

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Covid deaths in England may rise as cases in over-55s increase

Article reports that a rise in Covid infections in the over-55s could see an increased number of hospitalisations and deaths in the coming weeks, experts have warned. Imperial College London's latest React-1 study found that while infections appeared to be slowing down or plateauing in most younger age groups in England, they were rising in over-55s, with no clear sign of when they will peak. According to their latest data, the average prevalence of Covid-19 across England stood at 6.4%, based on swabs collected between 9 and 31 March from a random sample of nearly 100,000 people. "That's by far the highest we've seen at any time since [the study began] in May 2020," said Prof Paul Elliott, who led the research.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/06/covid-deaths-in-england-may-rise-as-cases-in-over-55s-increase>

Citing decreasing COVID cases, South Africa ends emergency

With declining cases of COVID-19, South Africa on Tuesday ended its national state of disaster, the legal framework used for two years to impose restrictions to combat the pandemic. South African sports fans can now return to stadiums in large numbers to watch soccer, rugby and cricket matches. Sports venues can take up to 50% of capacity with people who show proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test done within 72 hours. Most restrictions will be lifted, but people will be required to wear masks in indoor public spaces. International travelers must provide proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test done within 72 hours. "While the pandemic is not over, and while the virus remains among us, these conditions no longer require that we remain in a national state of disaster," President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a nationally televised speech Monday night. "Going forward, the pandemic will be managed in terms of the national health act."

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-sports-cyril-ramaphosa-cricket-66d3d0fab99253df3e094798cb96e6d0>

Do I Need Covid Booster? Third Dose Protects Against Omicron for Months: Study

Three Covid-19 vaccinations offer protection against severe symptoms even after four months, according to a study from Denmark, one of the countries first hit by the fast-spreading omicron variant. More than 121 days after being administered, third doses of vaccine still offered as much as 77.3% protection against symptoms that require hospitalization, the study found. Denmark estimates that about 70% of its adult population contracted omicron from November to March. The Nordic country ended all virus restrictions on Feb. 1 because a high vaccination rate prevented omicron from overburdening its hospitals. The study, published by Denmark's Statens Serum Institut for infectious diseases, isn't yet peer-reviewed. It also showed that the third dose offered as much as 90.2% protection against hospitalization immediately after it was taken and that three shots reduces the risk of getting omicron by almost 50%.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/third-covid-shot-protects-against-omicron-for-months-study-says>

Hit by staff shortages, airlines and airports struggle with travel recovery

Thousands of holidaymakers have seen their Easter getaways disrupted or cancelled because airlines and airports do not have enough staff to meet the recovery in demand as pandemic restrictions are eased in Europe. High rates of COVID-19 in Britain have caused staff absences for airlines and airports that were already struggling to recruit after workers deserted the industry

during the pandemic. Low-cost carrier easyJet was one of the worst affected, saying it cancelled around 60 UK flights on Tuesday and expected to pull a similar number in the coming days.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hit-by-staff-shortages-airlines-airports-struggle-with-travel-recovery-2022-04-05/>

Global groups propose pandemic plan costing \$10 billion a year

It will take \$15 billion in grants this year and another \$10 billion annually after that to establish and maintain an adequate toolkit to respond to COVID-19 and address future pandemic threats, according to four organizations focused on global health and the economy. The estimate is laid out in "A Global Strategy to Manage the Long-term Risks of COVID-19," a working paper published on Tuesday by the International Monetary Fund, in partnership with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Global Fund and Wellcome Trust.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/global-groups-propose-pandemic-plan-cost-10-bln-year-2022-04-05/>

Queensland's COVID-19 vaccination mandate for cafes, pubs and clubs set to ease

A mandate preventing people unvaccinated against COVID-19 from visiting many public venues in Queensland will be eased from next Thursday. People will no longer need to prove they have had two doses of a vaccine before heading into cafes, pubs and clubs from 1:00am on April 14. This also includes theme parks, casinos, cinemas, weddings, showgrounds, stadiums, galleries, libraries and museums.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-05/qld-coronavirus-covid19-vaccination-mandate-eased-april-14/100958850>

New Zealand's Covid strategy was one of the world's most successful - what can we learn from it?

Two weeks ago marked the two-year anniversary of New Zealand's adoption of the elimination strategy and a lockdown that successfully stamped out the first wave of Covid-19. By chance, it was also the week that the government announced a major relaxation of Covid-19 control measures in response to the Omicron variant wave sweeping the country. By most metrics, the New Zealand Covid-19 response - the initial elimination strategy which has now transitioned to a mitigation strategy - has been one of the most successful in the world. It got the country through the first 18 months of the pandemic until vaccines became widely available, giving it very low Covid-19 mortality rates. Life expectancy actually increased during this period. Protecting public health has also been good for protecting the economy, resulting in relatively good economic growth and low unemployment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/apr/05/new-zealands-covid-strategy-was-one-of-the-worlds-most-successful-what-can-it-learn-from-it>

IMF calls for \$15 bln this year to manage long-term risks of COVID

Countries around the world should provide \$15 billion in grants this year and \$10 billion a year thereafter to manage the long-term risks of COVID-19, the International Monetary Fund said in a new staff paper released on Tuesday. The paper, prepared with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Global Fund, and charitable group Wellcome, said a new, more comprehensive approach was needed immediately to strengthen global health systems and limit the already staggering \$13.8 trillion cost of the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/imf-calls-15-bln-this-year-manage-long-term-risks-covid-2022-04-05/>

S.Africa's COVID state of disaster to end at midnight - Ramaphosa

South Africa's national state of disaster, in place for more than two years in response to COVID-19, will end from midnight local time on Monday, President Cyril Ramaphosa said. The national state of disaster has been the government's main mechanism for managing the pandemic. Removing it will

do away with the vast majority of remaining COVID-19 restrictions, aside from a few that will remain in place on a transitional basis, Ramaphosa said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safricas-covid-state-disaster-end-midnight-president-ramaphosa-2022-04-04/>

US pulls GSK's COVID drug as omicron sibling dominates cases

GlaxoSmithKline's IV drug for COVID-19 should no longer be used because it is likely ineffective against the omicron subvariant that now accounts for most U.S. cases, federal health regulators said Tuesday. The Food and Drug Administration announced that the company's antibody drug sotrovimab is no longer authorized to treat patients in any U.S. state or territory. The decision was expected, because the FDA had repeatedly restricted the drug's use in the Northeast and other regions as the BA.2 version of omicron became dominant. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday that BA.2 accounts for 72% of the COVID-19 cases sequenced by health authorities. Some experts have warned of a BA.2-driven surge similar to those that have hit European countries, though U.S. case counts have yet to rise.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-glaxosmithkline-medication-d3d3c46bae3b5a433bbd49f09cf0bbcf>

Exit Strategies

Canada panel makes initial recommendations on second COVID booster shot

An official Canadian panel has provided initial recommendations on the use of a second COVID-19 vaccine booster dose for some Canadians as infections rise in many parts of the country, Health Canada said. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommended Canadian jurisdictions to prepare for the deployment of a second vaccine booster dose program over the coming weeks prioritizing people 80 years old and over and residents of long-term care.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/canada-panel-makes-initial-recommendations-second-covid-booster-shot-2022-04-05/>

Is Covid Over? African Union, Covax Turn Down Moderna (MRNA) Vaccine Doses

Two buyers of Covid-19 vaccines for low- and middle-income countries have declined options to purchase hundreds of millions of additional doses from Moderna Inc., a sign of waning demand as the pandemic eases. The African Union and Covax, the World Health Organization-backed group, decided not to obtain more of the vaccine as developing nations struggle to turn supplies into inoculations. Lower-income countries left behind in the global rollout are now grappling with a lack of funds, hesitancy, supply-chain obstacles and other factors that are hampering distribution.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/buyers-turn-down-moderna-covid-vaccine-as-pandemic-demand-wanes>

US to donate more than 100mn children's Covid doses to poorer countries

The Biden administration will soon start donating children's doses of Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine to poorer countries for the first time, although officials warn some might not reach their intended recipients because of a fight in Congress over pandemic funding. The donation of more than 100mn doses for five to 11-year-olds, which is set to be announced on Tuesday, is part of the administration's pledge to give a total of 1.2bn doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to low- and middle-income countries. But Biden administration officials say a congressional dispute over billions of dollars' worth of extra Covid funding could mean the jabs do not get to where they are needed.

<https://www.ft.com/content/3e5f9359-67a5-4f24-971e-51761119899b>

Here's what's in the \$10 billion Covid-19 aid bill

The Senate has reached a bipartisan deal to provide an additional \$10 billion in Covid-19 assistance, less than half of what the White House originally had requested. It would allow the Biden administration to purchase more vaccines and therapeutics, as well as maintain testing capacity and research. But it does not include \$5 billion in funding for global Covid-19 aid, nor would it replenish

the program that pays for testing, treating and vaccinating the uninsured. The deal would be paid for using unspent funds from the Democrats' \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which was enacted in March 2021.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/04/politics/covid-19-aid-bill-whats-in-it/index.html>

Court leery of forcing OSHA to adopt COVID healthcare worker rule

A U.S. appeals court on Monday sounded skeptical of claims by a group of unions that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can be forced to adopt a permanent rule to protect healthcare workers from COVID-19. Judges on a U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit panel pressed the unions' lawyer on how the court could have the power to require OSHA to adopt a rule, particularly after the agency said it needed more time to review the issue.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/court-leery-forcing-osha-adopt-covid-healthcare-worker-rule-2022-04-04/>

Mexico says WTO COVID vaccine deal should go beyond IP waiver

Any World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on COVID-19 vaccines should include more than just a waiver on intellectual property, Mexico's representative to the trade body said, in a sign that consensus is proving tough to forge. The United States, the European Union, India and South Africa reached a provisional consensus on elements of a long-sought IP waiver for the vaccines, according to a document that circulated among governments last month

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-says-wto-covid-vaccine-deal-should-go-beyond-ip-waiver-2022-04-04/>

U.S. Senate negotiators reach deal on \$10 billion for COVID aid

Negotiators in Congress have agreed to an additional \$10 billion in COVID-19 funding to address U.S. needs but have dropped international aid from the package, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Monday. The compromise, if passed, would be less than half of the \$22.5 billion initially sought by U.S. President Joe Biden to combat COVID, prepare for future variants and shore up the nation's pandemic infrastructure.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/lawmakers-back-10-bln-us-covid-funds-report-2022-04-04/>

Congressional Negotiators Settle on \$10 Billion for Covid-19 Tests, Treatments

Senators unveiled a \$10 billion deal to further fund the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic with money repurposed from earlier aid rounds, well below what the White House originally requested for vaccines and therapeutics. The package will allow the U.S. to purchase supplies, including more tests and vaccines, that the Biden administration said would be needed to continue to fight the virus. The \$10 billion pulls from unused money in earlier bills passed by Congress, rather than representing new spending.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/congressional-negotiators-settle-on-10-billion-for-covid-tests-treatments-11649092836>

Partisan Exits

Judge grants class-action status to COVID-sickened prisoners

A federal judge has certified a class-action lawsuit in Oregon over state leaders' response to the COVID-19 pandemic inside its prisons. A group of adults in custody who contracted COVID-19 first sued the state in April 2020, alleging culpability by Gov. Kate Brown, Corrections Department Director Colette Peters and Health Authority Director Patrick Allen, among other state officials. The lawsuit acknowledges Corrections has taken some measures but argues they have not been enough. "This really is quite a groundbreaking order, and decision, and it could potentially be a model for advocates in other parts of the country where they're having similar problems," Corene Kendrick, deputy director of the American Civil Liberty Union's National Prison Project, told Oregon Public Broadcasting this week.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-patrick-allen-kate-brown-oregon-3e16c296b69de52c70a1100e6a1d28ef>

Biden orders push on long COVID, pandemic's shadowy mystery

Confronting the pandemic's lasting shadow, President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered a new national research push on long COVID, while also directing federal agencies to support patients dealing with the mysterious and debilitating condition. Biden assigned the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate an urgent new initiative across federal agencies, building on research already under way at the National Institutes of Health. He also directed federal agencies to support patients and doctors by providing science-based best practices for treating long COVID, maintaining access to insurance coverage, and protecting the rights of workers coping with the uncertainties of the malaise. Of particular concern are effects on mental health.

<https://apnews.com/article/biden-covid-science-health-lifestyle-0b07271ad444318fe7a531ed080440e6>

Covid Spending Bill Hits Senate Snag on Amendment Dispute

A hard-fought \$10 billion emergency Covid-19 compromise bill hit a last-minute snag in the Senate Tuesday as Republicans demanded a deal to propose amendments. Republicans want to force a vote on the Biden administration's repeal of Title 42, a pandemic-related restriction on border crossings, a move likely to create headaches in the Democratic caucus. Other Republicans, including Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa, said they have amendments they want considered as well. Utah Senator Mitt Romney, the lead Republican negotiator on the pandemic funding, urged his caucus to vote against a procedural motion on the bill, essentially stalling it until the two parties can agree on the parameters for floor debate.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/covid-spending-bill-hits-senate-snag-amid-amendment-dispute>

Scotiabank CEO criticizes government bank tax, misses AGM due to COVID

Bank of Nova Scotia Chief Executive Officer Brian Porter criticised the Canadian government's proposed bank tax in prepared remarks to shareholders on Tuesday, calling them a "knee-jerk reaction that sends the wrong message to the global investment community." Porter said the proposed tax on banks' profits would ultimately affect shareholders, including pensioners and retail investors. Canada's third-largest lender emailed Porter's speech to media after a positive COVID-19 test kept him from attending the meeting. Chief Financial Officer Raj Viswanathan read an abridged version during the bank's first in-person shareholders' meeting since the pandemic.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/finance/topstories/scotiabank-ceo-criticizes-government-bank-tax-misses-agm-due-to-covid/ar-AAVTiYP>

Using the False Claims Act to combat COVID-19 fraud

The COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant economic crisis precipitated the largest increase in government spending in American history. Major stimulus legislation such as the CARES Act of 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 created and funded programs that added trillions of dollars to the U.S. economy at lightning speed. While these efforts helped millions of Americans, the unprecedented flood of money also provided ample opportunity for unscrupulous actors. The Small Business Administration's Office of Inspector General estimates that the agency handed out more than \$80 billion in potentially fraudulent loans during the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/using-false-claims-act-combat-covid-19-fraud-2022-04-05/>

U.S. Fed bars six former bankers over COVID grant fraud

The U.S. Federal Reserve on Tuesday said it had barred six former bank executives from Regions Bank and Bank of America Merrill Lynch from the industry for fraudulently obtaining COVID-19 pandemic relief grants. Under the CARES Act, some small businesses were eligible to receive funds to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The six individuals obtained funds based on fraudulent representations and used the money for unauthorized personal expenses, the Fed said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fed-bars-six-former-bankers-over-covid-grant-fraud-2022-04-05/>

Continued Lockdown

'This is inhumane': the cost of zero Covid in Shanghai

Jia Ruiling's* father has been enduring severe pain since 17 March. He has late-stage stomach cancer, but his hospital refused to treat him because Jia's neighbourhood in Shanghai was under lockdown as a result of a handful of Covid cases. "We begged the hospital to accept him again and again," Jia said. "At some point my father was in so much pain that he wanted to take his life. What can we do? Please, help us let the central government know." China's strict zero-Covid policy means all positive cases have to be hospitalised. But in the last few weeks, as case numbers have risen sharply and 26 million people entered a harsh lockdown, mainland China's most important financial hub has come to a standstill. The number of new daily positive cases exceeded 10,000 for the first time on Monday. Although 38,000 health workers have been shipped in from around China to help, medical resources are overwhelmingly diverted to combat Covid, leaving it difficult for non-Covid patients like Jia's father to access them.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/this-is-inhumane-the-cost-of-zero-covid-in-shanghai>

Shanghai lockdown deepens after new surge in asymptomatic COVID cases

Chinese authorities on Tuesday extended a lockdown in Shanghai to cover all of the financial centre's 26 million people, despite growing anger over quarantine rules in the city, where latest results show only 268 symptomatic daily COVID-19 cases. In a major test of China's zero-tolerance strategy to eliminate the novel coronavirus, the government widened the lockdown to eastern parts of the city and extended until further notice restrictions in western districts, which had been due to expire on Tuesday. The broader lockdown came after testing saw asymptomatic COVID-19 cases surge to more than 13,000. Symptomatic cases fell on Monday to 268, from 425 the previous day.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-lockdown-deepens-after-new-surge-asymptomatic-cases-2022-04-05/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Covid Antibody Therapy From Vir, Glaxo Loses U.S. Authorization

A Covid-19 antibody treatment from Vir Biotechnology Inc. and GlaxoSmithKline Plc lost its U.S. authorization as the therapy is unlikely to work against the dominant omicron BA.2 subvariant, regulators said. The treatment, sotrovimab, is no longer authorized in any U.S. state or territory, since the subvariant accounts for more than half of virus cases in all regions, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Tuesday in a statement. Last month, the agency limited use of the drug only in parts of the country where the the subvariant dominated. Recent data suggested the treatment was less effective against BA.2 than other variants.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/covid-treatment-from-vir-glaxo-loses-u-s-authorization>

Future of Covid Boosters Comes Down to Crucial Meeting of FDA Advisers

An all-star panel of Covid experts will convene this week to hash out how and when vaccines should be updated to address future variants as the virus continues to rapidly mutate. The meeting of U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisers should provide some of the first hints of its strategy to map out a more proactive plan for developing strain-specific boosters. Until now, the process has been led by drugmakers such as Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc., which have gained approval for boosters for specific populations. This is likely just the beginning. Many researchers believe the vaccines will need to be periodically updated to counteract new strains, just like annual flu shots

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-05/future-of-boosters-comes-down-to-crucial-meeting-of-fda-advisers>

Biden launches U.S. plan to help Americans struggling with long COVID

President Joe Biden on Tuesday tasked the U.S. health department with developing a national action plan to tackle the looming health crisis of long COVID, a complex, multi-symptom condition that leaves many of its sufferers unable to work. Long COVID, which arises months after a COVID-19

infection, affects nearly 7% of all U.S. adults and 2.3% of the overall population and has cost an estimated \$386 billion in lost wages, savings and medical bills, according to an analysis by the Solve Long Covid Initiative, a non-profit research and advocacy group.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-launches-national-plan-address-long-covid-2022-04-05/>

Prior COVID vaccination induces a more robust antibody response to Omicron

A recent study posted to the medRxiv* preprint server assessed the impact of prior severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) vaccination on the human immune response against SARS-CoV-2 Omicron infection. Various studies have reported lower susceptibility of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant against neutralizing antibodies. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the potential of previous SARS-CoV-2 infections in modifying the human immune response against the novel Omicron variant.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220405/Prior-COVID-vaccination-induces-a-more-robust-antibody-response-to-Omicron.aspx>

Could computer models be the key to better COVID vaccines?

When Moderna joined the hunt for a coronavirus vaccine in early 2020, the company had only limited clinical experience with its technology. Scientists had tested the company's messenger RNA (mRNA)-based vaccines against a few viruses, such as avian influenza and Zika, in humans. They found that the highest dose levels — upwards of 300 micrograms — often triggered undesirable side effects. The lowest doses (around 10 µg) did not always elicit a sufficient immune response. There seemed to be a happy medium: in a two-dose vaccine for another respiratory virus with pandemic potential¹, a new strain of bird flu, the sweet spot was around 100 µg. So, it made intuitive sense for Moderna, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and its collaborators at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in Bethesda, Maryland, to try something similar to tackle SARS-CoV-2.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00924-8>

An equitable roadmap for ending the COVID-19 pandemic

Many governments are rolling back restrictions, but the pandemic will end only with a renewed focus on equitable distribution of vaccines and therapeutics, responsive public health plans, and policies to protect the vulnerable. More than 2 years into the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains unclear when and how it will end. The global outcome is dependent on multiple factors: the level of cooperation between governments; equitable access to vaccines, testing and therapeutics; local government action and the response of citizens; and competing outbreaks, conflicts or natural disasters. Ending the pandemic will also require a focus on the elderly and other vulnerable populations, as well as those in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-022-01787-2>

COVID-19: The endless search for the origins of the virus

Even as COVID-19 enters its third year as a pandemic, the world is no closer to knowing the source of the virus that sparked it all. Just six weeks after declaring a global health emergency, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of the new coronavirus a pandemic on March 11, 2020. But while the animal hosts of the coronaviruses that caused the 2003-2004 SARS and 2012 MERS outbreaks were identified in a matter of months, the origin of the current SARS-CoV-2 virus – along with its myriad mutations and variants – has proved more elusive. Last September, a task force set up by The Lancet COVID-19 Commission to search for the pandemic's ultimate source was disbanded after 14 months, amid rancour, recriminations and concerns about conflicts of interest. And the probe by the WHO, a public health agency with no investigatory powers, has largely been stalled after a tightly controlled fact-finding trip to China in January 2021.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/5/covid-19-source-china-animal-or-lab>

We shouldn't dismiss 'incidental' covid-19 infections in UK hospitals

The UK is currently experiencing a surge in covid-19 cases caused by the omicron variant, in common with many countries. Inevitably, the number of people in UK hospitals with the illness is also rising, and reached 2509 people admitted on 28 March – just over half the daily admissions seen at the highest peak of the pandemic in the UK in January 2021, when it reached more than 4500 per day.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2314916-we-shouldnt-dismiss-incidental-covid-19-infections-in-uk-hospitals/>

Omicron sub-variant BA.2 makes up 72% of COVID variants in U.S. - CDC

The U.S. national public health agency said on Monday the BA.2 sub-variant of Omicron was estimated to account for nearly three of every four coronavirus variants in the country. Overall COVID-19 cases in the United States have dropped sharply after hitting record levels in January, but a resurgence in cases in parts of Asia and Europe has raised concerns that another wave could follow in the United States. The country's health experts, however, believe it is unlikely. The seven-day moving average of U.S. COVID cases was 26,106 as of April 1, marginally lower than 26,309 from a week earlier, as per data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/omicron-sub-variant-ba2-makes-up-72-covid-variants-us-cdc-2022-04-04/>

Covid-19 first-of-its-kind study saw volunteers infected for science

The first “controlled investigation” of Covid-19 has been carried out and it has allowed researchers to dispel a widespread myth about the way people become infected. The human challenge study involved people being deliberately infected with a virus — in this case it was SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. The study, published last week in the journal Nature Medicine, found that only the most minuscule amount of the virus is needed to infect a person — as much as a single airborne droplet from a person sneezing, coughing or talking. It also found that, despite what most people have been told, viral shedding and transmissibility occur at high levels when a person is infected regardless of whether they have severe or mild symptoms.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/science/covid19-firstofitskind-study-saw-volunteers-infected-for-science/news-story/770261dddb58d36048136a78e4c961b1>

China Variants and Omicron XE Put Fresh Focus on Covid Mutations

The disclosure of new Covid variants emerging in China and the rise of a potentially more transmissible strain in the U.K. has recast the spotlight on the ongoing risk of the virus, even as health experts say there's no reason to panic. The World Health Organization said a hybrid of two omicron strains -- BA.1 and BA.2 -- that was first detected in the U.K. and dubbed XE could be the most transmissible variant yet. It is estimated to spread 10% more easily than BA.2, which itself was more transmissible than the original omicron famous for its ease of penetration.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-04/china-variants-and-omicron-xe-put-fresh-focus-on-covid-mutations>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Hong Kong reports 3,254 new COVID-19 cases

Hong Kong health authorities reported 3,254 new COVID-19 infections on Tuesday, up from 3,138 on Monday, and 87 deaths as cases in the global financial centre continue a broader downward trend.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-3254-new-covid-19-cases-2022-04-05/>

Quebec extends mask mandate to end of April as COVID hospitalizations rise

Quebec will require masks to be worn in indoor public spaces for all of April, delaying a plan to relax the measure by the middle of the month as it and other Canadian provinces face a new COVID-19 wave, a top public health official said on Tuesday. The province, the second most populous in

Canada, will become one of the last parts of North America to continue a mask mandate in public indoor places like stores, with health officials projecting a rise in cases and hospitalizations.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/quebec-extends-mask-mandate-end-april-covid-hospitalizations-rise-2022-04-05/>

Doctors believe thousands of new COVID-19 cases each day are going unreported in NSW

NSW public health physicians believe the state's daily COVID-19 figures are at least 50 per cent higher than the reported number, due to unreported positive results. Between 15,000 and 20,000 positive results are being recorded each day, which Health Minister Brad Hazzard described as a "big underestimate". "Many people are not, it would appear, not actually reporting the positive cases," he said. "We understand that they may have symptoms that are very mild and they just don't think it's necessary.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-05/doctors-say-thousands-of-covid19-cases-in-nsw-not-being-reported/100967202>

Four people with COVID-19 die in SA as state sets new predicted peak of 5,500 daily cases

New modelling from SA Health shows the state will reach a peak of 5,500 new COVID-19 cases per day — a level already reached last week, with a similar number of new cases possible tomorrow. The state reported four COVID-linked deaths and 5,068 new cases today. Almost 5,500 new cases were reported last Wednesday and a similar number could be recorded this Wednesday — typically the peak day of the week. Previous modelling had predicted a peak of 8,000 cases per day in mid-April.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-05/sa-records-four-covid-19-deaths-as-modelling-peak-approaches/100967024>

Covid-related deaths rise in England with infections at record high

Covid-related deaths in England have jumped to their highest level since mid-February, according to the latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). There were 780 deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate in the seven days leading up to 25 March - up 14% on the previous week. This increase follows several weeks where deaths appeared to have levelled off. Coronavirus infections have been rising across the UK since early March, driven by the Omicron BA.2 variant. Prevalence of the virus is currently at a record high, with ONS figures suggesting approximately 4.9 million had Covid in the week to 26 March. This increase may now be having an impact on the number of deaths, which typically lag behind infections by several weeks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/covid-related-deaths-rise-england-infections-record-high>

New Lockdown

Whole of Shanghai enters COVID lockdown despite lower symptomatic cases

Chinese authorities on Tuesday extended a lockdown in Shanghai to cover all of the financial centre's 26 million people, despite growing anger over quarantine rules in the city, where latest results show only 268 symptomatic daily COVID-19 cases. In a major test of China's zero-tolerance strategy to eliminate the novel coronavirus, the government widened the lockdown to eastern parts of the city and extended until further notice restrictions in western districts, which had been due to expire on Tuesday. The broader lockdown came after testing saw asymptomatic COVID-19 cases surge to more than 13,000. Symptomatic cases fell on Monday to 268, from 425 the previous day.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-lockdown-deepens-after-new-surge-asymptomatic-cases-2022-04-05/>