

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

30th Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

UK police to issue first 20 fines over Downing Street lockdown parties

British police said on Tuesday that 20 fines would be issued over gatherings in Boris Johnson's offices and residence that broke coronavirus lockdown rules, sparking fresh calls for the prime minister to resign.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-issue-first-20-fines-over-lockdown-gatherings-downing-street-2022-03-29/>

U.S. authorizes second COVID booster for Americans 50 and older

U.S. health officials on Tuesday authorized a second COVID-19 booster dose of the two most commonly used COVID-19 vaccines for people age 50 and older, citing data showing waning immunity and the risks posed by Omicron variants of the virus. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration agency said the new boosters - a fourth round of shots for most vaccine recipients - of the Pfizer Inc/BioNTech SE and Moderna Inc vaccines are to be administered at least four months after the previous dose. They are intended to offer more protection against severe disease and hospitalization.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/fda-green-lights-second-booster-pfizerbiontech-moderna-covid-shot-older-2022-03-29/>

World Moves From Shortages to Possible Glut of Covid-19 Vaccines

After racing to build capacity and meet once seemingly insatiable orders for Covid-19 shots, the global vaccine industry is facing waning demand as many late-to-market producers fight over a slowing market. The trend is poised to rein in the blockbuster sales that global pharmaceutical giants from Pfizer Inc. to AstraZeneca Plc saw at the peak of the pandemic. It also stands to create new problems for local manufacturers from India to Indonesia that built mammoth capacity to make shots but are now grappling with excess supply. Even as boosters are likely to keep demand alive for Covid inoculations worldwide, the desperate shortages that existed for much of last year have waned. Instead, in a dramatic reversal, the possibility of a global glut is now looking more likely.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-28/world-moves-from-shortages-to-possible-glut-of-covid-19-vaccines>

Future of Covid memorial wall still uncertain one year after the first heart

Despite the dedication of a team of volunteers who continue to touch up the red hearts and the messages in black pen, the Covid memorial wall is yet to be granted a permanent status and could still be removed. On Tuesday, bereaved families and supporters will be handing a petition with more than 106,000 signatures and counting to 10 Downing Street, calling for the memorial wall to be made permanent. The day will include a silent procession along the length of the wall, as well as a candlelit vigil in the evening. Boris Johnson promised a "commission" on Covid commemoration in May last year, but nothing further has been done, and the prime minister has refused to commit to making the wall permanent.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/29/national-covid-memorial-wall-future-one-year-on>

U.S. eases COVID-19 travel advisory for India

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State Department eased government COVID-19 travel ratings for India and some other countries on Monday. The CDC said had changed

its COVID-19 travel recommendation for India to "Level 1: Low" from "Level 3: High," which urges unvaccinated Americans to avoid travel to those locations. The CDC also lowered Chad, Guinea and Namibia to "Level 1." The State Department on Monday lowered its travel advisory for India to "Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution," reflecting the lower COVID-19 risk, but also cited the risk of "crime and terrorism."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/us-eases-covid-19-travel-advisory-india-2022-03-28/>

Exit Strategies

Biden administration to offer Covid-19 vaccines to migrants

The Biden administration will offer Covid-19 vaccines to migrants taken into custody at the US-Mexico border, according to two sources familiar with the planning, and confirmed by the Department of Homeland Security, as officials prepare for an influx of migrants. The plan, which had earlier been a source of tension at the White House, could extend to thousands of migrants encountered at the US southern border. The Department of Homeland Security will be able to initially provide up to 2,700 vaccines per day, it said in a notice to Congress obtained by CNN, increasing to 6,000 daily by the end of May.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/biden-administration-to-offer-covid-19-vaccines-to-migrants/ar-AAVBiSG>

Moderna's Covid Booster Shot Will Be Offered to South African Health Workers

Moderna Inc.'s coronavirus vaccine will be offered as a booster to some South African health workers, who received either one or two shots of Johnson & Johnson's inoculation as part of a vaccine trial involving almost half a million people. The Moderna shot will be offered to 10,000 health workers in a trial known as Sherpa that is likely to start in the second half of April, Glenda Gray, the co-lead of J&J's vaccine trials in South Africa and president of the South African Medical Research Council. The aim of the study, which will target participants in the earlier Sisonke trial, is to compare how well the Moderna shot works in comparison to Pfizer Inc.'s shot as a boost, Gray said in an interview on Monday.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-28/moderna-booster-shot-to-be-offered-to-south-african-health-staff>

China's patchy vaccine campaign leaves elderly at risk

China's patchy vaccination campaign has left half of its elderly population exposed to a higher risk of severe Covid-19, just as the country tackles surging outbreaks of the infectious Omicron variant in Shanghai and other regions. Shanghai on Monday began a two-phase lockdown of all 26mn of its residents to combat a wave of largely asymptomatic cases that have been rapidly multiplying in the community.

<https://www.ft.com/content/a0dd80f7-3dda-4ea2-bfc2-480c5f10ef06>

Covid-19 spring booster vaccination to begin in coming days

The Covid-19 spring booster vaccination is to begin in Northern Ireland in the coming days. People aged 75 years and over, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 12 years and over with weakened immune systems will be offered a booster dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. The Public Health Agency (PHA) said the spring booster should be offered around six months after an individual received their first booster dose. The agency is now urging those eligible to book an appointment

<https://www.irishnews.com/coronavirus/2022/03/30/news/covid-19-spring-booster-vaccination-to-begin-in-ni-in-coming-days-2627957/>

The world's refugees remain last in line for covid-19 vaccines

Two years into the pandemic, 34.7% of the world's population have not had a single dose of vaccine. For vulnerable groups such as refugees and internally displaced persons—85% of whom are hosted in low and middle income countries—the disparity in comparison with the citizens of the countries

they live in is stark. India, for example, has 500 million unvaccinated people, one of the world's highest numbers. Many of these unvaccinated people are the nation's most marginalised (57% of the eligible population are fully vaccinated).

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o703>

German health minister urges EU to clear 2nd booster for elderly

Germany's health minister said on Tuesday he would urge the European Union to back a fourth COVID-19 shot for people over the age of 60 years to boost immunity in the absence of vaccines that specifically protect against the Omicron variant. Pointing to data from Israel, minister Karl Lauterbach said a recommendation was "urgently necessary" to reduce the risk of death from an infection and that he would raise the issue at a meeting of health ministers in Brussels.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-health-minister-wants-eu-recommend-fourth-covid-shot-2022-03-29/>

Brazil health regulator says time to ease COVID travel restrictions

Brazilian health regulator Anvisa recommended that COVID-19 travel restrictions be eased due to a drop in cases and deaths, requiring only full vaccination and doing away with quarantine for unvaccinated travelers. People entering the country who have not been vaccinated will still need to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test result, but quarantining will be eliminated immediately. Travelers' health declarations used for tracing COVID cases will no longer be required, with immediate effect, while testing for vaccinated travelers will be suspended from May 1, Anvisa said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-health-regulator-says-time-ease-covid-travel-restrictions-2022-03-29/>

Germany speaks out against COVID-19 vaccine patent waiver

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he did not agree with a planned intellectual property waiver for COVID-19 vaccines as patents are a crucial way of encouraging companies to continue pushing ahead with new research. The waiver drafted by the United States, European Union, India and South Africa earlier in March would need formal approval from the WTO's 164 member countries, including Germany, before being adopted

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-speaks-out-against-covid-19-vaccine-patent-waiver-2022-03-28/>

Partisan Exits

Academic on trial for spreading misinformation on Covid vaccines

A professor of clinical pharmacology and a vocal critic of coronavirus containment measures went on trial in the northern port city of Thessaloniki on Tuesday for disseminating misinformation regarding the Covid-19 vaccine. Aristotle University's Dimitris Kouvelas was put under investigation and indicted last year after making claims online indicating that a prominent government official's health problems were a result of his being vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2. In these claims, Kouvelas said that former deputy civil protection minister – and one of the top government officials in the fight against the pandemic – Nikos Hardalias should take the National Organization for Medicines (EOF) to task for approving the coronavirus vaccine, which, he indicated, contributed to the heart attack he suffered in August 2021. The academic, who has gained widespread popularity among anti-vaxxers for his outspoken and often vulgar criticism of Covid restrictions and vaccine mandates, was indicted under new legislation aimed at stemming the dissemination of "fake news."

<https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1180898/academic-on-trial-for-spreading-misinformation-on-covid-vaccines/>

Virtual reality helps reduce COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy can be affected by several factors such as lack of confidence in health authorities and experts who have developed the vaccine, constraints, complacency, the degree to which the personal costs and benefits of the vaccine are weighted, lack of compliance, lack of collective responsibility, and fake news regarding vaccines. However, informing people about community immunity has occasionally been shown to increase intentions for vaccination. Thus, using novel

technologies that can help people understand the benefit of vaccination, as well as the impact of vaccination on other vulnerable individuals, can assist in reducing vaccine hesitancy. A new Scientific Reports study investigates whether intention for vaccination is increased by a gamified immersive virtual reality (VR) experience that shows how community immunity works.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220328/Virtual-reality-helps-reduce-COVID-19-vaccine-hesitancy.aspx>

UK PM has not been notified of any COVID-19 lockdown breach fine, spokesman says

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has not been issued with a fine for COVID regulation breaches at this time, his spokesman told reporters, after police said they had recommended an initial 20 fines be issued over gatherings held in Downing Street. Asked whether Johnson had received a fine, or been told he would be fined, the spokesman told reporters: "No. We've said we will update if that were to occur but our position has not changed."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-has-not-been-notified-any-covid-19-lockdown-breach-fine-spokesman-2022-03-29/>

Continued Lockdown

GM told workers to sleep in factory during China lockdown: report

General Motors is asking workers to sleep on the floors of its Shanghai factories to keep production going during the city's new COVID-19 lockdown, Reuters reported, citing two people familiar with the matter. China, which has pursued a zero-COVID strategy throughout the pandemic, is battling several new outbreaks of COVID-19. The city of Shanghai said Sunday it was locking down half of the city from Monday to Friday while it launched a mass COVID-19 testing drive. The other half of the city is to be locked down for the same period starting April 1. While the lockdowns last, China has told companies based in the zone to enforce a "closed-loop" arrangements, whereby workers live and work in a bubble away from the public, Reuters said.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/gm-told-workers-sleep-on-factory-floors-shanghai-lockdown-report-2022-3>

Capital of China's Jilin province apologises for food shortages due to COVID curbs

The Chinese city of Changchun, capital of the COVID-hit northeastern province of Jilin, on Tuesday apologised to its 8.5 million residents for food shortages related to shutdowns and disruption caused by COVID containment measures. Due to COVID-19, two major wholesale food markets in Changchun have shuttered, leading to a shortfall in food supply, said the city's deputy Communist Party secretary, Liu Renyuan, a problem aggravated by a shortage of workers that has delayed deliveries to homes.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/capital-chinas-jilin-province-apologises-food-shortages-due-covid-curbs-2022-03-29/>

Shanghai tightens COVID lockdown on second day of curbs

China's most populous city tightened the first phase of a two-stage COVID-19 lockdown on Tuesday, asking some residents to stay indoors unless they are getting tested as the number of new daily cases exceeded 4,400. The financial hub of Shanghai, home to 26 million people, is in its second day of a lockdown authorities are imposing by dividing the city roughly along the Huangpu River, splitting the historic centre from the eastern financial and industrial district of Pudong to allow for staggered testing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-tightens-covid-lockdown-screws-again-curbs-enter-day-2-2022-03-29/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Omicron BA.2 Variant Is Dominant Covid-19 Strain in U.S., CDC Estimates

The Omicron BA.2 variant represents more than half of new Covid-19 cases in the U.S., the latest federal estimates show, as signs suggest infections are edging higher again in parts of the Northeast. The region has the highest BA.2 concentrations, including more than 70% in an area

including New York and New Jersey, according to estimates the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released Tuesday. BA.2 has been moving steadily higher for more than a month and represents an estimated 55% of national cases in the week ended March 26, the CDC said. Public-health authorities and experts are watching BA.2 closely, in part because it appears to spread more easily than the version that caused record levels of Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations in the U.S. this winter. BA.2 has fueled new surges in European countries including the U.K., where pandemic trends have often presaged events in the U.S. Parts of Asia, including Hong Kong and Shanghai, are also confronting serious Omicron surges.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-ba-2-variant-is-dominant-in-u-s-cdc-estimates-11648570107?mod=hp_lead_pos2

Sputnik V: How the Russian war has affected Russian vaccines

If Sputnik V once looked like a vital tool for the Kremlin's geopolitical ambition, it now looks like another victim of it. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, both RDIF and Dmitriev are now under Western sanctions. The U.S. Treasury said the sovereign wealth fund is widely considered "a slush fund" for Russian President Vladimir Putin and "emblematic of Russia's broader kleptocracy," while the chief executive was dubbed a "close associate" of the Kremlin leader. In a letter received after the initial publication of this article, the RDIF described the Treasury's accusation as "defamatory."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/29/sputnik-v-vaccine/>

West Lothian's Valneva factory 'could provide UK with Covid vaccines for years to come'

A state-of-the-art vaccine manufacturing facility in West Lothian could play a key role if the UK needs annual vaccines against coronavirus. The chief executive of Valneva, which is commissioning the site in Livingston, said he still hopes to supply the immunisation despite a UK Government contract for one hundred million doses being terminated last year. Thomas Lingelbach says it is one of only a handful worldwide able to make what are called 'inactivated whole virus vaccines'. The CEO is now keeping a close eye on developments at the plant and told STV News this could be vital as covid evolves into the post pandemic era.

<https://news.stv.tv/scotland/west-lothians-valneva-factory-could-provide-uk-with-covid-vaccines-for-years-to-come>

Fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose substantially reduces mortality in the elderly

The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Omicron variant was largely responsible for a resurgence of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in late 2021. In Israel, a campaign to implement a fourth vaccine or second booster was introduced by the Ministry of Health for those at high risk of infection from this variant who had already received three doses of vaccine. To this end, Israel approved a second booster dose on January 2, 2022, for people aged 60 and older, high-risk groups, and healthcare personnel who had received a first booster dose at least four months prior.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220328/Fourth-COVID-19-vaccine-dose-substantially-reduces-mortality-in-the-elderly.aspx>

EU regulator starts reviewing Spanish COVID vaccine booster

The European Union's drug regulator said Tuesday it has begun an accelerated review process for an experimental coronavirus vaccine booster made by the Spanish company Hipra. The European Medicines Agency said in a statement that its evaluation is based on preliminary data from laboratory studies and research in adults that compared Hipra's booster shot to the vaccine made by Pfizer-BioNTech. It said early results suggest the immune response achieved with Hipra "may be effective" against COVID-19, including the hugely infectious omicron variant.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-europe-coronavirus-vaccine-e41cfd7bf9a59248027a18a0c173fa0>

EULAR takes 'precautionary position' in support of third, booster COVID-19 vaccine doses

Citing a lack of available data and time, EULAR has taken a “precautionary position” in support of third and booster COVID-19 vaccine doses for patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. “There are concerns that individuals on certain immunosuppressive or immunomodulatory drugs may not mount an adequate protective response to COVID-19 vaccination,” Robert B.M. Landewé, MD, PhD, of Amsterdam UMC, and colleagues wrote in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. “Data are not currently available to reliably identify who might, or might not, benefit from a third primary dose of a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine. Taking a precautionary position, third primary doses are being recommended by some authorities in selected groups of individuals and EULAR supports this approach.”

<https://www.healio.com/news/rheumatology/20220328/eular-takes-precautionary-position-in-support-of-third-booster-covid19-vaccine-doses>

EC approves AstraZeneca's Evusheld for Covid-19 prevention

The European Commission (EC) has granted marketing authorisation to AstraZeneca’s Evusheld (AZD7442) for Covid-19 pre-exposure prophylaxis, or prevention, in adults and adolescents age 12 years and above. Evusheld is a cocktail of two long-acting antibodies (LAAB), tixagevimab (AZD8895), and cilgavimab (AZD1061). The LAABs are obtained from B-cells of convalescent patients following Covid-19 and attach to particular sites on the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The treatment dose approved for use in the region is 150mg intramuscular doses of tixagevimab and cilgavimab, each, given sequentially.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/ec-astrazeneca-evusheld-covid/>

Specialist nurse appointed for rare Covid-19 condition affecting children

A hospital in London has become one of the first in the UK to appoint a dedicated nurse for a rare inflammatory condition in children linked to Covid-19. Evelina London Children's Hospital has recruited Michael Bell into the role of clinical nurse specialist for paediatric cases

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/children/specialist-nurse-appointed-for-rare-covid-19-condition-affecting-children-29-03-2022/>

Covid-19: Oxygen shortages two years into pandemic highlight pre-covid failures, says WHO

Two years into the covid-19 pandemic, access to oxygen is still a major problem in low and middle income countries, health leaders have warned. The shortages have highlighted the “abject failure” of the global community to develop and build up primary healthcare and universal health coverage over the past 20 years, said Michael Ryan, the World Health Organization’s health emergencies programme executive director. “Covid didn’t cause this, covid uncovered this. Covid laid bare, tore away the bandages from, some very, very old wounds,” Ryan told an Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator briefing. “No one was interested in oxygen,” he said, despite it being vital for the treatment of patients with covid-19 in the early stages of the pandemic. “I went to meeting after meeting and I spoke about oxygen, and nobody was listening because oxygen wasn’t sexy. It wasn’t new. It wasn’t some technological advance that could be delivered to the world. Oxygen was boring, oxygen was old,” Ryan said.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o829>

Premature deaths in elderly due to Covid in England and Wales among worst in the world

Elderly people in England and Wales had the highest rate of premature deaths to Covid-19 among 20 comparable countries, researchers have shown. The study by University of Manchester epidemiologists, published in the *Journal of Global Health*, reveals 5.78 per cent of the over-90s were lost to the disease. In Sweden the figure was 3.82 per cent, Italy 3.18 per cent, Germany 2.46 per cent and France 2.08 per cent. In the Netherlands, the figure for the over 95s was 3.87 per cent. The high mortality rate was largely due to the failure to stop the virus from sweeping through care

homes as older patients were discharged from hospital without being tested. There was a substantial increase in deaths in care homes in England and Wales in the first three months of the pandemic – estimated by other researchers at 79 per cent.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-elderly-premature-deaths-coronavirus-england-among-worst-1545360>

HIV drugs may lower COVID risk; COVID and flu co-infection raises risk of severe illness, death

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. HIV drugs may curb COVID-19 risk. Certain drugs used to treat HIV may have a role in preventing SARS-CoV-2 infections, according to preliminary data that may help explain why people living with the condition have not appeared to be at higher risk for serious COVID-19 despite being generally more vulnerable to infections.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hiv-drugs-may-lower-covid-risk-covid-flu-co-infection-raises-risk-severe-illness-2022-03-28/>

EU starts real-time review of Hipra's COVID vaccine

Europe's drug regulator said on Tuesday it had started a real-time review of Spanish pharmaceutical firm Hipra's COVID-19 vaccine candidate. The decision by the human medicines committee of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to begin the rolling review is based on early results from clinical studies, which compared the immune response to the vaccine with that seen with Pfizer/BioNTech's Comirnaty, the regulator said. The agency did not say when the review is expected to be completed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-starts-real-time-review-hipras-covid-vaccine-2022-03-29/>

Explainer: Omicron 'stealth' COVID variant BA.2 now dominant globally

A sub-variant of the highly transmissible Omicron version of coronavirus known as BA.2 is now dominant worldwide, prompting surges in many countries in Europe and Asia and raising concern over the potential for a new wave in the United States. Below is a summary of what is known about BA.2...

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-stealth-covid-variant-ba2-now-dominant-globally-2022-03-29/>

Explainer: Why are Shanghai's COVID infections nearly all asymptomatic?

Article reports that epidemiologists examining the biggest Chinese outbreak of COVID-19 in two years are trying to ascertain why the proportion of asymptomatic cases is so high, and what it could mean for China's future containment strategy. The number of new confirmed community transmitted cases in the major financial hub of Shanghai reached 4,477 on Tuesday, a record high, but only 2.1% showed symptoms. The share of symptomatic cases over the previous seven days was around 1.6%. Although outbreaks overseas have demonstrated that Omicron was less deadly than its predecessors, with lower levels of hospitalisation, the rate of symptomatic infection was relatively high compared to China's numbers.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/why-are-shanghais-covid-infections-nearly-all-asymptomatic-2022-03-29/>

FDA OKs another Pfizer, Moderna COVID booster for 50 and up

U.S. regulators on Tuesday authorized another COVID-19 booster for people age 50 and older, a step to offer extra protection for the most vulnerable in case the coronavirus rebounds. The Food and Drug Administration's decision opens a fourth dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to those people at least four months after their previous booster. Until now, the FDA had cleared fourth doses only for people 12 and older who have severely weakened immune systems. The agency said this especially fragile group also can get an additional booster, a fifth shot.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-business-health-coronavirus-vaccine-33e81ee1dadd9ff04c136db620aa1ae>

Covid-19 pandemic isn't over for Black Americans, report warns

A searing report released Tuesday by the Black Coalition Against COVID details the immense toll the Covid-19 pandemic has taken — and continues to take — on Black communities, and calls for continued vigilance and action to prevent further losses even as the rest of the nation is eager to move on. The report's authors — physicians and public health and policy experts — note with alarm that even as case rates began to fall sharply across the country earlier this year, the Covid-19 hospitalization rate for Black people was higher than it had been at any time during the pandemic for any racial or ethnic group. For the week ending Jan. 8, 2022, the hospitalization rate for Black Americans was 64 per 100,000 — more than twice the overall rate. Rates for all Americans have since fallen, though they remain much higher for Black people.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/03/29/covid-19-pandemic-isnt-over-for-black-americans-report-warns/>

'A slow-moving glacier': NIH's sluggish and often opaque efforts to study long Covid draw patient, expert ire

The National Institutes of Health is fumbling its first efforts to study long Covid. Fifteen months ago, Congress showered the agency with a massive \$1.2 billion to research the mysterious cases of patients who never fully recover from Covid-19 infections. But so far the NIH has brought in just 3% of the patients it plans to recruit. Critics charge that the NIH's missteps are even bigger: that it is acting without urgency, that it is taking on vague, open-ended research questions rather than testing out therapies or treatments, and that it is not being fully transparent with patient advocates and researchers.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/03/29/nih-long-covid-sluggish-study/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19: Containing BA.2 variant would need 'extreme measures', Donnelly says

The Minister for Health has said the extra transmissibility of the BA.2 variant means “quite extreme measures” would be needed to contain it. Stephen Donnelly is understood to have told an online meeting of Fianna Fáil members on Monday night that there are likely several hundred thousand cases of Covid every week, with daily numbers several times higher than those being tracked by PCR and antigen tests. Sources indicated that Mr Donnelly told the meeting said that the current transmissibility of the variant meant that extremely restrictive measures would be needed, and said that he is told by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) that extra restrictions of this level are not currently advised. This is due to the fact that despite the massive pressure coming onto the hospital system arising from the enormous levels of infection, associated staff absenteeism, and infection prevention and control measures.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/covid-19-containing-ba-2-variant-would-need-extreme-measures-donnelly-says-1.4838091>

UK records another 215,001 Covid-19 cases and 217 deaths as hospitalisations keep rising

The UK has recorded another 215,001 Covid-19 cases and 217 deaths, it was revealed on Monday. The number of cases in the latest update is the second highest since the pandemic began. However figures are Monday are usually much higher than any other weekday as they now include positive tests confirmed over the weekend. The figures show the number of hospital patients with the virus has risen again, reaching 17,685 on Friday. It means a run of daily rises in hospitalisations is continuing, and has now stretched back more than three weeks to March 5, when the figure was 1,0867.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/latest-covid-figures-uk-daily-cases-deaths-pandemic-omicron-variant-wave-b990972.html>

COVID-19: Less than two-thirds of people self-isolating after testing positive for

coronavirus, figures show

The number of people self-isolating after testing positive for coronavirus has fallen "significantly" since it stopped being a legal requirement - with less than two thirds of those who know they have the virus following government advice, figures show. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) spoke to 1,369 people over 18 who tested positive for coronavirus up to two days before 24 February 2022, when the legal requirement to self isolate for at least five days was removed. The respondents were interviewed between 28 February and 8 March 2022 when self-isolation was advised but not legally required. The survey found 876 respondents (64%) were self-isolating after testing positive for COVID.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-less-than-two-thirds-of-people-self-isolating-after-testing-positive-for-coronavirus-figures-show-12577325>

France sees highest daily jump in COVID-19 hospitalisations since Feb 1

French health authorities said on Monday the number of patients hospitalised for COVID-19 over the past 24 hours jumped by 467 to 21,073, the highest daily rise since Feb 1. On a week-on-week basis, the hospitalisations figure is up 1.8% and it has been now increasing for the fifth day running, after a steady decline since early February. COVID-19 infections have been rising again since early March, with the seven-day moving average of new cases at a six-week high of 127,488. Generally, such a trend inversion translates into hospital figures with a two-week delay.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-sees-highest-daily-jump-covid-19-hospitalisations-since-feb-1-2022-03-28/>

Hong Kong reports 7596 new daily coronavirus infections

Hong Kong reported 7,596 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, as daily infections continued a steadily decline and the government prepared to ease some of the city's stringent COVID-19 measures starting in April.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-reports-7596-new-daily-coronavirus-infections-2022-03-29/>

China reports 1293 new COVID cases for March 28 vs 1275 a day earlier

China reported 1,293 confirmed coronavirus cases for March 28, the national health authority said on Tuesday, compared with 1,275 a day earlier. Of the new cases, 1,228 were locally transmitted, the National Health Commission said, versus 1,219 a day earlier. The number of new asymptomatic cases, which China does not classify as confirmed cases, stood at 5,758 compared with 5,134 a day earlier. There were no new deaths, leaving the death toll at 4,638. As of March 28, mainland China had confirmed 145,808 cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-reports-1293-new-covid-cases-march-28-vs-1275-day-earlier-2022-03-29/>