

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 27th Jan 2021

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### News Highlights

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#### **Border control in New Zealand on the cards for most of 2021**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said New Zealand faces tougher border restriction for most of the year. [This is after the country reported its first case of community spread Covid-19 in several months.](#) A vaccine may be approved in the country as early as next week. However, authorities will need confidence that those who receive a shot cannot pass the virus on to others and for enough of the population to be vaccinated before restrictions can be loosened.

#### **EU export controls proposed**

A proposed register of vaccine exports in the EU has won Germany's endorsement. [The announcement by AstraZeneca of markedly fewer vaccine doses being delivered in the first quarter stoked some anger in the bloc and led to talk about export control proposals.](#) However, in the UK, minister [Nadhim Zahawi expressed confidence that the Pfizer vaccine doses on order from its Belgian factory](#) will arrive on time, despite such proposals.

#### **UK exceeds 100,000 deaths**

The death toll due to Covid-19 in the UK now exceeds 100,000. Prime Minister Boris Johnson expressed condolences, [He said he took 'full responsibility for everything that the government has done,' but insisted 'we truly did everything that we could and continue to do everything that we can,](#) to minimise loss of life and to minimise suffering.' He said an inquiry into the government's handling of the pandemic will take place.

#### **AstraZeneca vaccine 'eight percent' efficacy claim roundly repudiated**

The German health ministry has [disputed claims that the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University is only eight percent effective among those over 65.](#) Media reports in Germany cited anonymous government members claiming the vaccine showed low rates of efficacy. The ministry said there is no data to support such a claim. [An AstraZeneca spokesperson chimed in saying the reports 'are completely incorrect,' and pointed to data published in The Lancet](#) to rebut the claims.

### Lockdown Exit

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#### **California ends wide lockdown as Covid hospital strain eases**

California lifted blanket "stay-at-home" orders across the US state Monday, paving the way for activities including outdoor dining to return even in worst-hit regions as the pandemic's strain on hospitals begins to ease. The western state has suffered one of the nation's worst winter Covid spikes, with hospital intensive care units overwhelmed, ambulances backed up for hours at a time, and cases more than doubling since December to over three million. The "stay-at-home" measures were ordered for some 20 million people in southern and central California since December 3, but public health director Tomas Aragon said the state was now "turning a critical corner."

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210125-california-ends-wide-lockdown-as-covid-hospital-strain-eases>

## **New Zealand may approve COVID-19 vaccine next week, start general vaccinations mid-year**

New Zealand may approve a COVID-19 vaccine as early as next week, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Tuesday, a day after the country confirmed its first case of the new coronavirus in the community in months. "We're making swift progress towards vaccinating New Zealanders against the virus, but we're also absolutely committed to ensuring the vaccines are safe and effective," Ardern said in a statement. The recent community case, in a woman who returned to New Zealand on Dec. 30 and had tested positive for the South African strain of the virus after leaving a two-week mandatory quarantine, led Australia to immediately suspend a travel bubble with New Zealand for 72 hours. Pressure has been mounting on Ardern's government to vaccinate the population, but New Zealand has repeatedly said the process will not start for months.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-newzealand/new-zealand-may-approve-covid-19-vaccine-next-week-start-general-vaccinations-mid-year-idUSL1N2K105A>

## **New Zealand's borders may stay shut for most of the year as Covid-19 rages on, PM Ardern says**

New Zealand's borders will remain closed for most of this year as the Covid-19 pandemic rages on, but the country will pursue travel arrangements with neighbouring Australia and other Pacific nations, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Tuesday. Medical authorities, meanwhile, may approve a Covid-19 vaccine as early as next week, Ardern said, as pressure mounts for a start to vaccinations after the country confirmed its first case of the new coronavirus in the community in months. "Given the risks in the world around us and the uncertainty of the global rollout of the vaccine, we can expect our borders to be impacted for much of this year," Ardern said

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/new-zealand-s-borders-may-stay-shut-for-most-of-the-year-as-covid-19-rages-on-pm-ardern-says/ar-BB1d63mC>

## **The help firms will get if there is another Covid lockdown**

In New Zealand, most businesses would dread going into another Covid lockdown, but the Government has planned ahead what financial support would be available if the worst happens. Finance Minister Grant Robertson set out the assistance that would be offered "next time around" before Christmas. And while wage subsidies would again do the heavy lifting when it came to propping up the economy, some of the help would be new.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/124054723/the-help-firms-will-get-if-there-is-another-covid-lockdown>

## **'Treat every case like a murder': How New Zealand-like Zero Covid approach could work in Ireland**

The calls for a zero-Covid approach in Ireland are growing louder, and the Government may soon be forced to act. As images from packed festivals and sports events in New Zealand made their way to Ireland, where it is illegal to travel further than 5km from home and household visits are banned, the calls to put an end to rolling lockdowns have grown more desperate. Public health expert Dr Tomás Ryan explained how a Zero Covid approach could work in Ireland should it be brought in. Stating that the approach is "perfectly realistic", Dr Ryan said we have a choice of "taking control of our situation or [choosing] to live in rolling lockdowns or permanent lockdown for the rest of 2021". In order for Ireland to live Covid-free, Dr Ryan said, "We need three things. We need to chase, we need to crush, and we need to contain the virus."

<https://www.irishpost.com/news/treat-every-case-like-a-murder-expert-explains-how-new-zealand-like-zero-covid-approach-could-work-in-ireland-202331>

## **Coronavirus Covid 19: Auckland Mayor Phil Goff calls for council involvement in local lockdowns**

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff does not want Wellington running the whole show when local lockdowns

are imposed for Covid-19. The former Labour MP is urging his colleagues in Parliament to break the shackles of centralised bureaucracy and bring local councils to the table. He would like to see a multi-agency "command centre" set up working with Cabinet ministers and local councils when a local outbreak occurs.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/coronavirus-covid-19-auckland-mayor-phil-goff-calls-for-council-involvement-in-local-lockdowns/6L3CPF2D35QNC425FBUPVKTR2M/>

### **'No system is perfect': Siouxsie Wiles on New Zealand's fight against Covid complacency**

Last January Siouxsie Wiles was a microbiologist at the University of Auckland, specialising in the scientific possibilities of bioluminescence, as well as a widely awarded media commentator. Twelve months later, Wiles is New Zealand's most famous scientist (at least its most visible, thanks to her trademark pink hair) and a lynchpin of its pandemic success, having been tireless and ever-present in her efforts to explain how the virus spreads. At her peak she was doing 20 to 30 interviews a day. But while many might see her as a figure of 2020, for Wiles the threat remains very much at hand. Though New Zealand's border restrictions have been bolstered since the new variant of coronavirus took off in December, a steady stream of cases have been confirmed in arrivals in quarantine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/no-system-is-perfect-siouxsie-wiles-on-new-zealands-fight-against-covid-complacency>

### **Johnson & Johnson on track for 100 million vaccine doses by end of June, bolstering US supply | TheHill**

Johnson & Johnson said Tuesday that it is on track to meet its target of 100 million coronavirus vaccine doses for the United States by the end of June, one of a string of confident announcements on vaccine supply. Johnson & Johnson's vaccine trial is being closely watched as it has the potential to produce a third vaccine for the U.S., helping further an increase in available doses. The company said Tuesday that it expects results from its Phase 3 trial "by early next week." If the vaccine proves to be safe and effective and is authorized in the coming weeks, the company's chief financial officer, Joseph Wolk, told CNBC, "We're very confident and on track to meet all of our commitments, which would include 100 million doses to the U.S. by the end of June."

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/535853-johnson-johnson-on-track-for-100-million-vaccine-doses-by-end-of-june>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **White House expected to tell governors they will get more coronavirus vaccine doses starting next week**

The Biden administration said Tuesday it will seek to buy another 200 million doses of the two coronavirus vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use in the United States. The purchases would increase available supply by 50 percent, bringing the total to 600 million doses by this summer. Because both products — one developed by Pfizer and German company BioNTech and the other by Moderna — are two-dose regimens, that would be enough to fully vaccinate 300 million people. An estimated 260 million people in the United States are currently considered eligible to receive a coronavirus vaccine, though Pfizer and Moderna have initiated trials for children as young as 12, the results of which could expand the pool

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/01/26/vaccine-supply-biden/>

### **EU threatens to impose export controls on Covid vaccines**

Prime minister Boris Johnson has pledged to launch an inquiry into Britain's handling of the pandemic, but insisted on Tuesday evening that "we truly did everything that we could, and continue to do everything that we can, to minimise [the] loss of life and to minimise suffering." However, for many of those scientists who either advised the government or watched on helplessly from the sidelines as their warnings went unheeded, there is no excusing the realities of the past year and the scale of mortality that has swept across the UK.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-uk-news-live-coronavirus-vaccine-test-update-b1792643.html>

### **Covid vaccine: Scottish GPs say vaccination target for over-70s is a 'big ask'**

Coronavirus vaccination centres around Scotland will have to be operating at "full steam" in a matter of days for all over-70s to given their first dose on time, doctors have warned. Dr Andrew Buist, chair of the British Medical Association's Scottish GPs group, described the official target of reaching this age group by mid-February as a "big ask". While he said he was very confident that the over-80s would receive their first dose by the end of next week as planned, he was much less certain about the over-70s target.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/scotland/covid-vaccine-scotland-gps-vaccination-target-over-70s-big-ask-845612>

### **People 75 and older can sign up for coronavirus vaccine beginning Wednesday**

Massachusetts embarks on the next stage of its COVID-19 vaccination program on Wednesday, extending eligibility to people 75 and older, the population most devastated by the coronavirus, amid frustration over the pace and priority of distribution. As the Biden administration announced plans to buy 200 million more doses of the vaccine and increase weekly shipments to states, Massachusetts officials said residents 75 and over could now register for appointments at scores of immunization sites across the state. The first shots for this age cohort, approximately 450,000 people, will begin Monday. "By the end of this week, we will have 103 vaccination sites open to the public with the ability to administer about 240,000 doses each week," Governor Charlie Baker said Tuesday in his State of the Commonwealth address. "And by mid-February, we will have 165 public sites, including seven mass vaccination sites, and all together, we will have the capacity to administer approximately 305,000 doses every week.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/01/26/nation/people-75-older-can-sign-up-coronavirus-vaccine-beginning-wednesday/>

### **Wales reveals how much coronavirus vaccine is being wasted**

The Welsh Government has published detail for how much coronavirus vaccine is being wasted. In total 0.3% of the vaccine distributed in Wales has been wasted - which is equivalent to around 870 of the 290,000 coronavirus doses that have so far been administered in Wales. See the daily update here. However Wales will not be releasing figures on coronavirus vaccine stock and supply levels - despite the health minister stating they would be in yesterday's press conference. Vaughan Gething said on Monday that information would be put in the public domain about the amount of vaccines Wales had received, the amount supplied and the amount of vaccine wastage. This information is in addition to the data Public Health Wales now releases on a daily basis showing the number of people being immunised against Covid-19 and their priority category. But the Welsh Government has now said that figures on the amount of doses supplied to Wales will not be released. It said that the UK Government has asked that vaccine stock data is not published "due to current commercial sensitivities".

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/wales-reveals-how-much-coronavirus-19700809>

### **Covid-19: Plans to vaccinate all over-65s by end of February**

The Department of Health has said it plans to vaccinate everyone aged over 65 in Northern Ireland by the end of February. Both GP practices and regional vaccination centres will be used to vaccinate members of the public from prioritised groups. People aged between 65 and 69 in NI are to be vaccinated at their local vaccination centre. Until now only health care workers have been vaccinated at these locations. As of Monday, 159,642 people in Northern Ireland had received a first coronavirus vaccine dose. On Tuesday, the Department of Health daily figures reported an additional 16 Covid-19 related deaths and 550 new cases, bringing the total number of positive tests to 101,291.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-55817436>

### **Covid-19 in Scotland: Half of over-80s have had first vaccine dose**

More than half of people over 80 have received their first dose of a coronavirus vaccine. The 51 per cent figure announced by Scottish ministers is significantly lower than the UK-wide average of 78.7

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-in-scotland-half-of-over-80s-have-had-first-vaccine-dose-m0mvfxzrr>

### **Four in five over-80s have had first COVID-19 jab despite weekend slump in vaccinations**

Health and social care secretary Matt Hancock said on 25 February that 78.7% of people aged over 80 have now received a dose of COVID-19 vaccine - up from 60% around a week ago. UK-wide there are 3.3m people aged over 80 - suggesting that around 2.6m in this cohort have had at least one dose of vaccine. Of the 6.6m total first-dose COVID-19 jabs administered UK-wide to date, around 40% have gone to over-80s. NHS officials have said around three quarters of jabs in England have been administered by GP-led local vaccination sites.

<http://www.gponline.com/four-five-over-80s-first-covid-19-jab-despite-weekend-slump-vaccinations/article/1705476>

### **Davos highlights: Merkel appeals for international co-operation to overcome Covid-19**

European leaders on Tuesday urged greater international co-operation as they reflected on the pandemic and signalled hopes for Joe Biden's administration to extend its early efforts to re-engage in multilateral forums. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, said the coronavirus pandemic has been the "hour of multilateralism", as she used her speech to plead for more international collaboration to defeat the virus. "We must choose the multilateral approach," she said on Tuesday, adding that isolation was not the solution and urging for coronavirus vaccines to be distributed fairly to poorer countries. Ms Merkel also said the pandemic had highlighted the importance of international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris climate accord.

<https://www.ft.com/content/02465195-1957-490d-a3c8-4c54d45469a9>

### **Coronavirus: Vaccine supply fears grow amid EU export threat**

The EU has warned Covid vaccine producers they must deliver agreed supplies, amid fears reductions could seriously hamper its inoculation drive. AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech have both said production problems mean they cannot supply the expected numbers. The EU warned it could restrict exports of vaccines made in the bloc, with Germany's health minister demanding "fair distribution". The UK's vaccine minister warned of "the dead end of vaccine nationalism". AstraZeneca is mainly produced in the UK, while the UK's supplies of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine come from the company's Belgian plant.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55805903>

### **Delaying the second Covid dose in the UK is controversial, but it's the right decision**

A recent YouGov poll shows that the British are among the most willing in the world to take the Covid-19 vaccine. This is good news. But there are still questions about the vaccines and the way they're being deployed, especially after the government decided to spread out the time between the two doses from three weeks to 12 weeks. The confusion is understandable, as we are in a developing situation. Clear messages about why tough decisions are made can get lost in the noise. First, it is absolutely clear that the two Covid-19 vaccines that are being deployed in the UK will save lives. Moreover, they will reduce the burden on hospitals. The Pfizer data, measured from day 14 post-vaccination, showed only one severe case of Covid-19 in 21,000 vaccinated people. The AstraZeneca data showed no hospitalisations or severe disease in 6,000 vaccinated trial participants. The caveat to this was that there were a small number of cases in the first two months after the first vaccine dose. This brings me to an important point.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/26/second-covid-dose-uk-jabs>

### **Covid: No risk to delivery of Pfizer vaccine, minister insists, despite EU threat to impose export controls**

There is no risk to deliveries of the Pfizer vaccine, a minister is insisting, despite the EU threat to impose controls over a separate row with UK-based AstraZeneca. Nadhim Zahawi sought to play down growing fears of “vaccine nationalism” – saying he was “confident” that tens of millions of doses of Pfizer jabs ordered from Belgium will arrive. Brussels announced plans for export controls after AstraZeneca – which was due to deliver 80 million doses to the EU by the end of March – suddenly said it was cutting supplies to as low as 30 million. But, asked whether the EU could prevent Pfizer vials leaving its borders, Mr Zahawi, the vaccines minister, said: “No, I’m confident that the Pfizer vaccine will be delivered.”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/covid-vaccine-eu-pfizer-astrazeneca-b1792655.html>

### **Lockdown UK: Schools to find out when they can reopen 'within days'**

Schools are to find out when they can reopen ‘within days,’ Education Minister Nick Gibb said. He told MPs: ‘The Government recognises that headteachers, teachers, support staff and parents and carers need time to prepare for reopening. ‘That’s why (Education Secretary Gavin Williamson) made it clear we will give two weeks’ notice to schools colleges and universities so they can prepare for a return to face to face education. ‘We want to give notice so parents can get notice for the care of their children, and we will be making an announcement in the next few days.’

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/26/lockdown-uk-schools-to-find-out-when-they-can-reopen-within-days-13967376/>

### **How quarantine hotels could work for travellers arriving in the UK**

Boris Johnson is considering making all travellers arriving in the UK – including Brits returning home – quarantine in hotels. International travel is banned during England’s lockdown, with exceptions for essential circumstances. The UK has already scrapped travel corridors, meaning anyone arriving from abroad – with the exception of Ireland – must self-isolate for 10 days.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/hotel-quarantine-uk-rules-new-covid-travel-restrictions-arrivals-australia-explained-843581>

### **Germany backs EU export restrictions on vaccine after supply cuts**

Germany’s health minister supported European Union proposals to introduce restrictions on COVID-19 vaccines on Tuesday as tensions grew with AstraZeneca and Pfizer over sudden supply cuts just a month after the bloc started vaccinating citizens. The EU has proposed setting up a register of vaccine exports, amid frustration over delays in deliveries of AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 shot and other supply problems. “I can understand that there are production problems but then it must affect everyone in the same way,” Health Minister Jens Spahn told ZDF television. “This is not about Europe first but about Europe’s fair share,” he said, adding it therefore made sense to have export limits on vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-spahn/germany-backs-eu-export-restrictions-on-vaccine-after-supply-cuts-idUSKBN29VOLN>

### **U.S. will have enough Covid-19 vaccines for 300 million Americans by end of summer, Biden says**

President Biden plans to purchase another 200 million doses of coronavirus vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna, which should give the U.S. enough to fully vaccinate 300 million Americans by the end of summer 2021, the administration announced in a press release Tuesday. The Biden administration will also increase the number of vaccines being shipped weekly to states from 8.6 million to 10 million. The move comes less than a week after the Biden administration released a sweeping national plan to revamp the coronavirus vaccine effort. That plan foreshadowed a number of the changes announced Tuesday, including purchasing more vaccines from vaccine manufacturers.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/26/biden-purchase-doses-300-million-americans/>

### **UK health minister says new COVID variant makes it harder to lift lockdown**

Britain’s health minister Matt Hancock said on Monday a new more infectious coronavirus variant

means the government needs to be more cautious in lifting lockdown restrictions. The government said on Friday that the new variant may be 30% more deadly than the original strain. "There is no question the new variant made this fight a whole lot tougher," Hancock told a press conference. "The critical message is we must be cautious. For all of us, our response must be extra careful."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-hancock-va/uk-health-minister-says-new-covid-variant-makes-it-harder-to-lift-lockdown-idUSKBN29U21C?il=0>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Covid-19: PM 'deeply sorry' as UK deaths exceed 100,000**

The UK death toll from coronavirus has passed 100,000, according to government figures. Boris Johnson says he is "deeply sorry for every life that has been lost" The PM says he takes "full responsibility for everything that the government has done." The health secretary Matt Hancock said the figure was "heartbreaking" while Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said it was a "national tragedy"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-55808412>

### **Covid-19: Was US vaccine rollout a 'dismal failure' under Trump?**

President Joe Biden has pledged to boost the rollout of Covid vaccines in the US, and has criticised the speed of the operation under the previous administration. It's been "a dismal failure thus far," the president said after taking office. He's committed to overseeing 100 million vaccine doses administered in his first 100 days, and has since said: "I think we may be able to get that to 1.5 million a day, rather than one million a day." So how slow was the rollout under the Trump administration?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-55721437>

### **'This was absolutely avoidable': How the UK lost 100,000 lives to Covid-19**

A catalogue of costly errors, the refusal to heed scientific advice at crucial pinch-points and the absence of any real strategy set the UK on a collision course with tragedy, writes Samuel Lovett

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-deaths-uk-coronavirus-cases-latest-b1792224.html>

### **100,000 UK Covid deaths: The moments which led to the 'grim milestone'**

Since the first confirmed death of a Covid-19 patient in the UK in March, the country has passed many other "grim milestones". Now that figure has reached 100,000 deaths among patients who died within 28 days of the first positive coronavirus test. Here's how we got here. March 5 - 'Business as usual' as first reported Covid death confirmed. On March 5, the UK reported its first confirmed Covid death after a woman in her 70s died at the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust after testing positive for the virus. No restrictions to limit the spread of the pandemic were in place yet. The prime minister stressed it was "business as usual" for the country and encouraged people to keep washing their hands.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-01-26/100000-uk-covid-deaths-the-moments-which-led-to-the-grim-milestone>

### **Angela Merkel admits Covid highlighted shortcomings in Germany: 'The speed of our action leaves a lot to be desired'**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel conceded that the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted significant shortcomings in her country as she told the World Economic Forum on Tuesday that it has underlined the need for international cooperation on issues such as vaccines. Germany had a relatively successful first phase of the pandemic, but saw infections shoot up during the winter months and recently passed the threshold of 50,000 deaths, Europe's fifth-highest toll. A lengthy second lockdown has slowly brought down the number of new cases in recent weeks.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/angela-merkel-germany-covid-vaccine-b1792906.html>

### **Police turn water cannon on Dutch lockdown protesters during third night of rioting**

Police arrested at least 70 people after rioting broke out for a third night around the Netherlands

following protests over a new night-time curfew. The scenes over the weekend, which saw rioters attack police and start fires, came after the government implemented new lockdown curbs, including the first curfew in the country since World War Two. The measure - which runs each day from 9pm to 4.30am - was imposed after the National Institute for Health (RIVM) warned of a new wave of infections due to the so-called British variant of Covid-19, despite the numbers of new infections in the Netherlands declining for weeks.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/amsterdam-lockdown-protests-police-b901122.html>

### **100,000 Covid deaths: Why the UK's death toll is so bad**

More than 100,000 people in the UK have died from a virus, that, this time last year, felt like a far-off foreign threat. How did we come to be one of the countries with the worst death tolls? There is no quick answer to that question, and there is sure to be a long and detailed public inquiry once the pandemic is over. But there are plenty of clues that, when pieced together, help build a picture of why the UK has reached this devastating number. Some will point a finger at the government - its decision to lock-down later than much of western Europe, the stuttering start to its test-and-trace network, the lack of protection afforded to care home residents. Others will spotlight deeper rooted problems with British society - its poor state of public health, with high levels of obesity, for example.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55757790>

### **Italy's Prime Minister Conte to Resign Amid Struggle Against Covid-19 and Recession**

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is set to resign on Tuesday, his office said, as Europe's underlying problems of economic stagnation and political fragmentation start to reassert themselves amid the gruelling pandemic. The fall of Italy's government, in office for just 17 months, is a symptom of the continuing fissures in Italian and European politics. Established and insurgent parties are struggling over Europe's future, stable majorities are often elusive and leaders are searching for ways to overcome long-term economic underperformance—nowhere more so than in Italy. Rome's latest political breakdown is likely to cause concern in the capitals of Europe's stronger economies, such as Germany, which last year agreed to underwrite a massive European Union investment plan for economic recovery from the coronavirus.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/italian-prime-minister-giuseppe-conte-to-resign-11611599680>

### **Police break up seven parties in Spain's Marbella as Covid lockdown flouters continue to break rules**

Policia Nacional have busted seven illegal parties in Marbella, including one held in a hotel and two others in nightclubs. Hundreds of lockdown flouters were slapped with fines and warnings over the weekend in Marbella as police cracked down on breaches of coronavirus restrictions.

<https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2021/01/26/police-break-up-seven-parties-in-spains-marbella-as-covid-lockdown-flouters-continue-to-break-rules/>

### **Teachers, students march in France for more virus support**

Schoolteachers and university students marched together in protests or went on strike Tuesday around France to demand more government support amid the pandemic. "No virus protocol, no school!" read posters carried by schoolteachers, demanding better virus protections at their schools, which have remained open since September because of the government's concern over learning gaps. "Sick of Zoom!" chanted university students frustrated that they've been barred from campuses since October. The common concern at Tuesday's protests in Paris Marseille and other cities around France was economic.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/teachers-students-march-in-france-for-more-virus-support-students-students-virus-teachers-university-b1792900.html>

### **Clashes in Lebanon's Tripoli as anger grows over virus lockdown**

Lebanese demonstrators clashed with security forces in the northern city of Tripoli on Monday night, as anger grows over a total lockdown aimed at stemming an unprecedented spike in coronavirus cases. The National News Agency (NNA) said security personnel had clashed with demonstrators angered at "the lockdown, fines against those who flout it and the suffocating economic crisis." An AFP photographer saw demonstrators burn tyres and throw rocks, to which security forces responded with teargas and rubber bullets.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210125-clashes-in-lebanon-s-tripoli-as-anger-grows-over-virus-lockdown>

### **Lebanese in impoverished north protest coronavirus lockdown**

Dozens of Lebanese protesters, enraged at a nearly month-long lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus, took to the streets of the country's second largest city on Monday and pelted security forces with stones. The security forces responded with tear gas to break up the protesters, who gathered in central Tripoli despite a strict lockdown in place since mid-January aimed at containing a major surge in infection in the small Mediterranean country. Protesters in Tripoli were complaining that their region, the most impoverished in Lebanon, is unable to cope with the nearly month-long lockdown with little to no government assistance.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/lebanese-in-impoverished-north-protest-coronavirus-lockdown-7162012/>

### **Wuhan doctor: China authorities stopped me sounding alarm on Covid**

A doctor from the Wuhan hospital hit hardest by the Covid-19 epidemic has said he and colleagues suspected the virus was highly transmissible in early January last year, weeks before Chinese authorities admitted it, but were prevented from warning anyone. The doctor's testimony - in a new BBC documentary on the 54 days between the first known case of coronavirus and the Wuhan lockdown - adds to mounting evidence of Beijing's early attempts to cover up the virus outbreak, and intimidate healthworkers into staying quiet. Wuhan central hospital is just a few kilometres from the Huanan wet market, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, and was quickly overwhelmed by patients after the first cases emerged in December 2019. More than 200 hospital employees reportedly contracted the virus, and several, including whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang, died.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/wuhan-doctor-china-authorities-stopped-me-sounding-alarm-on-covid>

### **Europe's Covid chaos: EU vaccine shortage prompts fury as AstraZeneca says it can't meet £300m vaccine deal demands after weekend of riots over lockdown restrictions**

EU health chiefs have demanded pharmaceutical firms give 'early warning' when exporting vaccines to Britain. It means Pfizer - which has a jab-making plant in Belgium - will be forced to tell EU officials about jab exports. Britain has ordered 40million doses of Pfizer jab, which is described as 'workhorse' of the UK vaccine rollout. Vaccine battle took another twist last night when German papers reported EU officials could reject UK jab. The reports say EMA could reject the Oxford vaccine for usage in over-65s due to '8 per cent efficacy rates.' But vaccine manufacturer AstraZeneca last night furiously denied claims, reported in Bild and Handelsblatt. It comes after AstraZeneca announced it could only supply 31million of 80million doses to EU by end of March. EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides says drop is 'not acceptable' and announced new scrutiny rules

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9184203/AstraZeneca-say-meet-EUs-Covid-19-vaccine-demands-blocs-supply-chain-problems.html>

### **Boris Johnson's lockdown slip-up contradicts the official line**

The news that the prime minister is looking at easing some restrictions by mid-February came as a surprise to many reporters - and to No 10. The slip by Boris Johnson went against what insiders have been briefing for many weeks: that the easing of restrictions is a long way off and that this time there will be extreme caution. "The one to four [most vulnerable] groups are going to be vaccinated by 15 February. Before then we will be looking at the potential of relaxing some measures," he said.

Aides have underlined to reporters that Johnson's comments were misinterpreted - "looking at" only means the government will be starting to make decisions, and that nothing will change before the 15 February review point. Less generously, it was a bit of a tongue twist from Johnson.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/25/boris-johnsons-lockdown-slip-up-contradicts-the-official-line>

### **Dutch police detain more than 150 in third night of anti-lockdown violence**

Dutch police detained more than 150 people in a third night of unrest in cities across the Netherlands, where roaming groups of rioters set fires, threw rocks and looted stores in violence triggered by a night curfew aimed at curbing the coronavirus. The nation's first curfew since World War Two followed a warning by the National Institute for Health (RIVM) over a new wave of infections due to the "British variant" of the virus, and was imposed despite weeks of declines in new infections. Ten police were injured in the port city of Rotterdam, where 60 rioters were detained overnight, Dutch news agency ANP said on Tuesday.

<https://www.irisht Examiner.com/world/arid-40214330.html>

### **Anger and grief as United Kingdom's COVID-19 death toll nears 100,000**

As the United Kingdom's COVID-19 death toll approaches 100,000, grief-stricken relatives of the dead expressed anger at Prime Minister Boris Johnson's handling of the worst public health crisis in a century. When the novel coronavirus, which first emerged in China in 2019, slid silently across the United Kingdom in March, Johnson initially said he was confident it could be sent packing in weeks. But 97,939 deaths later, the United Kingdom has the world's fifth worst official death toll - more than its civilian toll in World War Two and twice the number killed in the 1940-41 Blitz bombing campaign, although the total population was lower then. Behind the numbers there is grief and anger.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-deaths/anger-and-grief-as-united-kingdoms-covid-19-death-toll-nears-100000-idUSKBN29U16j>

## **Continued Lockdown**

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### **COVID-19: School closures having 'calamitous' impact on kids and parents**

Keeping schools closed is having a "calamitous" impact on children, some of the UK's top paediatricians have warned as they called for teachers to be prioritised for a vaccine. The group said they were witnessing an "acute and rapid increase in mental health and safeguarding cases", with parents suffering breakdowns and other psychological stress due to home-schooling. Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi insisted it was the government's "absolute priority" to re-open schools. Experts - from Imperial College London, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust and the Royal Brompton Hospital - added that vaccinating school staff "offers protection to one of our most important key-worker groups" and also protects children.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-school-closures-having-calamitous-impact-on-kids-and-parents-12199076>

### **Lockdown must continue to stop new variants, say Norwich scientists**

Strict lockdown measures must continue to stop the evolution of more dangerous variants of Covid-19, Norwich scientists have warned. Scientists from the Earlham Institute, based at Norwich Research Park, say it is crucial to stop more virulent variants from emerging to give the coronavirus vaccine roll-out the best chance of succeeding. While the government has said it will review data next month to see if some easing of restrictions could be possible, scientists have stressed the importance of lockdown.

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/covid-lockdown-must-continue-say-norwich-scientists-7074378>

### **UK unemployment reaches four-year high in Covid-19 lockdown**

Unemployment in the UK has reached the highest level for more than four years as the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and tougher lockdown measures place more pressure on businesses and workers. The Office for National Statistics said the unemployment rate rose to 5% in the three

months to the end of November – representing more than 1.7 million people – from 4.9% in the three months to the end of October, reaching the highest level since August 2016. Unemployment was 4% in February before the pandemic struck.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/26/uk-unemployment-high-covid-19-lockdown-jobless>

### **Chinese city suffers food shortages during Covid-19 lockdown**

Residents of a locked-down Chinese city have raised an outcry about food and medicine shortages, spurring a rare public debate about the country's strict epidemic controls. Citizens in Tonghua, near China's border with North Korea in northeastern Jilin province, complained on blogging platform Weibo that a sudden lockdown has left some trapped in their apartments without supplies for more than a week. "We Tonghua people weren't knocked down by the virus . . . but by hunger and basic illnesses," wrote one blogger.

<https://www.ft.com/content/7ed987cb-195e-4f53-bd86-2b21277f6a27>

### **Tanaiste Leo Varadkar confirms lockdown extension plans to March as he rules out zero Covid approach**

In Ireland, Tanaiste Leo Varadkar has said that the Government plans to keep full lockdown restrictions in place until March 5. Mr Varadkar said that the harsh restrictions are set to remain in place for another six weeks should Cabinet agree on the measures which would be in line with measures in place in Northern Ireland. The Tanaiste also said that the Government was looking at a phased reopening of schools in February however he hinted that it would depend on whether cases numbers were low enough.

<https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/tanaiste-leo-varadkar-confirms-lockdown-23384287>

### **Level 5 extension until March 5th: Ministers told detailed legal work needed on travel rules**

In Ireland, Cabinet has signed off on an extension of current Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions until March 5th, as well as a range of measures designed to curtail travel into the State. However, Government sources cautioned that it could be some time before many of the measures are brought into place due to a range of complexities around the new policies. It is understood that the Cabinet was warned that there are issues around the legal and practical approaches to implementing some of the new policies, including mandatory hotel quarantine, and shifting self-quarantine at home onto a mandatory rather than advisory footing.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/level-5-extension-until-march-5th-ministers-told-detailed-legal-work-needed-on-travel-rules-1.4468043>

### **UK jobless rate highest since 2016 as second COVID-19 lockdown hits**

Britain's unemployment rate hit its highest in nearly five years in the three months to November, when coronavirus cases began to rise for a second time and most of the country returned to a partial lockdown. Redundancies touched a record high, taking the unemployment rate to 5.0%, its highest since mid-2016, according to official data, although the increase was slightly weaker than economists' forecasts. There were some signs of a limited recovery in December, when lockdown measures eased, although a deterioration is likely in early 2021 as a tougher lockdown shut schools and closed most non-essential businesses to the public.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-economy-unemployment/uk-jobless-rate-rises-to-highest-since-2016-idUSKBN29V001>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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**WHO warns pregnant women should NOT get Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine because it hasn't been proven safe after issuing the same warning over Pfizer's shot - but US doctors say it ...**

The World Health Organization said pregnant women should only be immunized if they are high risk such as being a frontline healthcare worker or having an underlying condition.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9189157/WHO-warns-Modernas-COVID-19-vaccine-NOT-used-pregnant-women.html>

### **Pfizer develops booster shot amid fears its COVID-19 vaccine is less effective against highly-infectious variants from Brazil and South Africa**

Pfizer develops booster shot amid fears its COVID-19 vaccine is less effective against highly-infectious variants from Brazil and South Africa. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said Tuesday his firm will develop booster shots 'every time' a variant makes its shot less effective. Last week, lab tests suggested Pfizer's current shot worked against the spike protein mutation shared by the UK and South African variants. It has not announced testing the vaccine against mutation seen in the South African and Brazilian variants that may make them vaccine-resistant. Bourla said despite thinking the shot will work against variants, Pfizer is developing booster shots. Moderna said yesterday it is making a South African variant booster shot after finding immunity to the variant from its vaccine may wane faster.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9189007/Pfizer-CEO-says-making-booster-shots-coronavirus-variants.html>

### **Made-in-Canada coronavirus vaccine starts human clinical trials**

A made-in-Canada vaccine to protect against COVID-19 began human clinical trials Tuesday in Toronto, says the biotechnology company that developed the vaccine. Toronto-based Providence Therapeutics said three shots will be given to 60 adult volunteers at a clinical trial site in Toronto in the first phase of the trial on Tuesday. Fifteen of those volunteers will receive a placebo, and 45 will get the vaccine, called PTX-COVID19-B. Brad Sorenson, the company's CEO, said it's the first time a vaccine designed and manufactured in Canada has begun clinical trials. The company has purchased a site in Calgary to mass produce the vaccine.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-providence-1.5887613>

### **Johnson & Johnson is 'comfortable' meeting coronavirus vaccine delivery promises, CFO says**

As the world awaits Johnson & Johnson's phase 3 COVID-19 vaccine data, the company is prepping for regulatory filings and a global rollout. Orders for hundreds of millions of doses are pending. But even as rivals face manufacturing and logistics hurdles, a top J&J exec said his company is "comfortable" meeting its 2021 supply commitments. J&J's one-dose vaccine would provide a major boost to worldwide vaccination efforts as shots from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca remain in the early stages of their rollouts. News of supply disruptions for the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines has been surfacing in Europe, and U.S. rollouts for the mRNA vaccines have gotten off to a slower-than-expected start. J&J expects to report phase 3 data for its one-dose vaccine by early next week, execs said Tuesday. If the data are positive, that could "could meaningfully accelerate the rollout of vaccinations across the U.S." and "potentially disrupt other vaccine manufacturers' demand expectations," Barclays analyst Carter Gould wrote in a note to clients Tuesday.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/j-j-ahead-phase-3-covid-19-vaccine-data-release-comfortable-meeting-its-delivery-commitments>

### **Moderna vaccine doses can be spaced up to six weeks apart, says WHO**

Moderna's Covid vaccine can be given in two doses as much as six weeks apart, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said. The WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation, known as Sage, recommended the jab be given at an interval of 28 days but said that could be extended by a further two weeks under exceptional circumstances. "The main recommendation for the use of this vaccine is that based on the current elements we recommend it should be given in

doses of 100 micrograms or 0.5 ml with an interval of 28 days," Alejandro Cravioto, panel chair, told a virtual briefing. "This interval might be moved to 42 days but the evidence we have does not go beyond that time," he said, speaking from Mexico.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/moderna-vaccine-covid-spacing-pregnant-b1792784.html>

### **Studies extend hopes for antibody drugs against COVID-19**

New results extend hopes for drugs that supply antibodies to fight COVID-19 suggesting they can help keep patients out of the hospital and possibly prevent illness in some uninfected people. Eli Lilly said Tuesday that a two-antibody combo reduced the risk of hospitalizations or death by 70% in newly diagnosed, non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients at high risk of serious illness because of age or other health conditions. All 10 deaths that occurred in the study were among those receiving placebo rather than the antibodies.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/studies-extend-hopes-for-antibody-drugs-against-covid19-antibodies-studies-antibodies-results-illness-b1792996.html>

### **Russian biochemist who created novichok invents Covid-19 drug**

Dr Lenoid Rink was involved in the secret Soviet development of Novichok. Novichok was used on the Skripals in Britain in 2012 and Alexei Navalny last year. The new coronavirus-tackling drug is based on a Soviet medicine for leprosy. Rink said the formulation has been tested on 700 elderly patients with no deaths. The drug has been featured positively by Russian state-owned media outlets.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9188229/Russian-chemist-created-novichok-invents-Covid-19-drug.html>

### **Johnson & Johnson expects COVID-19 vaccine data next week**

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday said it expected to report eagerly-awaited data on its COVID-19 vaccine early next week, and that it would be able to meet the delivery target for doses to countries with which it had signed supply agreements. Public health officials are increasingly counting on single-dose options like the one being tested by J&J to simplify and boost inoculations given the complications and slower-than-hoped rollout of authorized vaccines from Pfizer Inc and Moderna Inc, which require second shots weeks after the first. The company forecast 2021 profit well above Wall Street estimates, and its shares rose 3.4% to \$171.55. The outlook does not include any contribution from the COVID-19 vaccine, Chief Financial Officer Joseph Wolk said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-johnson-johnson-results/johnson-johnson-expects-covid-19-vaccine-data-next-week-idUSKBN29V197>

### **COVID-19: UK to share genomics know-how to help other countries identify new variants**

The UK is to offer its genomics expertise to help other countries identify new COVID variants, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has announced. The launch of the New Variant Assessment Platform will see other countries offered UK laboratory capacity and advice to analyse new strains of coronavirus. It will be led by Public Health England working with NHS Test and Trace and a team from the World Health Organisation.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-to-share-genomics-know-how-to-help-other-countries-identify-new-variants-12198958>

### **COVID-19 lockdown loneliness leads to depressive symptoms in adults: Study**

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has meant more time at home for everyone and people have turned to cooking, reading, among other activities to deal with the health crisis, which brings a fresh supply of stress every day. According to a new study, loneliness in adults aged 50 and over during the COVID-19 lockdown was linked to worsening depressive and other mental health symptoms. Loneliness emerged as a key factor linked to worsening symptoms of depression and anxiety in a study of more than 3,000 people aged 50 or over led by the University of Exeter and King's College London and funded by The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre (BRC).

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/covid-19-lockdown-loneliness-leads-to-depressive-symptoms-in-adults-study-203550>

### **No data suggesting lower efficacy of AstraZeneca vaccine: German health ministry**

There is no data that would suggest efficacy of only 8% among older people for AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine, the German health ministry said on Tuesday in response to corresponding media reports. It reiterated that it expects the European Medicines Agency to decide on Friday whether to approve the vaccine.

[https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu-astrazeneca-idUSKBN29V0ZC?taid=600ff2bac8ffe70001f6604c&utm\\_campaign=trueanthem&utm\\_medium=trueanthem&utm\\_source=twitter](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu-astrazeneca-idUSKBN29V0ZC?taid=600ff2bac8ffe70001f6604c&utm_campaign=trueanthem&utm_medium=trueanthem&utm_source=twitter)

### **AstraZeneca: German reports on low efficacy on over-65s 'completely incorrect'**

"Reports that the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine efficacy is as low as 8% in adults over 65 years are completely incorrect," an AstraZeneca spokesperson told DW in a written response. The company said that an influential UK vaccination committee, the JCVI, and the UK's national MHRA medicines regulator supported the use of its vaccine on that particular age group. "In November, we published data in The Lancet demonstrating that older adults showed strong immune responses to the vaccine, with 100% of older adults generating spike-specific antibodies after the second dose," AstraZeneca's spokesperson said. The firm's response followed reports in Handelsblatt and Bild, two German daily newspapers. Both cited unnamed members of Germany's government as saying that the vaccine had a poor efficacy rate among people above 65. Bild put the figure at "less than 10%," Handelsblatt at 8%. The newspapers further reported that German government officials didn't expect the vaccine to be approved for use on over-65s by the European Medicines Agency regulator as a result.

<https://www.dw.com/en/astrazeneca-german-reports-on-low-efficacy-on-over-65s-completely-incorrect/a-56341198>

### **Vaccine developments at center stage as pandemic total tops 100 million**

As the world's COVID-19 total passed 100 million cases today amid the threat of more-transmissible variants, anxiety grew over vaccine supplies amid promising news of effectiveness and more production capacity. In a major development that could boost global vaccine production, Sanofi today announced that it will help supply more than 100 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at its plant in Frankfurt, Germany, according to Reuters. The news came from Sanofi's chief executive officer, Paul Hudson, during an interview with the French newspaper Le Figaro.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/vaccine-developments-center-stage-pandemic-total-tops-100-million>

### **Children, teens report mental distress amid pandemic remote learning**

A study today in JAMA Network Open reveals that 10.5% of children and teens in a Chinese province during distance learning early in the COVID-19 pandemic reported psychological distress—particularly among those who never wore a face covering or were physically active for less than a half hour a day. A team led by researchers from Southern Medical University in Guangdong province analyzed data from an online survey of about 1.2 million randomly sampled school-aged children and adolescents from 21 cities receiving home-based instruction from Mar 8 to 30, 2020.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/children-teens-report-mental-distress-amid-pandemic-remote-learning>

### **Sanofi, after R&D setback, lends a hand to vaccine rival Pfizer for coronavirus shot production**

Following its midstage coronavirus R&D setback, Sanofi is still looking for ways to help in the world's effort to beat back the pandemic. It's teaming up with Pfizer and BioNTech to produce 100 million doses of the rival vaccine—even as Sanofi works to push its own programs through clinical testing. After Sanofi's weak trial showing in December forced the company to delay its own vaccine

development, the French drugmaker approached Pfizer and BioNTech about helping with mRNA shot production, CEO Paul Hudson said in an interview with Le Figaro newspaper. A Sanofi spokesman confirmed the manufacturing partnership, saying Sanofi will provide BioNTech “access to our established infrastructure and expertise to produce over 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine in Europe in 2021.” The first batches will be delivered from Sanofi’s site in Frankfurt, Germany, by August, he said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/sanofi-after-r-d-setback-lends-a-hand-to-vaccine-rival-pfizer-for-coronavirus-shot>

### **Regeneron pitches COVID-19 antibody cocktail for 'passive vaccination' with fresh trial data**

As the demand for COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca continues to outstrip supply and alternative vaccines struggle to make it out of the pipeline, the world is desperate for new ways to end the pandemic. Regeneron says it's offering a potential solution. The New York-based biotech released preliminary data from an ongoing phase 3 trial of its antibody cocktail REGEN-COV in people at high risk of contracting COVID-19 because of exposure to family members with the disease. The results justify using the drug for “passive vaccination,” the company said today. REGEN-COV was 100% effective at preventing symptoms of COVID-19 in the trial as compared to placebo, the company announced. Passive vaccination with the drug slashed the overall rate of infection by half. All the infections that did occur among trial participants on the drug were asymptomatic, lasted no more than one week and showed a “short duration” of the viral shedding that can drive the illness to other people, Regeneron said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/regeneron-pitches-covid-antibody-cocktail-for-passive-vaccination-fresh-trial-data>

### **Lilly antibody combo slashed COVID-19 deaths, hospitalizations in high-risk patients**

Amid new worries about COVID-19 vaccine supplies, monoclonal antibodies—such as those from Eli Lilly and Regeneron—could be important stopgaps to reduce deaths and hospitalizations until vaccinations gain steam. And Lilly is touting data showing two of its antibodies did just that in high-risk patients. In a phase 3 study of more than 1,000 high-risk patients recently diagnosed with COVID-19, 11 patients who received a bamlanivimab-etesevimab combo were hospitalized and none died. That compared with 26 hospitalizations and 10 deaths among placebo patients, which translates into a 70% reduction in the risk of a COVID-19 hospitalization or death. Aside from the trial’s primary endpoint of reducing those two outcomes, the antibody duo met secondary endpoints such as evidence of reduced viral load and improved resolution of symptoms.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/lilly-antibody-combo-slashed-covid-19-deaths-hospitalizations-high-risk-patients>

### **Regeneron says monoclonal antibodies prevent Covid-19 in study**

Regeneron said Tuesday that its monoclonal antibody cocktail prevented Covid-19 in a clinical trial. The news, issued via a press release, mirrored similar news from Eli Lilly last week that its monoclonal antibody prevented symptomatic Covid-19 infections in nursing homes. The results represent the first 400 volunteers from the study, which is being run by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and is continuing to enroll patients. The volunteers were at high risk of infection because they lived in the same household as a Covid-19 patient. Half the patients received a placebo, and the other half received 1.2 grams of casirivimab and imdevimab, Regeneron’s antibodies

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/26/regeneron-says-monoclonal-antibodies-prevent-covid-19-in-study/>

### **Coronavirus: AstraZeneca defends EU vaccine rollout plan**

The head of AstraZeneca has defended its rollout of the coronavirus vaccine in the EU, amid tension

with member states over delays in supply. Pascal Soriot told Italian newspaper La Repubblica that his team was working "24/7 to fix the very many issues of production of the vaccine". He said production was "basically two months behind where we wanted to be". He also said the EU's late decision to sign contracts had given limited time to sort out hiccups with supply. Mr Soriot, chief executive of the UK-Swedish multinational, said a contract with the UK had been signed three months before the one with the EU, giving more time for glitches to be ironed out.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55817633>

### **COVID-19 lockdowns have permanently damaged children's eyes**

Nearsightedness, or myopia, has gone up dramatically during periods of lockdown — that's according to a study of more than 100,000 children in China. Though the damage is irreversible, there are things that all of us (including parents) can do to slow its progress.

<https://www.dw.com/en/covid-19-lockdowns-have-permanently-damaged-childrens-eyes/av-56337120>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **Portugal urged to seek international help as COVID-19 deaths hit record**

Portugal's government was urged to transfer COVID-19 patients abroad on Tuesday as deaths hit a record high and the oxygen supply system of a large hospital near Lisbon partly failed from overuse. COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours reached a record 291, bringing the total to 653,878 cases and 11,012 deaths. It now has world's the highest seven-day average of cases and deaths per million people. Health Minister Marta Temido told broadcaster RTP on Monday: "The Portuguese government is triggering all mechanisms available, including in the international framework, to ensure it provides the best assistance to patients."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal-idUSL8N2K15AL>

### **Spain reports 93,822 new coronavirus cases on Monday, the highest weekend figure so far**

Spain's central Health Ministry reported 93,822 new coronavirus infections on Monday, as well as adding 767 fatalities to the overall death toll. The figures, which account for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, represent new record highs – for the entire pandemic in the former case, and for this third wave of the crisis in the latter. Presenting the figures on Monday evening, Fernando Simón, the director of the Health Ministry's Coordination Center for Health Alerts (CCAES), warned that Spain must "urgently" relieve the pressure on the country's hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs), which are in a "critical situation."

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-01-26/spain-reports-93822-new-coronavirus-cases-on-monday-the-highest-weekend-figure-so-far.html>

### **France, Spain And Portugal Struggle To Contain New Coronavirus Infections**

While many European countries have seen declines in new daily coronavirus cases, Spain, France and Portugal after relaxing crackdowns in December are fighting off a new surge of infections that have leaders mulling over new lockdowns and stricter restrictions to keep cases at bay. Unlike other countries across Europe, Spain, Portugal and France relaxed their coronavirus crackdowns in December for Christmas, which experts suggest lent itself to the surge in new cases. The spread of the U.K. coronavirus variant may have also contributed to the increase in infections, as the mutation is believed to be more contagious.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carlieporterfield/2021/01/25/france-spain-and-portugal-struggle-to-contain-new-coronavirus-infections/>

### **Calls for third lockdown grow as France's new Covid-19 hospitalisations rise sharply**

The number of people hospitalised in France for COVID-19 rose by more than 1,000 over the last two days, a trend unseen since Nov. 16, and the number of patients in intensive care units for the

disease exceeded 3,000 for the first time since Dec. 9. A growing number of medical experts have called for a third lockdown in France while the government rolls out the vaccine, but French media reported that President Emmanuel Macron was trying to avoid such a measure. As of Monday, France had vaccinated 1,092,958 people.

<https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210126-despite-curfew-france-s-new-covid-19-hospitalisations-rise-sharply>

### **Why Malaysia's contact-tracing efforts are falling dangerously short**

Covid-19 numbers in Malaysia continue to soar a year to the day since the country's first case was detected - but after more than 180,000 infections, 678 related deaths and two nationwide lockdowns, public health experts are now concerned that the nation's contact-tracing efforts are falling dangerously short. People who have tested positive for the disease have taken to social media to complain that they had not yet been contacted by health officials, while contact-tracing applications such as MySejahtera and SELangkah are overwhelmed, with reports indicating that thousands of close contacts are potentially being missed on a daily basis.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/health-environment/article/3119162/year-after-its-first-coronavirus-case-malaysias>

### **Brazilian COVID-19 variant detected in Minnesota**

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) confirmed the nation's first case of COVID-19 caused by a variant strain, known as the Brazil P.1 variant, in a person who had recently travelled to Brazil. The person is a resident of the Twin Cities who became ill the first week of January. He or she provided a specimen for testing on Jan 9, and MDH detected the variant strain through a surveillance program that performs whole-genome sequencing on 50 COVID-19 specimens each week. MDH has interviewed the patient and is advising quarantine, as well as follow-up with the person's contacts. In addition to the P.1 variant, MDH sequencing also revealed two more cases of B117, known as the UK variant, in two patients who had recently traveled to California and the Dominican Republic, respectively.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/brazilian-covid-19-variant-detected-minnesota>

## **New Lockdown**

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### **Hong Kong places residents of 12 buildings under sudden Covid-19 lockdown**

Metal barriers blocked streets, police addressed people through loudspeakers, and some residents in the Hong Kong area of Yau Ma Tei faced a night sealed off from the rest of the city, after an "ambush-style" Covid-19 lockdown on Tuesday. People living in blocks numbered 9-27 on Pitt Street, and Shun Fung Building on 3 Tung On Street, were taken by surprise, with the government acting at the last minute to avoid giving residents advance warning through leaks in the media. The lockdown, which began at 7pm, was expected to end at 6am on Wednesday, and those in the area had been told to stay inside until they had been tested for Covid-19. But officers also said people should be prepared to miss work, because they were unsure of whether testing would finish on time.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3119275/hong-kong-fourth-wave-carrie-lam-promises>