, and apologised after it was criticised for issuing "reckless" guidance amid a new wave of coronavirus infections and hospitalisations. The homeware retail chain, which has 414 stores and 16,000 employees across the UK, sent a memo to staff with guidance on its workplace policy after the government's relaxation of rules as part of its "living with Covid" plan published last month.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/15/wilko-apologies-for-saying-staff-come-to-work-covid>

Masks, PCR tests no longer needed in Namibia as COVID cases fall

The wearing of masks in public in Namibia and negative PCR tests for vaccinated visitors are no longer required, President Hage Geingob said on Tuesday, as active COVID-19 cases fall to just a couple of hundred. Infections peaked at more than 30,000 per month in June 2021 but the southern African country has averaged 14 cases per day during the last seven days, with the total active cases at 222.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/masks-pcr-tests-no-longer-needed-namibia-covid-cases-fall-2022-03-15/>

JPMorgan to resume hiring unvaccinated individuals, drop mask mandate -memo

JPMorgan will resume hiring unvaccinated individuals from April 4, the bank said in an internal memo seen by Reuters on Monday, as it looks to ease rules put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank is also dropping the mask mandate in its offices for all employees, making wearing masks voluntary for both vaccinated and unvaccinated employees, according to the memo.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/jpmorgan-resume-hiring-unvaccinated-individuals-memo-2022-03-14/>

Tokyo will not request extension of COVID restrictions -Nikkei

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government will not request an extension of COVID-19 countermeasures scheduled to end on March 21, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Tuesday. The Japanese government will likely announce on Wednesday whether to lift the so-called quasi-state of emergency curbs currently applied in 18 of Japan's 47 prefectures including the capital, Tokyo, local media have said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/tokyo-will-not-request-extension-covid-19-restrictions-nikkei-2022-03-15/>

Shanghai official rules out need for COVID lockdown at the moment

China's financial hub of Shanghai is not under lockdown, and does not need one "at the moment" to minimise the disruption to people's daily lives from the COVID-19 outbreak, state television quoted a city government official as saying. Although its cases are few by global standards, Shanghai is battling its worst flare-up of infections since China reined in, early in 2020, its first outbreak emerging from the central city of Wuhan.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/shanghai-official-rules-out-need-covid-lockdown-moment-2022-03-15/>

China's New Covid-19 Cases More Than Double as Millions Live Under Lockdowns

China is modifying its Covid-19 playbook amid a surge in cases as it seeks to avoid strains on its healthcare system. Health authorities said patients with no symptoms or only mild ones should go to centralized isolation facilities so that hospitals can focus on more serious cases. The change in the mandatory hospitalization rules that have seen China through most of the pandemic is an acknowledgment that its current approach risks overwhelming hospitals amid a rapid increase in cases. China recorded more than 15,000 symptomatic locally transmitted infections in 28 provinces so far in March, largely due to the spread of the more infectious Omicron variant, Mi Feng, spokesman for China's National Health Commission, told a news conference Tuesday.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-new-covid-19-cases-more-than-double-as-outbreak-spreads-11647336996>

Partisan Exits

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff Tests Positive for Covid-19

Second gentleman Doug Emhoff, the husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, has tested positive for Covid-19, Ms. Harris's spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said in a statement. Ms. Harris tested negative for Covid-19 on Tuesday and will continue to test, Ms. Singh said. The vice president was scheduled to attend an event with President Biden on Tuesday evening, but decided not to participate out of an abundance of caution.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/second-gentlemandoug-emhoff-tests-positive-for-covid-19-11647382602>

COVID-19: Cases up nearly 50% week-on-week - as expert accuses ministers of 'wanting to get rid of data and move on'

A COVID expert has accused ministers of "wanting to get rid of data and move on" - as cases across the UK have spiked by nearly 50% over the last week. In the last seven days, 444,201 coronavirus cases were reported - a 48.1% increase on the previous week. The COVID Infection Survey, carried out by the Office for National Statistics, has also shown an increase in cases across the UK, which Health Secretary Sajid Javid said was "expected" following the easing of restrictions in England in late January.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-cases-up-nearly-50-week-on-week-as-expert-accuses-ministers-of-wanting-to-get-rid-of-data-and-move-on-12566355>

Trucker mandate protest hits DC, snarling local traffic

Hundreds of truckers and other motorists who have been doing rolling protests on highways encircling Washington made their way into the nation's capital Monday, snarling already-congested traffic in a demonstration against COVID-19 mandates and other grievances. The DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency issued a traffic advisory shortly before 2 p.m. that suggested motorists delay travel or use alternative transportation "due to ongoing demonstration activity on I-395, I-695, and I-295." The Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department closed a number of streets and exits off the highways to prevent the protesters from coming into the city. "These rolling road closures are occurring in real-time as they are needed," the announcement said. The protesters, separated intermittently by the usual congested traffic, waved flags and blew their horns as they drove. When asked why they had come to protest, one unidentified couple with Montana license plates answered "freedom."

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-traffic-transportation-eb15a38a85aa863533e0863e2917a79a>

U.S. Senate votes to overturn transit mask mandate; Biden vows veto

The U.S. Senate voted 57 to 40 on Tuesday to overturn a 13-month-old public health order requiring masks on airplanes and other forms of public transportation, drawing a quick veto threat from President Joe Biden. Last week, the White House said it would extend the current COVID-19 mask requirements at airports, train stations, ride share vehicles and other transit modes through April 18 but pledged a new review. The order was set to expire on Friday. The mandate has drawn significant opposition from Republicans who note that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said last week that 98% of Americans live in places where it is safe to ditch indoor masks.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-says-biden-would-veto-bill-overturn-transport-mask-mandate-2022-03-15/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Pfizer-BioNTech seek U.S. OK for second COVID booster for 65 and older

The submission to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration includes data collected in Israel, where a second booster is authorized for many people over age 18. An analysis of data from over a million adults 60 years and older showed rates of confirmed infections and severe illness were lower among individuals who received an additional booster dose of the vaccine administered at least four months

after an initial booster (third) dose compared to those who received only one booster dose, the companies said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-biontech-seek-us-authorization-second-covid-booster-shot-report-2022-03-15/>

Pfizer Asks FDA to Authorize Second Covid-19 Booster Dose

Pfizer Inc. and partner BioNTech SE have asked U.S. health regulators to authorize a second booster dose of their Covid-19 vaccine for people 65 years and older. The companies said Tuesday that they had filed the application. The Food and Drug Administration is expected to make a decision in time for the Biden administration to begin a potential fall vaccine campaign. The FDA has been reviewing data and looking at potentially authorizing a fourth dose of the shot for use in the fall, The Wall Street Journal reported last month. Health authorities have cleared booster doses for children as young as 12 years of age, at least five months after they finished their first round of vaccination.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-asks-fda-to-authorize-second-covid-19-booster-dose-11647384010>

Novavax Covid vaccine now available in Netherlands

The Novavax protein-based vaccine against the coronavirus is now available in the Netherlands. "The Novavax vaccine can be an alternative for people who are hesitant about inoculation with an mRNA or vector vaccine," public health institute RIVM said on its website. People who want to get a Novavax shot can make an appointment with the GGD at telephone number 0800-0174. The Novavax vaccine contains tiny particles with the coronavirus' spike protein, which was counterfeited in the laboratory. It also contains an adjuvant that enhances the body's immune response to this protein. The body will produce antibodies against the spike protein after injection. If the body later comes into contact with SARS-CoV-2, the immune system will recognize the spike protein and produce antibodies to fight it, according to the RIVM.

<https://nltimes.nl/2022/03/14/novavax-covid-vaccine-now-available-netherlands>

Merck's Covid-19 Pill Heavily Used So Far Despite Concerns

A new Covid-19 pill from Merck & Co. and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics LP has been more widely used than expected since rolling out late last year, though regulators and many doctors consider it a last resort. Many doctors and health officials anticipated a rival pill, Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid, would be the Covid-19 drug of choice. Paxlovid was found to be far more effective than Merck-Ridgeback's molnupiravir in clinical trials, and regulators and guidelines recommended using Paxlovid if possible. Prescriptions for the two antivirals have been running about equal since their authorization in December, however. The larger-than-expected use is a sign of the high demand for easy-to-use coronavirus treatments that can be taken at home, especially during surges like the recent Omicron wave.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/mercks-covid-19-pill-heavily-used-so-far-despite-concerns-11647250200>

Scientists link 'severe' Covid-19 to long-term mental health problems

People who suffer from severe Covid-19 symptoms are more likely to have long-term mental health problems, a new study suggests. Higher rates of depression and anxiety have been found in people who were "bedridden" with Covid-19 for more than seven days last year, according to a study published in The Lancet. Scientists, drawing on data from 247,249 people across the UK, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, found that people with coronavirus who were not admitted to hospital were more likely to experience symptoms of depression up to 16 months after diagnosis, compared to those never infected.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-mental-health-study-symptoms-b2035604.html>

A quarter of symptomatic kids hit by long COVID; mRNA shots provide best protection in breast milk

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. One in four kids with COVID develop lingering problems One in four children with COVID-19 symptoms develop "long COVID," according to data pooled from 21 earlier studies conducted in Europe, Asia, Australia and South America. Among the 80,071 children with COVID-19 in the studies, 25% developed symptoms that lasted at least 4-to-12 weeks or new persistent symptoms that appeared within 12 weeks, researchers reported on Sunday on medRxiv ahead of peer review.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/quarter-symptomatic-kids-hit-by-long-covid-mrna-shots-provide-best-protection-2022-03-14/>

Top Pfizer, Moderna execs at odds on need for 4th COVID-19 vaccine dose

Top executives at pandemic juggernauts Pfizer and Moderna are at odds on the need for a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose. One says a second booster is needed "right now," while the other thinks a fourth mRNA shot may only be essential for older adults and the immunocompromised. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla, Ph.D., for his part, thinks another booster is needed as soon as possible. While a third dose of the company's mRNA-based shot Comirnaty offers protection against severe disease, it may not be enough to stave off infection, CEO Albert Bourla told CBS News' "Face the Nation." Based on what Pfizer has seen, it's "necessary" for a "a fourth booster right now," Bourla said over the weekend.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/top-pfizer-moderna-execs-odds-need-fourth-covid-19-vaccine-dose>

Prognosis U.S. Sewer Data Warns of a New Bump in Covid Cases After Lull

A wastewater network that monitors for Covid-19 trends is warning that cases are once again rising in many parts of the U.S., according to an analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data by Bloomberg. More than a third of the CDC's wastewater sample sites across the U.S. showed rising Covid-19 trends in the period ending March 1 to March 10, though reported cases have stayed near a recent low. The number of sites with rising signals of Covid-19 cases is nearly twice what it was during the Feb. 1 to Feb. 10 period, when the wave of omicron-variant cases was fading rapidly. It's not clear how many new infections the signs in the sewage represent and if they will turn into a new wave, or will be just a brief bump on the way down from the last one. In many parts of the country, people are returning back to offices and mask rules have been loosened — factors that can raise transmission.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/are-covid-cases-going-back-up-sewer-data-has-potential-warning>

Coronavirus Resurgence

How Hong Kong went from Zero Covid success story to the world's worst Omicron wave

For a long time, Hong Kong was held up as one of the great success stories of Covid. When the pandemic started, it shut down: it closed its borders. For eight whole months, there was not a single case of Covid-19 detected within it. And life for Hong Kongers was relatively normal, at least from a public health perspective. Restaurants were open, schools were open. There were no lockdowns, no bans on household mixing. Meanwhile, in the UK, tens of thousands were dying; our children were barred from schools; I spent my 40th birthday drinking cans with one friend on a park bench, because larger gatherings were banned. Life was not normal. But now, Hong Kong is living through a disaster. At the absolute peak of Britain's second wave, about 18 people in every million were dying from Covid a day, and our health service was creaking under the strain. On 13 March, in Hong Kong, nearly 38 people out of every million died.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/science/how-hong-kong-went-from-zero-covid-success-story-to-the-worlds-worst-omicron-wave-1517171>

Rise in COVID-19 infections overseas may foreshadow increase in US, experts say

When the coronavirus receded across much of the globe last month and the omicron surge declined,

many Americans were hopeful that was perhaps the signal that the United States was entering a new phase of the pandemic. However, new data indicators, domestically and internationally, suggest that the virus continues to spread. Although official counts of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations are still declining, new wastewater data updated this week from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows the United States may be seeing the beginnings of an uptick in COVID-19 infections. Between Feb. 24 and March 10, 37% of wastewater sites that are monitored by the CDC have seen an increase of 100% or more in the presence of the COVID-19 virus in their wastewater.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/rise-covid-19-infections-overseas-foreshadow-increase-us/story?id=83437924>

China Covid cases hit two-year high with millions in lockdown as outbreak spreads

China has posted a steep jump in daily Covid-19 infections with new cases more than doubling from a day earlier to a two-year high as a virus outbreak expanded rapidly in the north-east. A total of 3,507 domestically transmitted cases with confirmed symptoms were reported on Monday across more than a dozen provinces and municipalities, the National Health Commission said, up from 1,337 a day earlier. Since the coronavirus first emerged in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019, China had successfully suppressed large-scale outbreaks through its strict “zero-Covid” strategy, which involved hard lockdowns that confined huge sections of the population to their homes.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/15/china-covid-cases-hit-two-year-high-with-millions-in-lockdown-as-ou-tbreak-spreads>

What rising Covid-19 infections in the UK and Europe could mean for the US

Two weeks after the United Kingdom dropped its last remaining Covid-19 mitigation measure -- a requirement that people who test positive for the virus isolate for five days -- the country is seeing cases and hospitalizations climb once again. Covid-19 cases were up 48% in the UK last week compared with the week before. Hospitalizations were up 17% over the same period. The country's daily case rate -- about 55,000 a day -- is still less than a third of the Omicron peak, but cases are rising as fast as they were falling just two weeks earlier, when the country removed pandemic-related restrictions.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/15/health/covid-rising-uk-us/index.html>

Germany reports record COVID-19 incidence before easing curbs

Germany reported a record high seven-day incidence of the coronavirus on Tuesday, just days before the planned easing of restrictions. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) registered 198,888 new infections, that is 42,000 higher than a week ago, bringing the total number of infections to more than 17.4 million. The seven-day incidence rose to a new high of 1,585.4 infections per 1,000 people, up from 1,543.0 the day before. Another 283 people died, bringing the total to 125,873 people. This week, the government wants to adopt a slimmed-down law that will significantly reduce restrictions around Germany

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/germany-reports-record-covid-19-incidence-before-easing-curbs-2022-03-15/>

China's soaring COVID case load raises concerns about costs of containment

China posted a steep jump in daily COVID-19 infections on Tuesday, with new cases more than doubling from a day earlier to hit a two-year high, raising concerns about the rising economic costs of its tough measures to contain the disease. A total of 3,507 domestically transmitted cases with confirmed symptoms were reported on Monday across more than a dozen provinces and municipalities, up from 1,337 a day earlier, the National Health Commission said. Most of the new cases were in the northeastern province of Jilin.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-3602-new-confirmed-coronavirus-cases-march-14-vs-1437-day-earlier-2022-03-15/>

China's Covid-19 Surge Shuts Down Plants in Manufacturing Hubs Shenzhen and Changchun

A surge in Covid-19 cases led Chinese manufacturing hubs Shenzhen and Changchun to lock down in recent days, halting production at many electronics and auto factories in the latest threat to the world's battered supply chain. A number of manufacturers including Foxconn, Technology Group, a major assembler of Apple Inc.'s iPhones, said they were halting operations in Shenzhen in compliance with the local government's policy. The government placed the city into lockdown for at least a week and said everyone in the city would have to undergo three rounds of testing after 86 new cases of domestic Covid-19 infections were detected Sunday.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-outbreak-shuts-down-some-china-factories-including-apple-supplier-11647246503?mod=hp_lead_pos7

Nearly Half of Hong Kong's Population Has Likely Caught Covid

About half of Hong Kong's 7.4 million people have already been infected with Covid-19, according to an estimate of the damage caused by the deadly omicron wave that's overwhelmed the city. Researchers at the University of Hong Kong determined that about 3.6 million Hong Kongers caught the disease through March 14. That's up from an estimated 1.8 million infections they concluded had developed through March 7 based on disease modeling and an in-depth analysis of the ongoing outbreak.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-15/nearly-half-of-hong-kong-s-population-has-already-caught-covid>

South Korea reports record deaths amid omicron surge

Article reports that South Korea had its deadliest day yet of the pandemic on Tuesday, with 293 deaths reported in the latest 24 hours, as the country grapples with a record surge in coronavirus infections driven by the fast-moving omicron variant. The 1,196 virus patients in serious or critical conditions were also a new high. Health officials said the country's medical response remains stable following efforts to expand resources, with more than 30% of intensive care units designated for COVID-19 treatment still available. But the strain on the hospital system is expected to increase in coming weeks, considering the time lags between infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-south-korea-pandemics-23161b8f66dc2332c54a573e4f6e2430>

Coronavirus in Israel: Infection coefficient continues to rise

Israel's coronavirus infection coefficient is continuing to rise, the country's Health Ministry reported Tuesday morning. On Monday, 6,521 new coronavirus cases were diagnosed, for a total of 35,810 active cases around the country. As of Tuesday morning, 795 COVID-19 patients were hospitalized, among them 340 who are in serious condition or worse. Included in that count are 170 patients whose condition is critical, and 148 who are on ventilators. Twenty-three (23) other patients are on ECMO (heart and lung) machines.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/323981>

Rise in COVID-19 infections overseas may foreshadow increase in US, experts say

When the coronavirus receded across much of the globe last month and the omicron surge declined, many Americans were hopeful that was perhaps the signal that the United States was entering a new phase of the pandemic. However, new data indicators, domestically and internationally, suggest that the virus continues to spread. Although official counts of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations are still declining, new wastewater data updated this week from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows the United States may be seeing the beginnings of an uptick in COVID-19 infections. Between Feb. 24 and March 10, 37% of wastewater sites that are monitored by the CDC have seen an increase of 100% or more in the presence of the COVID-19 virus in their wastewater.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/rise-covid-19-infections-overseas-foreshadow-increase-us/story?id=83437924>

New Lockdown

Covid: Nearly 30 million people under lockdown as China grapples with worst outbreak in two years

China has put nearly 30 million people under strict lockdown measures as the country recorded a steep rise in new coronavirus infections, which have hit a two-year high. A total of 5,280 new Covid-19 infections were recorded in the country on Tuesday,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/china/china-covid-30-million-lockdown-latest-b2036062.html?src=rss>

China Reports Over 5,000 Covid Cases as More Cities Locked Down

China saw more than 5,000 new Covid-19 infections for the first time since the early days of the pandemic, as outbreaks of the highly contagious omicron variant prompt officials to lock down more cities and impose further restrictions. There were a total of 5,154 new cases Tuesday, of which 1,647 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said. While not a large number if compared globally, it's a significant tally for China which has kept cases low for most of the past two years through a strict Covid Zero strategy that is now being challenged by omicron. More than 4,000 of the infections were in the northeastern province of Jilin, bordering Russia. The region of some 24 million residents was locked down on Monday to try and stymie what has become an explosive outbreak by China standards.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-15/china-reports-over-5-000-covid-cases-as-more-cities-locked-down>

Lockdowns Spread Across China to Contain Outbreak

Fallout from China's race to halt its worsening coronavirus outbreak is growing as authorities order lockdowns and other restrictions across more of the country. All 24 million residents of northeastern Jilin province, which borders Russia and North Korea, were locked down on Monday, the first time since Covid-19 was first detected two years ago in Wuhan that such restrictions have been imposed on an entire province. Shenzhen city began a weeklong lockdown on Monday, closing public transport, nonessential businesses and schools, while companies in Shanghai began shutting down over the weekend. Whether authorities can swiftly end the outbreak will not only test China's pandemic strategies against the more infectious Omicron variant behind the latest wave, but also has major implications for the rest of the world. China's current restrictions have already disrupted global supply chains, including Foxconn Technology Group plants in Shenzhen that make devices for Apple Inc.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/lockdowns-spread-across-china-as-race-to-contain-covid-19-outbreak-intensifies-11647266905?mod=hp_listb_pos2