

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

30th May 2022

Lockdown Exit

Testing Positive in Zero-Covid China

Millions of people around the world have had Covid-19 in the last two years. I'm one of a small number of Americans to have had it in zero-Covid China, and with it a taste of a public-health approach that has, over the past two years, locked down large swaths of the world's most populous nation for weeks and even months at a time. I tested positive 19 hours after arriving in Beijing on Feb. 4 to cover figure skating at the 2022 Olympic Games. Under U.S. protocols I would simply have secluded myself in my hotel room. In China, after five days of resistance, I was marched by two strangers into an elevator whose floor was slick with sanitizer, through a lobby cordoned off with yellow police tape, and into an ambulance that would take me to an isolation facility for open-ended detention.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/testing-positive-in-zero-covid-china-11653710461>

Beijing Says Outbreak Under Control as City Eases Movement Curbs

China's capital Beijing will loosen mobility curbs in several districts from Sunday after authorities said its outbreak is under control, while total case numbers in the financial hub of Shanghai continued to decline. Most public transportation services including buses, subways and taxis will resume in three districts including Chaoyang, according to Xu Hejian, a spokesman for the Beijing city government. Shopping centers outside of controlled areas in the city will also be allowed to reopen with capacity limits on the number of people. Chaoyang is home to Beijing's central business district, most foreign embassies and expatriates.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-28/shanghai-reports-covid-case-in-community-total-infections-fall>

Shanghai edges towards COVID reopening as Beijing plans to ease curbs

The Chinese metropolis of Shanghai inched further towards a gradual reopening from two months of grinding COVID-19 lockdown, while officials in Beijing prepared to ease curbs in parts of the capital,

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/shanghai-reports-131-new-asymptomatic-covid-cases-39-symptomatic-cases-may-27-2022-05-28/>

U.S. doctors reconsider Pfizer's Paxlovid for lower-risk COVID patients

Use of Pfizer Inc's Covid-19 antiviral Paxlovid spiked this week, but some doctors are reconsidering the pills for lower-risk patients after a U.S. public health agency warned that symptoms can recur after people complete a course of the drug, and that they should then isolate a second time. More quarantine time "is not a crowd-pleaser," Dr. Sandra Kemmerly, an infectious disease specialist at Ochsner Health in New Orleans, told Reuters. "For those people who really aren't at risk ... I would recommend that they not take it."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-doctors-reconsider-pfizers-paxlovid-lower-risk-covid-patients-2022-05-28/>

Swiss to destroy more than 620000 expired Moderna COVID doses

Switzerland will destroy more than 620,000 expired doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, health officials said on Friday, as demand for the shots drops dramatically. "It was consciously accepted that under certain circumstances too much vaccine was procured for Switzerland's needs," a spokesperson for the Federal Office of Public Health said, confirming a report by broadcaster RTS. "The aim is to protect the population in Switzerland at all times with sufficient quantities of the most

effective vaccines available."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-destroy-more-than-620000-expired-moderna-covid-doses-2022-05-27/>

Beijing to relax COVID curbs in some areas from Sunday

Beijing will ease curbs in some low-risk areas of the Chinese capital on Sunday to allow a return to normal life, city officials said on Saturday. Fangshan and Shunyi districts can shift from work-from-home to normal mode, the officials told a news conference. Public transportation including busses, taxis and subway will resume service in three districts, and shopping malls will be allowed to reopen in some areas.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-relax-covid-curbs-some-areas-sunday-2022-05-28/>

Modelling predicts Western Australia's COVID-19 cases will keep falling as state enters home stretch of Omicron outbreak

Western Australia has officially recorded more than 700,000 COVID-19 cases in the past five months. But modelling by the Telethon Kids Institute and Curtin University suggests the true figure might be closer to 850,000 due to asymptomatic cases and some people who failed to get tested or report their results.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-05-28/experts-confident-wa-has-passed-omicron-peak/101104156>

Cyprus gets rid of required COVID-19 tests for visitors

Travelers to Cyprus will no longer be required to show either a valid COVID-19 vaccination or a recovery certificate and won't need to produce a negative recent COVID-19 test of June 1, the Cypriot government said Friday. The government also decided to abolish a requirement to wear face masks in all indoor areas in Cyprus as of June 1 with the exception of hospitals, nursing homes and other indoor medical facilities. Transport Minister Yiannis Karousos said the decision to lift COVID-19 screening requirements at airports signals the tourism-reliant island nation is ready to return to normality.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-politics-health-cyprus-70711513e3da670dd5d64366c15e0231>

Moderna aims to provide Omicron vaccine in Japan in autumn

A senior Moderna official says the US pharmaceutical company aims to provide a coronavirus vaccine for the Omicron variant as early as this autumn in Japan using the country's new emergency approval system. Paul Burton, chief medical officer at Moderna, had an exclusive interview with NHK in Tokyo on Thursday. He said his company is developing a vaccine that works for the Omicron variant and other strains that have been detected earlier. He said Moderna should have data on the new vaccine "in the next couple of weeks." He said he thinks "it is going to provide strong, long-lasting protection even against Omicron."

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20220527_08/

China's industrial profits slump in April as COVID curbs squeeze firms

Profits at China's industrial firms fell at their fastest pace in two years in April as high raw material prices and supply chain chaos caused by COVID-19 curbs squeezed margins and disrupted factory activity. Profits shrank 8.5% from a year earlier, swinging from a 12.2% gain in March, according to Reuters' calculations based on National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data released on Friday. The slump is the biggest since March 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/chinas-industrial-profit-falls-sharply-april-amid-covid-curbs-2022-05-27/>

Exit Strategies

China Covid News: Beijing Adds More Cases as Anxiety Over Nation's GDP Swells

Beijing police detained 17 employees of a Covid-19 lab for failing to test samples properly, blaming the infractions for worsening the outbreak that's enveloped China's capital for a month. Workers at the lab diluted samples to the point that infections may not be able to be detected, officials said at a

briefing on Friday. It led to cases not being found and spawned the risk of further spread, said Li Ang, an official with the Beijing Municipal Health Commission. The city will tighten supervision over labs, including daily inspections.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-26/beijing-adds-more-cases-as-anxiety-over-china-economy-swells>

North Korea Says Pandemic Situation Being Controlled and Is Improving

The pandemic situation in North Korea is being controlled and is improving, state media Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday, citing a meeting overseen by leader Kim Jong Un. Officials reported the latest number of daily “fever” cases rose by 980. More than 89,500 cases were recorded for the 24 hours ending May 28 at 6 p.m. KCNA said. The country has reported a total of 3.44 million infections since the end of April, with 94% of them having recovered, according to the report.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-29/north-korea-says-pandemic-situation-being-controlled-improving>

Shanghai takes baby steps towards ending COVID lockdown

Shanghai took more gradual steps on Friday towards lifting its COVID-19 lockdown while Beijing was investigating cases where its strict curbs were affecting other medical treatments as China soldiered on with its uneven exit from restrictions. The financial hub and the capital have been hot spots, with a harsh two-month lockdown to arrest a coronavirus spike in Shanghai and tight movement restrictions to stamp out a small but stubborn outbreak in Beijing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-economy-improves-fitfully-end-covid-lockdown-nears-2022-05-27/>

Covid-19 in Bulgaria: Omicron variant found in all 180 samples - NCIPD

Bulgaria’s National Centre for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (NCIPD) said on May 25 that it has found the Omicron coronavirus strain in each of the 180 samples taken from Covid-19 patients in the country. Covid-19 in Bulgaria: Omicron variant found in all 180 samples – NCIPD. The samples had been taken over a period of time ranging from April 1 to May 3 and came from 17 out of Bulgaria’s 28 districts. As of May 9, 10 patients in the NCIPD sample group had died, 22 were in hospital, 27 were undergoing home treatment and 121 had recovered. NCIPD said that the BA.2 subvariant of the Omicron strain was found in 144 cases, or 80 per cent of all samples, compared to 74.7 per cent in the previous sample group sequenced by NCIPD, as announced on May 11. The remaining samples showed evidence of eight distinct subvariants of the Omicron strain of the virus, including seven cases of BA.1.1 and 17 cases of the BA.2.9 subvariant.

<https://sofiaglobe.com/2022/05/25/covid-19-in-bulgaria-omicron-variant-found-in-all-180-samples-ncipd/>

Shanghai lockdown: Residents demand release, and some get it

On a balmy Sunday night, residents of an upscale Shanghai compound took to the streets to decry lockdown restrictions imposed by their community. By the following morning, they were free to leave. The triumphant story quickly spread on chat groups across the Chinese city this week, sparking one question in the minds of those who remained under lockdown: Shouldn’t we do the same? By the end of the week, other groups of residents had confronted management in their complexes, and some had won at least a partial release. While it’s unclear how widespread they are, the incidents reflect the frustration that has built up after more than seven weeks of lockdown, even as the number of new daily cases has fallen to a few hundred in a city of 25 million people.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-china-shanghai-14dfea8660192cf6ec30ab4025e438ae>

JBS U.S. units to adopt pandemic response plans after COVID outbreaks

Subsidiaries of meat processor JBS USA LLC have agreed to implement infectious disease preparedness plans at seven U.S. plants, in the wake of a U.S. congressional report finding that the industry largely failed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among workers. The agreement was

announced on Friday by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which said the companies will work with teams of outside experts to develop and implement new policies on engineering, ventilation, visitor screening, cleaning, and personal protective equipment.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/jbs-us-units-adopt-pandemic-response-plans-after-covid-outbreaks-2022-05-27/>

U.S. extends tariff exclusions on Chinese COVID-19 medical products

The U.S. Trade Representative's office on Friday said it extended tariff exclusions on Chinese-made medical products needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic for another six months, to Nov. 30. The exclusions from tariffs of up to 25% imposed by former President Donald Trump's administration were granted in 2020 and were subsequently extended, but were due to expire on May 31, USTR said. Products affected by the extension include face masks, surgical gloves, hospital gowns, and other related products and devices.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/us-extends-tariff-exclusions-chinese-covid-19-medical-products-2022-05-27/>

Global firms warn of sluggish China demand due to lengthy COVID curbs

Two months into harsh COVID-19 lockdowns that have choked global supply chains, China's economy is staggering back to its feet, but businesses from retailers to chipmakers are warning of slow sales as consumers in the country slam the brakes on spending. Car sales in the world's largest auto market have slowed dramatically, gamers are buying fewer consoles, and people are unwilling to replace their existing smartphones, laptops and TVs, as prolonged COVID curbs crimp spending power and put more people out of jobs.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/global-firms-warn-sluggish-china-demand-due-lengthy-covid-curbs-2022-05-26/>

Shanghai edges towards COVID reopening as Beijing plans to ease curbs

The Chinese metropolis of Shanghai inched further towards a gradual reopening from two months of grinding COVID-19 lockdown, while officials in Beijing prepared to ease curbs in parts of the capital, saying on Saturday its outbreak was under control. Shanghai aims to essentially end its lockdown from Wednesday after relaxing restrictions over the last week. More people have been allowed out of their homes, and more businesses permitted to reopen, though most residents remain largely confined to their housing compounds, with shops mainly limited to deliveries.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/shanghai-reports-131-new-asymptomatic-covid-cases-39-symptomatic-cases-may-27-2022-05-28/>

Partisan Exits

UK ministerial code updated to set out possible sanctions for breaches

British ministers who breach the government's code of conduct will not be expected to resign, an official document published on Friday said with an updated version of the rule book setting out a range of alternative sanctions. Behaviour at the heart of government is under intense scrutiny after a series of scandals - including several illegal parties in Prime Minister Boris Johnson's offices during the COVID-19 lockdown. The policy paper, published alongside the latest version of the Ministerial Code, said it was "disproportionate to expect that any breach, however minor, should lead automatically to resignation or dismissal"

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-government-makes-changes-ministerial-code-conduct-2022-05-27/>

Covid 19 Omicron outbreak: Ashley Bloomfield tests positive for virus

Director-general of health Dr Ashley Bloomfield has tested positive for Covid-19. The Ministry of Health confirmed Bloomfield tested positive while attending the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. He tested positive on Thursday and is now self-isolating in Geneva. "This will mean a delay in his return to New Zealand. He is experiencing mild symptoms." Bloomfield was attending the Assembly with Health Minister Andrew Little, who left Geneva earlier this week. Both were following all appropriate health precautions, the ministry said. The World Health Assembly is

described as the World Health Organisation's decision-making body, where the WHO's work is reviewed and new tasks assigned.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/covid-19-omicron-outbreak-ashley-bloomfield-tests-positive-for-virus/IPWRGYGZKSWF7G242TYX7NH7J/>

Beijing city offers elderly COVID shot-related health insurance to ease hesitancy

China's capital is offering elderly residents state-backed insurance for "medical accidents" linked to COVID-19 shots to ease vaccination hesitancy among those most vulnerable, as Beijing ramps up inoculations during its worst outbreak. Chinese officials have pointed to relatively lower vaccination rates among the elderly as a key weakness in its "dynamic zero-COVID" strategy. The city of 22 million people had fully inoculated 97.7% of its adult residents as of September last year, but only 80.6% of people aged 60 and over had received their first dose by mid-April this year, according to city officials.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-city-offers-elderly-covid-shot-related-health-insurance-ease-hesitancy-2022-05-27/>

Continued Lockdown

No work and nowhere to live: a rural migrant's ordeal in locked-down Shanghai

When Shanghai began its draconian COVID-19 lockdown two months ago, the French restaurant where Sun Wu waited tables closed and the 22-year-old, like countless other rural migrants, lost his job. To make ends meet, Sun helped sort government deliveries for residents under lockdown, earning 250 yuan (\$38) a day and moving from a dormitory to live in the warehouse where he worked as required by COVID rules

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/no-work-nowhere-live-rural-migrants-ordeal-locked-down-shanghai-2022-05-27/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Covid-19 and mRNA technology are helping Africa fix its vaccine problems

After the disastrous effect of vaccine nationalism on access in Africa, boosting local production is key to preventing a repeat in future pandemics. WHO's new mRNA vaccine hub is at the forefront, report Emma Bryce and Sandy Ong In June 2021, the World Health Organization selected South African biotech company Afrigen to be part of the "hub" where mRNA technology—which underpins the most effective covid-19 vaccines—would be developed and shared with other lower and middle income countries.¹ More than 15 manufacturers ("spokes") have been named so far, almost half located in Africa.² For the world's second largest continent, by size and population, this initiative has come not a moment too soon. Africa uses one quarter of global vaccines but produces just 1%³—a shortage that left it wrong footed as covid-19 swept the globe and rich nations hoarded vaccine supplies.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o1196>

U.S. doctors reconsider Pfizer's Paxlovid for lower-risk COVID patients

Use of Pfizer Inc's COVID-19 antiviral Paxlovid spiked this week, but some doctors are reconsidering the pills for lower-risk patients after a U.S. public health agency warned that symptoms can recur after people complete a course of the drug, and that they should then isolate a second time. More quarantine time "is not a crowd-pleaser," Dr. Sandra Kemmerly, an infectious disease specialist at Ochsner Health in New Orleans, told Reuters. "For those people who really aren't at risk ... I would recommend that they not take it."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-doctors-reconsider-pfizers-paxlovid-lower-risk-covid-patients-2022-05-28/>

Previous COVID-19 or MIS-C does not protect kids from omicron, study finds

Research drawing on the national Overcoming COVID-19 study, led by Boston Children's Hospital,

and the hospital's own Taking On COVID-19 Together Group provides evidence that children who previously had COVID-19 (or the inflammatory condition MIS-C) are not protected against the newer omicron variant. The researchers obtained blood samples from 62 children and adolescents hospitalized with severe COVID-19, 65 children and adolescents hospitalized with MIS-C, and 50 outpatients who had recovered from mild COVID-19. All the samples were taken during 2020 and early 2021, before the emergence of the omicron variant. The researchers obtained blood samples from 62 children and adolescents hospitalized with severe COVID-19, 65 children and adolescents hospitalized with MIS-C, and 50 outpatients who had recovered from mild COVID-19. All the samples were taken during 2020 and early 2021, before the emergence of the omicron variant.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-05-previous-covid-mis-c-kids-omicron.html>

Exploring antigenic traits of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron BA.5 and BA.4 subvariants

SARS-CoV-2 mutants have emerged constantly throughout the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The SARS-CoV-2 Omicron BA.2 and BA.1 lineages appeared in late November 2021 in South Africa and harbor a substantial antigenic gap from prior SARS-CoV-2 variants and existing vaccine strains, yet a minor antigenic distance between each other. BA.4 and BA.5, the most recent SARS-CoV-2 Omicron mutants to appear, were initially discovered in Southern Africa, where they are causing the present wave of SARS-CoV-2 infection. In addition, the Omicron BA.5 and BA.4 sublineage cases were elevating quickly in various European nations. BA.5 and BA.4 encode similar spike (S) proteins and are more closely associated with BA.2. They share multiple mutations with BA.2, including Δ69-70, F486V, and L452R, but neither has the Q493R alteration compared to BA.2.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220527/Exploring-antigenic-traits-of-SARS-CoV-2-Omicron-BA5-and-BA4-subvariants.aspx>

Scientists identify 'trigger molecule' for Covid-related changes to smell

Scientists have identified the "trigger molecule" that makes pleasant aromas smell like burning rubbish or sewage in people whose sense of smell is disrupted by Covid. The loss of smell is a defining symptom of Covid-19, with about 18% of adults in the UK estimated to have been affected. Some people also experience disturbances in their sense of smell – a condition known as parosmia – but the biological basis for this has remained a mystery. Now scientists have identified a highly potent odour molecule that appears to be a trigger for the sense of disgust experienced by many of those with parosmia. The molecule, called 2-furanmethanethiol, found in coffee, was described by those with a normal sense of smell as being coffee- or popcorn-like, but those with parosmia typically described its scent as disgusting, repulsive or dirty.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/25/scientists-identify-trigger-molecule-for-covid-related-changes-to-smell>

Nasal COVID-19 vaccines help the body prepare for infection right where it starts - in your nose and throat

Imagine inhaling just a few drops of liquid or mist to get protected from COVID-19. That is the idea behind nasal COVID-19 vaccines, and they have been getting a lot of attention recently as a spray or liquid. These nasal vaccines would be based on the same technology as normal vaccines given by injection. But as Mayuresh Abhyankar, a University of Virginia researcher who studies infectious diseases and works on nasal vaccines, explains, vaccinating someone right where the coronavirus is likely to start its attack comes with many immunological benefits.

<https://theconversation.com/nasal-covid-19-vaccines-help-the-body-prepare-for-infection-right-where-it-starts-in-your-nose-and-throat-183790>

Covid-19 news: Reinfection eight times higher with omicron than delta

When the omicron variant was dominant in the UK, the risk of reinfection was about eight times higher than when the delta variant prevailed. In the UK, the risk of being reinfected with covid-19

was considerably more likely when the omicron variant was dominant, from 20 December 2021 to 13 May 2022, compared with when the delta variant was surging, defined as 17 May to 19 December 2021, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The finding is part of the ONS' Coronavirus Infection Survey, which measures how many people are testing positive for covid-19 and the prevalence of antibodies against the virus across the UK.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-reinfection-eight-times-higher-with-omicron-than-delta/>

Dominant coronavirus mutant contains ghost of pandemic past

The coronavirus mutant that is now dominant in the United States is a member of the omicron family but scientists say it spreads faster than its omicron predecessors, is adept at escaping immunity and might possibly cause more serious disease. Why? Because it combines properties of both omicron and delta, the nation's dominant variant in the middle of last year. A genetic trait that harkens back to the pandemic's past, known as a "delta mutation," appears to allow the virus "to escape pre-existing immunity from vaccination and prior infection, especially if you were infected in the omicron wave," said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist in Texas. That's because the original omicron strain that swept the world didn't have the mutation.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-united-states-pandemics-72462053f8d60fd548cf34377864100b>

First steps in reforming global health emergency rules agreed at WHO meeting

Countries have agreed to an initial U.S.-led push to reform of the rules around disease outbreaks, known as the International Health Regulations, after early opposition from Africa and others was overcome this week, sources told Reuters on Friday. The amendments, once confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO) assembly, are one of a handful of concrete outcomes from a meeting seen as a once-in-a-generation chance for the U.N. health agency to strengthen its role following some 15 million deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reform sought by Washington and backed by others like Japan and the European Union is a first step in a broader reform of the IHR, which set out countries' legal obligations around disease outbreaks, expected to take up to two years.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/first-steps-reforming-global-health-emergency-rules-agreed-who-meeting-sources-2022-05-27/>

Sotrovimab drives SARS-CoV-2 omicron variant evolution in immunocompromised patients

Sotrovimab is a monoclonal antibody used as monotherapy in outpatients at risk of developing severe COVID-19 disease. Indications include patients with respiratory, cardiac, metabolic, and immunosuppression comorbidities. Rockett and colleagues¹ have shown that, among 100 patients infected with the delta (B.1.617.2) variant and treated with sotrovimab monotherapy, four were immunocompromised and rapidly developed resistant mutations in the spike protein at positions 337 or 340, or both. These mutations are associated with prolonged excretion and in-vitro resistance.^{1, 2} Given that sotrovimab is one of the few monoclonal antibodies that retains efficacy against the widely circulating omicron BA.1 sublineage, monitoring the prevalence of these mutations is crucial.³

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(22\)00120-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(22)00120-3/fulltext)

Study: Lingering cough, fatigue more common in Omicron patients

Patients suffering from COVID-19 aftereffects were more likely to have persistent coughs and fatigue if they were infected with the Omicron variant instead of the Delta or other strains, a survey showed. The survey by the Tokyo metropolitan government was based largely on data collected from eight hospitals run by the metropolitan government or the Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Hospitals Corporation. These hospitals offer telephone consultations to patients experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19. The Tokyo Center for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention analyzed consultation

records for 2,039 patients who tested positive for the Omicron variant between January and April.

<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14630744>

The Best and Worst Places to Be in a World Divided Over Covid

Most of the world is now living alongside Covid-19, with the omicron variant penetrating parts of the globe that avoided the worst of the early pandemic, triggering record waves in places like New Zealand and Taiwan. In Europe and North America, while life has largely normalized, there's still a constant stream of Covid fatalities—especially in the US and UK. The ability to open up with low levels of death is why Norway retains the No. 1 position in Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking for a third month. A 91% vaccination rate in adults has helped the Nordic country keep its fatality rate low, despite a consistently circulating virus. Ireland comes in second in May, while Denmark overtakes the United Arab Emirates for third as it emerges from an omicron-fueled wave.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/covid-resilience-ranking/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 infections continue to fall in much of UK but rise in Scotland

Covid-19 infections are continuing to fall in most parts of the UK but have risen slightly in Scotland, figures show. A total of 1.1 million people in private households across the UK are estimated to have had the virus in the week to 21 May, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is down from 1.3 million the previous week and is the lowest estimate for the whole country since the end of November 2021, when virus levels were just starting to rise due to the spread of the original Omicron variant. Total infections have now fallen by 78 per cent since the peak of the recent BA.2 Omicron wave in late March, when a record 4.9 million were estimated to have Covid-19.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/scotland-office-for-national-statistics-northern-ireland-mark-drakeford-omicron-b2088854.html>

North Korea tests rivers, air, garbage as anti-COVID efforts gather steam

North Korean health officials are testing rivers, lakes, the air and household wastewater and garbage for the coronavirus as the country intensifies its fight against its first outbreak, state media said on Friday. The isolated country has been in a heated battle against an unprecedented COVID wave since declaring a state of emergency and imposing a nationwide lockdown this month, fuelling concerns about a lack of vaccines, medical supplies and food shortages.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nkorea-reports-100460-people-with-fever-symptoms-one-new-death-kcna-2022-05-26/>

North Korea stockpiled Chinese masks, vaccines before reporting COVID outbreak

In the months before it acknowledged its first official COVID-19 outbreak, North Korea suddenly imported millions of face masks, 1,000 ventilators, and possibly vaccines from China, trade data released by Beijing showed. Two weeks ago state media revealed the outbreak, fuelling concerns about a lack of vaccines, medical supplies and food shortages. Chinese data show that even before that announcement, the North had begun stocking up.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-stockpiled-chinese-masks-vaccines-before-reporting-covid-19-outbreak-2022-05-27/>

China reports 362 new COVID cases for May 27 vs 444 a day earlier

Mainland China reported 362 new coronavirus cases on May 27, of which 96 were symptomatic and 266 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Saturday. That compares with 444 new cases a day earlier - 102 symptomatic and 342 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There were no new deaths, leaving the death toll at 5,226. As of May 27, mainland China had confirmed 223,933 cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/china-reports-362-new-covid-cases-may-27-vs-444-da>

[y-earlier-2022-05-28/](#)

North Korea says new fever cases under 100000 as virus fight heats up

North Korea's daily fever cases dropped to below 100,000 for the first time, state media said on Saturday, less than three weeks after the country's first acknowledgement of a COVID-19 outbreak. The isolated country has been in a heated battle against an unprecedented COVID wave since declaring a state of emergency and imposing a nationwide lockdown this month, fuelling concerns about lack of vaccines, medical supplies and food shortages.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nkorea-reports-88520-more-people-with-fever-symptoms-amid-covid-outbreak-kcna-2022-05-27/>

Taiwan's COVID cases reach plateau, government says

The COVID-19 pandemic in Taiwan has reached a plateau, with cases at a high but stable level, the government said on Friday, as it maintained a policy of gradually easing restrictions and letting the island live with the virus. Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said infections could stay near the current level for a while before declining. He has previously forecast a peak could appear in late May. The more than 94,800 cases and 126 COVID-related deaths reported for the latest 24 hours were both records, but Chen pointed to the trend.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwans-covid-19-cases-reach-plateau-government-2022-05-27/>

Chinese province neighbouring North Korea reports border area COVID cases

Border areas in China's northeastern province of Jilin, which shares a long frontier with coronavirus-hit North Korea, reported domestically transmitted COVID-19 infections of unknown origin, a Chinese health official said on Friday. The outbreak had shown a trend of spreading from border areas to inland areas, Lei Zhenglong, of China's National Health Commission, told a news briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-province-neighbouring-north-korea-reports-border-area-covid-cases-2022-05-27/>