

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

11th Feb 2022

Lockdown Exit

US urges Canada to use federal powers to end bridge blockade

The Biden administration urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government Thursday to use its federal powers to end the truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions, as the bumper-to-bumper demonstration forced auto plants on both sides of the border to shut down or scale back production. For the fourth straight day, scores of truckers taking part in what they dubbed the Freedom Convoy blocked the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, disrupting the flow of auto parts and other products between the two countries. The White House said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg spoke with their Canadian counterparts and urged them to help resolve the standoff.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-detroit-canada-20f273b32bfa8ef695fdabcc7e11321e>

Russia's daily COVID-19 infections near 200000 for 1st time

Russian authorities on Thursday reported nearly 200,000 new confirmed coronavirus cases, in another record fueled by the rapid spread of the omicron variant amid a low vaccination rate and the absence of major restrictions for adults. The state coronavirus task force tallied 197,076 new infections over the past 24 hours, some 14,000 more than the day before and twice as many as two weeks ago. The task force also reported 701 deaths. While infections have soared, daily fatalities in recent weeks have remained steady between roughly 600 and 700. The highly contagious omicron variant accounts for 60% of current infections, according to Anna Popova, head of Russia's public health agency Rospotrebnadzor.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-russia-europe-public-health-11b1fb00d1f4fe5de9e6c39d8d60d455>

Unions and scientists claim Boris is moving 'too far, too soon'

Mr Johnson has declared that all coronavirus rules including self-isolation set to go from end of the month. Unison boss warned 'Covid risks haven't disappeared' and the PM's plans are 'going too far, way too soon.' And SAGE member said No10's scientists haven't discussed the move, cautioning that they bring 'dangers.' A top epidemiologist warned relaxing curbs is a 'political type of statement rather than a scientific one.' YouGov poll shows 75% believe self-isolation requirement should be in place for at least the next few months Nicola Sturgeon's may now extend emergency Covid curbs until September - but will axe masks in classrooms

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10497445/Unions-scientists-claim-Boris-moving-far-soon-rules-set-gone-fortnight.html>

Sweden stops mass COVID-19 PCR testing as symptomatic people are urged to stay home

Sweden has halted wide-scale testing for COVID-19 even among people showing symptoms of an infection, putting an end to the mobile city-square tent sites, drive-in swab centres and home-delivered tests. The move puts the Scandinavian nation at odds with most of Europe, but some experts say it could become the norm as costly testing yields fewer benefits with the easily transmissible but milder Omicron variant.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-10/sweden-stops-mass-covid-19-testing/100820856>

Germany's COVID-19 wave flattens as regions ease curbs

Germany's daily rise in the number of coronavirus infections is slowing, data from the Robert Koch Institute showed on Thursday, indicating that a fourth wave of the pandemic could flatten soon. Germany reported 247,862 new daily coronavirus cases on Thursday, up 5% from the same day last week. The 7-day infection incidence per 100,000 people also rose to 1,465 from 1,451 a day earlier. Germany's adjusted hospitalisation rate rose only slightly to 10.96 per 100,000 people from 10.88 a day earlier.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germanys-covid-19-wave-flattens-regions-ease-curbs-2022-02-10/>

India's pandemic recovery is in awkward full swing

Article reports that India's cities are bustling and economic growth is humming along once more, thanks to officials taking a pragmatic approach to managing the recent wave of Covid-19. It's a sharp contrast to China's rigid approach. Still, rising impatience from bond markets over the government's debt hangover puts the giant emerging market on an awkward trudge back to normality.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/indias-pandemic-recovery-is-awkward-full-swing-2022-02-10/>

Africa transitioning out of pandemic phase of COVID: WHO

Africa is transitioning out of the pandemic phase of the COVID-19 outbreak and moving towards a situation where it will be managing the virus over the long term, the head of the World Health Organization on the continent has said. "I believe that we are transitioning from the pandemic phase and we will now need to manage the presence of this virus in the long term," Dr Matshidiso Moeti told a media briefing on Thursday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/10/africa-transitioning-out-of-pandemic-phase-of-covid-who>

AstraZeneca says COVID vaccine demand high in Latam, Middle East, Asia

Astrazeneca said global interest in government purchase agreements for its COVID-19 vaccine was driven by strong demand in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, even as aggregate global demand this year will fall. Speaking on a media call after the release of the company's fourth-quarter results, CEO Pascal Soriot said the shot, branded Vaxzevria, is receiving a "fantastic welcome" in those regions. The drugmaker earlier flagged a likely fall in COVID-19-related product sales this year, as an expected decline in vaccine revenue is to be partially offset by growth in sales of its antibody drug Evusheld

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/astrazeneca-says-covid-vaccine-demand-high-latam-middle-east-asia-2022-02-10/>

U.S. Agrees to Pay Lilly \$720 Million for New Covid Treatment

The U.S. struck a \$720 million deal with Eli Lilly & Co. for supplies of an experimental Covid drug that appears to fight the omicron variant that's sweeping the country. Under the agreement, Lilly will provide the Department of Health and Human Services with 600,000 doses of bebtelovimab, a monoclonal antibody under U.S. regulatory review for treatment of mild-to-moderate Covid in certain high-risk patients. The new drug is a bid for a Covid comeback by Lilly, whose earlier antibody cocktail was pulled from U.S. treatment programs after it proved ineffective against omicron, which accounts for almost all U.S. cases of the disease. Lab tests of bebtelovimab demonstrate that it neutralizes omicron and the BA.2 subvariant that's also spreading in some countries.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-10/u-s-agrees-to-pay-lilly-720-million-for-new-covid-treatment>

New York eases COVID-19 rules, Massachusetts to drop school mask mandate

The governors of New York and Massachusetts announced on Wednesday that they would end certain mask mandates in their states, joining a growing list of U.S. state leaders planning to lift face-covering rules as the latest COVID-19 surge eases. New York Governor Kathy Hochul said her state would stop requiring people to wear a mask or prove they had received a COVID-19 vaccine

when entering most indoor public places, starting on Thursday, thanks to a decrease in COVID cases and hospitalizations.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/new-york-state-set-drop-indoor-mask-mandate-report-2022-02-09/>

Exit Strategies

US plans to roll out initial 10 million Covid-19 vaccine doses for children under 5 after FDA authorization, CDC document says

If the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine receives emergency use authorization from the US Food and Drug Administration for children 6 months to 5 years old, the tentative plan is to roll out about 10 million vaccine doses initially, according to a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention document posted online. The document, an updated pediatric Covid-19 vaccination planning guide, notes that "planning is for a sequenced rollout involving an initial total of approximately 10 million doses" and that providers and facilities that have ordered doses "must be able to receive vaccine shipment on Monday February 21."

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/09/health/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-children-under-5-cdc/index.html>

EU to provide €125mn to help Covid vaccine distribution in Africa

The EU is giving €125mn to support Covid-19 vaccine distribution in Africa after the international Covax programme said a shortage of syringes and medical equipment was slowing efforts to vaccinate the world's poorest people. Countries across Africa have been plagued by vaccine shortages. Public health experts have warned that the uneven rollout of vaccines could lead to new coronavirus variants emerging in areas where fewer people have been vaccinated.

<https://www.ft.com/content/f98c9081-76bb-47d7-8dd5-14b81690d1f7>

Global coronavirus vaccine rollout: Half the world is now fully vaccinated

About a year after wealthier nations began rolling out coronavirus vaccines, more than half the world's population has been fully vaccinated — a logistical feat without precedent in human history. But the global rollout remains uneven, with poor countries reporting much lower vaccination rates than rich countries. Public health experts have been warning that vaccine inequity is helping prolong the pandemic, as the focus of those seeking to speed up global vaccine coverage begins to shift from resolving a shortfall of supply to distributing doses and persuading people to get them.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/10/covid-half-world-fully-vaccinated-covax/>

Consultation on revoking staff Covid-19 vaccination mandate launches

The British government has today launched its consultation on revoking the Covid-19 vaccination mandate for health and care staff in England. Last month, health and social care secretary Sajid Javid announced a U-turn on plans to require all patient-facing health and care staff to be double vaccinated against Covid-19 by April 2022.

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/coronavirus/consultation-on-revoking-staff-covid-19-vaccination-mandate-launches-09-02-2022/>

U.S. plans to roll out COVID-19 shots for children under 5 years in February

The U.S. government is planning to roll out COVID-19 shots for children under the age of 5 as soon as Feb. 21, according to a document from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is considering authorizing the use of the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine in the age group even though it did not meet a key target in a clinical trial of two- to four-year-olds.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-plans-roll-out-covid-19-shots-children-under-5-years-february-2022-02-09/>

Africa transitioning out of pandemic phase of COVID, says WHO

Africa is transitioning out of the pandemic phase of the COVID-19 outbreak and moving towards a situation where it will be managing the virus over the long term, the head of the World Health

Organization on the continent said. "I believe that we are transitioning from the pandemic phase and we will now need to manage the presence of this virus in the long term," Dr Matshidiso Moeti told a regular online media briefing. "The pandemic is moving into a different phase ... We think that we're moving now, especially with the vaccination expected to increase, into what might become a kind of endemic living with the virus," she said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/africa-transitioning-out-pandemic-phase-covid-says-w-2022-02-10/>

COVAX cuts N.Korea's COVID vaccine allotment after no deliveries accepted

The COVAX global COVID-19 vaccine-sharing programme has scaled back the number of doses allocated for North Korea, international aid organisations said, as the country has so far failed to arrange for any shipments. A website dashboard maintained by the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, shows the number of doses earmarked for North Korea now stands at 1.54 million, down from as many as 8.11 million last year. This year, COVAX is moving to needs-based vaccine allocations, so the accumulation of previously allocated doses to North Korea is no longer relevant, said a spokesperson for Gavi

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/covax-cuts-nkoreas-covid-vaccine-allotment-after-no-deliveries-accepted-2022-02-10/>

UK's Prince Charles isolates after positive COVID-19 test

The UK's Prince Charles has tested positive for COVID-19 and is self-isolating, his office has said. A message on his official Twitter page said Charles tested positive on Thursday morning and was "deeply disappointed" not to be able to attend a scheduled visit in the city of Winchester in southern England. Charles, 73, met dozens of people during a large reception at London's British Museum on Wednesday evening. He was accompanied by his wife Camilla, and was in close contact with Britain's Treasury chief Rishi Sunak, among others. Charles' office, Clarence House, confirmed that he is triple vaccinated. It was not immediately clear what his condition was.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/10/uks-prince-charles-isolates-after-testing-positive-for-covid-19>

Partisan Exits

Paris police authority bans 'freedom convoy' Covid protests

"Freedom convoys" of motorists that have set off from half a dozen French cities in protest against the country's coronavirus restrictions will not be allowed to enter Paris, the capital's police authority has said. "The stated objective of these demonstrations is to 'block the capital' by preventing road traffic from circulating in order to further their demands ... from Friday, before moving on to Brussels on Monday," the authority said. "Because of the risk to public order, these protests will be banned from 11 to 14 February," it said, adding the penalties for blocking public roads included two years in prison, a fine of €4,500 and a three-year driving ban.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/10/paris-police-authority-bans-freedom-convoy-covid-protests>

An unvaccinated truck driver died from Covid-19. His mom has a message for protesting Canadian truckers

Marg Makins' family has been in the trucking business for generations. As she watches the crowds of truckers protest vaccine mandates across Canada, she wants to tell them about her son who died from Covid-19. David Mitchell, 70, was a veteran trucker before he died on October 15, Makins said. She says her son was not vaccinated. "It's a horrible thing to watch somebody die of this disease," Makins, who lives in a small Ontario town, told CNN on Tuesday. "I'm hoping (these truckers) can hear what I have to say and how bad Covid can be and maybe save somebody in their family or even themselves."

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/09/americas/canadian-trucker-dies-covid-19-mother-message-trnd/index.html>

New Zealand police move in to break up anti-COVID vaccine mandate protests

New Zealand police on Thursday arrested 120 people as they attempted to forcefully remove hundreds of protesters camped outside parliament to protest COVID-19 vaccine mandates and tough coronavirus restrictions. Inspired by truckers' demonstrations in Canada, several thousand protesters this week blocked streets near the parliament in capital Wellington with trucks, cars and motorcycles.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-police-make-arrests-covid-vaccine-mandate-protests-enter-3rd-day-2022-02-10/>

Brussels bans 'freedom convoy' protesting COVID curbs from entry

Brussels authorities have banned a pan-European "freedom convoy" of motorists protesting COVID-19 restrictions from entering the Belgian capital, the regional government said in a statement on Thursday. The convoy was expected to arrive at the home of European Union institutions and NATO on Monday. Authorities in Paris had earlier banned the convoy. Protesters set out from southern France on Wednesday in what they called a "freedom convoy" that will converge on Paris and Brussels to demand an end to COVID-19 restrictions, inspired by demonstrators who have gridlocked the Canadian capital Ottawa.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/brussels-bans-freedom-convoy-protesting-covid-curbs-entry-2022-02-10/>

UK police to contact 50 over Downing Street lockdown parties

More than 50 people believed to have attended lockdown parties at British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street will be contacted by police to explain their involvement, officers said on Wednesday, as they considered widening their investigation. A statement from the Metropolitan Police said officers would start contacting people from the end of this week, asking them to complete a document with formal legal status on the events that have left Johnson facing the gravest crisis of his premiership. Police are investigating 12 gatherings held at Johnson's office and residence after an internal inquiry found his staff had enjoyed alcohol-fuelled parties in Downing Street.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-reviewing-johnson-party-decision-after-photo-emerges-2022-02-09/>

'Move on': New Zealand police break up Wellington trucker protest

Scuffles broke out and some 120 people were arrested in New Zealand on Thursday as police began forcefully removing a protest against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other pandemic measures outside the parliament building in Wellington. Inspired by the trucker demonstrations in Canada, protesters began blocking streets in the capital with trucks, cars and motorbikes on Tuesday, pitching their tents outside parliament.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/10/move-on-new-zealand-police-break-up-wellington-trucker-protest>

New York City set to fire 3000 unvaccinated workers -report

New York City plans to fire roughly 3,000 municipal workers by the end of this week for failing to get the COVID-19 vaccine, the New York Times reported on Thursday. The move comes even as the state of New York prepares to join other U.S. states and cities in lifting many COVID-19 restrictions amid a sharp decline in infections linked to the Omicron variant. Bill de Blasio, Adams' predecessor as mayor, in December ordered all public and private sector workers in the city to get inoculated with the vaccines. Firing those workers who do not comply is one of the harshest pandemic policies in the nation.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/new-york-city-set-fire-3000-unvaccinated-workers-report-2022-02-10/>

Continued Lockdown

Japan's COVID-19 surge shows signs of peaking as curbs extended

Japan's biggest wave of COVID-19 cases to date is showing signs of peaking though authorities are

extending virus curbs into next month to try to bring down the rate of hospitalisations. Top medical adviser Shigeru Omi said on Thursday that health centres would shift towards focusing on care for the elderly and those at risk of developing serious illness. "While infections are still increasing, there's a relative slowing trend among working people in their 20s and 30s," he told reporters after a health task-force meeting.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-covid-19-surge-shows-signs-peaking-curbs-extended-2022-02-10/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Inhaled vaccine for COVID-19 protects against variants of concern

In a groundbreaking development toward curbing the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, scientists have developed an innovative inhaled vaccine for COVID-19 that offers robust disease protection. Pioneered by a team at McMaster University, the innovative inhaled COVID-19 vaccine has been demonstrated to provide broad, long-lasting protection against the original strain of coronavirus and variants of concern (VOC). A study has signified that the revolutionary inhaled form of COVID-19 vaccine has substantial immune mechanisms and benefits due to being delivered directly into the respiratory tract compared to the standard method injection. The team's research is published in the journal Cell

<https://www.healtheuropa.eu/inhaled-vaccine-for-covid-19-protects-against-variants-of-concern/113444/>

AZ halts development of Beta variant COVID-19 vaccine -

AstraZeneca confirmed today that it has discontinued clinical development of a follow-up to its COVID-19 vaccine Vaxzevria targeted at the Beta variant of the virus, which started development before the emergence of the Delta and Omicron strains. The new vaccine - codenamed AZD2816 - started phase 2/3 trials as a booster dose for people vaccinated with Vaxzevria or mRNA vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna last June, when Beta was still the dominant SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern. In its annual results statement, AZ said that it took the decision on the back of data showing that a third dose of Vaxzevria increased the immune response to new variants, including Omicron which is currently driving new COVID-19 cases around the world.

<https://pharmaphorum.com/news/az-halts-development-of-beta-variant-covid-19-vaccine/>

Chinese firm to get funding boost for vaccine against all Covid-19 strains

Global foundation CEPI will invest another US\$8.15 million to support phase 1 and 2 trials of the shot as well as a vaccine for the original coronavirus strain. While existing jabs still offer protection against severe Covid-19 outcomes, new variants such as Delta and Omicron have exposed their limitations

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3166437/coronavirus-chinese-firm-zerun-bio-get-funding-boost-vaccine>

GlaxoSmithKline's COVID-19 antibody delivers as Nucala, Trelegy eclipse £1B landmark

GlaxoSmithKline ended 2021 on a relatively high note saleswise, with its COVID-19 antibody therapy delivering a nice contribution and two key meds surpassing the £1 billion annual revenue mark for the first time. Xevudy, the Vir Biotechnology-partnered COVID therapy, delivered £828 million (\$1.12 billion) sales in the fourth quarter. Out of the 25% growth GSK's drug business enjoyed at constant currencies during the three-month period, the antibody contributed nearly 20 percentage points, the company said. Based on existing supply contracts for more than 1.7 million doses—about 40% of which were delivered in 2021—GSK expects about £1.4 billion in sales from Xevudy in 2022.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/covid-19-antibody-delivers-for-glaxosmithkline-as-nucala-trelegy-eclipse-ps1b-landmark>

The US still isn't getting Covid-19 data right

As the Omicron wave recedes in the United States, public health officials are faced with a new round

of decision-making on the best way for the country to move forward. It's a critical moment to rebuild the trust that has been lost among weary Americans over the past two years, said Lori Tremmel Freeman, chief executive officer of the National Association of County and City Health Officials. But the best way to gain that trust -- offering a transparent, metric-based approach -- is challenged by a fractured and undervalued health data infrastructure. It's problem that has long plagued the United States and one that has hindered the ability to respond swiftly and pointedly to the Covid-19 pandemic since the beginning.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/10/health/covid-data-problems/index.html>

South Korea to roll out Novavax COVID-19 vaccine next week

South Korea will begin offering Novavax Inc.'s COVID-19 vaccine at hospitals, nursing homes and public health centers next week, officials said, adding another tool to fight a fast-developing omicron surge. The country reported a record 54,122 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, a 12-fold increase from daily levels seen in mid-January, when omicron first became the country's dominant strain. But officials are expressing cautious hope that the country's high vaccination rate will prevent an explosion in serious illnesses and deaths. As of Thursday, 86% of South Koreans were fully vaccinated and 56% had received booster shots under a mass immunization program that has been mainly dependent on Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA vaccines.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/south-korea-seoul-covid-pfizer-moderna-b2011944.html>

Africa COVID cases could be seven times higher than reported - WHO

The World Health Organization estimates that the number of COVID-19 infections in Africa could be seven times higher than official data suggests, while deaths from the virus could be two to three times higher, its regional head said on Thursday. "We're very much aware that our surveillance systems problems that we had on the continent, with access to testing supplies, for example, have led to an underestimation of the cases," Dr Matshidiso Moeti told a regular online media briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/africa-covid-cases-could-be-seven-times-higher-than-reported-who-2022-02-10/>

Japan Health Ministry committee approves Pfizer oral COVID-19 drug

A Japanese Health Ministry committee has approved the oral COVID-19 drug made by U.S. drugmaker Pfizer Inc , the ministry said in a statement on Friday. Jiji news agency later reported that Health Minister Shigeyuki Goto had formally approved the drug, a move that officials had said they expected would take place in mid-February. Pfizer applied for approval in January.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/japan-health-ministry-committee-approves-pfizer-oral-covid-19-drug-2022-02-10/>

Risk of new heart problems jumps after COVID; mRNA shot side effects no different for cancer patients

Researchers at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs compared rates of new cardiovascular problems in 153,760 individuals infected with the coronavirus before vaccines were available, 5.6 million people who did not catch the virus, and another 5.9 million people whose data was collected before the pandemic. An average of one year after their recovery from the acute phase of the infection, the COVID-19 survivors had a 63% higher risk for heart attack, a 69% higher risk for problematic irregular heart rhythm, a 52% higher risk of stroke, a 72% higher risk of heart failure, and a nearly three times higher risk of a potentially fatal blood clot in the lungs compared with the other two groups, according to a report published on Monday in Nature

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/science/risk-new-heart-problems-jumps-after-covid-mrna-shot-side-effects-no-different-2022-02-09/>

Coronavirus can destroy the placenta and lead to stillbirths

New research suggests the coronavirus can invade and destroy the placenta and lead to stillbirths in

infected women. It's an uncommon outcome for any pregnancy but women with COVID-19 face an elevated risk. Authorities believe vaccination can help prevent these cases. Researchers in 12 countries, including the United States, analyzed placental and autopsy tissue from 64 stillbirths and four newborns who died shortly after birth. The cases all involved unvaccinated women who had COVID-19 during their pregnancy. The study bolsters evidence from small case reports and it confirms that placenta damage rather than an infection of the fetus is the likely cause of many COVID-19-related stillbirths, said Dr. Jeffery Goldstein, a pathologist at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-2ac91326c0cd16f67eba01885516ef2d>

Novavax says COVID-19 shot 80% effective in adolescent study

Novavax Inc said its two-dose vaccine was 80% effective against COVID-19 in a late-stage trial testing the shot in teens aged 12 to 17 years. The trial involved 2,247 adolescents and took place between May and September last year when the Delta variant was the dominant strain in the United States. The vaccine was 82% effective against the variant. The U.S. biotech said it expects to submit applications to global regulators for the shot's use in adolescents during the first quarter.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novavax-says-covid-19-shot-80-effective-adolescent-study-2022-02-10/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

In U.K.'s Omicron Wave, Many People Are Dying With Covid-19, Not From It

For the first time since the start of the pandemic, the number of people dying in the U.K. with a recent positive Covid-19 test is significantly overstating the true death toll from the virus, according to new data. In recent weeks, a commonly watched measure of Covid-19 mortality—deaths within 28 days of a positive test—has been around 30% higher than the number of registered deaths involving Covid-19 and nearly 75% higher than the number of registered deaths where Covid-19 was named as the main cause. That gap contrasts with most of the pandemic, when those two metrics tracked one another closely—at least after the first wave, when a lack of testing capacity meant that the death certificate figures significantly exceeded deaths within 28 days of a positive test.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-u-k-s-omicron-wave-many-people-are-dying-with-covid-19-not-from-it-11644499077>

Russia's daily coronavirus cases hit record high

Russia reported 197,076 COVID-19 cases on Thursday, a record daily high, as the Omicron variant, which accounted for 70% of detected infections, continued to spread across the country. Russia also recorded 701 deaths in the past 24 hours, the government's coronavirus task force said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-daily-coronavirus-cases-hit-record-high-2022-02-10/>

Vietnam warns of hospitals strain as COVID-19 cases spike after holiday

Vietnam warned on Thursday that its healthcare system could become overloaded, after seeing a surge in new daily coronavirus infections following its week-long Lunar New Year holiday. The Southeast Asian country reported nearly 24,000 new cases on Wednesday, compared to about 15,000 per day in the week before the annual holiday, when millions of people travelled to their rural homes and to tourist hotspots. "Increased travelling will lead to the risk of more infections among the community, including the risk of spreading the Omicron variant," the health ministry said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-warns-hospitals-strain-covid-19-cases-spike-after-holiday-2022-02-10/>

Palestinian authorities step up COVID measures as hospitals fill up

Palestinian authorities have ramped up COVID-19 testing and vaccinations in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and warned that public indifference to their calls for masking and social

distancing is hampering efforts to fight the pandemic. The Palestinian Authority Health Ministry said the total number of active cases of COVID-19 in the two territories stood at 64,000 on Wednesday due to the highly infectious Omicron variant. "Three weeks ago we were recording up to 300 infections daily, but in the last few days we crossed the 11,000 mark," said Mahdi Rashed, director of health services in Ramallah. "It's clear this is a result of the Omicron variant spreading."

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/palestinian-authorities-step-up-covid-measures-hospitals-fill-up-2022-02-09/>

New COVID-19 infections decrease in the Americas, says regional agency

New COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations are beginning to go down in some countries in the Americas, but deaths continue to rise in parts of Central and South America, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said on Wednesday. In North America, new infections and deaths decreased in all three countries in the past week, while hospitalizations and ICU admissions were down in the United States and Canada, the regional agency said. New infections in El Salvador dropped by 70%, but deaths increased by 42% in Venezuela, PAHO said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/new-covid-19-infections-decrease-americas-says-regional-agency-2022-02-09/>

S.Korea turns to self-treatment as Omicron fuels COVID surge

South Korea said on Thursday patients with mild coronavirus symptoms will have to treat themselves, aiming to free up medical resources for more serious cases, as new infections hit a fresh high because of the fast spreading Omicron variant. South Korea has largely been a COVID-19 mitigation success story, thanks to aggressive testing and tracing, social distancing and mask wearing. But as the highly infectious but less deadly Omicron variant began spreading, the government this month started to shift its strategy away from testing and tracing and towards self-monitoring, diagnosis and at-home treatment.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-turns-self-treatment-omicron-fuels-soaring-covid-19-cases-2022-02-10/>

UK reports 68214 COVID cases, 276 deaths

The United Kingdom reported 68,214 new COVID-19 cases and 276 deaths in its daily official data on Wednesday, with the seven-day figure for both falling compared with the week before. In the last seven days, infection numbers were down 23% and deaths were down 16% on the week before.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-reports-68214-covid-cases-276-deaths-2022-02-09/>

Hong Kong COVID infections surge, experts warn could near 30000 a day

Hong Kong reported 986 new coronavirus infections on Thursday as authorities scramble to contain an outbreak which medical experts warn could see 28,000 daily cases by the end of March, with the unvaccinated elderly a particular worry. The rise in cases, up 10-fold since Feb. 1, is proving to be the biggest test for the global financial hub's "dynamic zero" policy of virus suppression, which has turned it into one of the world's most isolated cities. Following mainland China, Hong Kong is trying to curb outbreaks as soon as possible, in contrast with many other places that are trying to "live with COVID", relying on high vaccination rates to bring protection while easing restrictions.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-leader-deeply-sorry-long-queues-amid-covid-surge-2022-02-10/>

New Lockdown

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam apologises for long Covid testing queues as new restrictions bite

Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam, has said she is "deeply sorry and anxious" about the lengthy wait for residents to get tested or enter isolation facilities after a record number of new coronavirus cases

left authorities scrambling. Hong Kong's daily Covid-19 infections nearly doubled to a record 1,161 cases on Wednesday as the global financial hub battles a rapid surge that could pose the biggest test yet of its "dynamic zero" policy. Writing on her official Facebook page on Wednesday night, Lam said that the government was working hard to enhance capacity and that the fast-spreading infections, hitting places like elderly care homes, were the last thing she wanted to see.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/10/hong-kong-leader-carrie-lam-apologises-for-long-covid-testing-queues-as-new-restrictions-bite>