

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 16th Jun 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **Hong Kong RAT proof nothing to get hungover about**

Try as Hong Kong might, the number of daily Covid-19 cases remains stubbornly high. In an effort to reduce them in time for celebrations of the city's 25th anniversary of its return to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, patrons of pubs, bars and clubs are from Thursday required to show proof of a negative rapid antigen test (RAT) result. It is an understandable move given such places are behind half a dozen recent clusters in entertainment districts involving hundreds of people. Random raids by police of numerous premises have led to dozens of fines and temporary closures for the violation of rules. Authorities have opted for the RAT strategy rather than rolling back a phased reopening of social and economic activity. The last of three stages remains to be implemented, but outgoing Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor contends circumstances are not right for that to happen before July 1.

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3181852/hong-kong-rat-proof-nothing-get-hungover-about>

#### **Shanghai to Mass Test Whole City Every Weekend Till End July**

Shanghai, which reported just 16 Covid cases for Wednesday, will conduct mass testing drives every weekend until the end of July in the latest display of the lengths authorities are going to in order to adhere to nation's zero tolerance approach to the virus. A temporary lockdown will also be imposed on residential complexes where a Covid case is detected in the week leading up to the weekend testing, Zhao Dandan, an official with the Shanghai Municipal Health Commission said at a briefing Wednesday. The lockdown will be lifted once everyone in the compound has been tested, he said. In an effort to detect cases early and break transmission chains, the city's residents will need to take nucleic acid tests at least once a week until the end of July, with workers at supermarkets, barbers, drugstores, shopping malls and restaurants required to undergo daily testing.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-15/shanghai-to-mass-test-whole-city-every-weekend-up-to-end-of-july>

#### **Hong Kong Covid Cases Top 1000 as Home Isolation Tweaked Again**

Hong Kong reported more than 1,000 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, the highest in two months, with the rise in infections spurring officials to continue to tighten rules around who can isolate at home. There were 971 new local infections, including many among school children, their families and patrons of nightlife venues, Department of Health official Albert Au said at the daily virus briefing. Another 76 infections were detected among travelers who recently entered the city, bringing the total to 1,047 -- the highest since April 14.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-15/hong-kong-covid-cases-top-1-000-as-home-isolation-tweaked-a-gain>

#### **UK to Roll Out Drugs From Pfizer, Shionogi to Fight Superbugs**

England is rolling out a pair of antibiotics from Pfizer Inc. and Shionogi & Co. as part of a pioneering program aimed at stimulating a broken market and taking on the rising threat of superbugs. Under the deal announced Wednesday by the National Health Service, the drug companies will receive a fixed annual fee for their antibiotics. The payments in the program, the first of its kind, will be as much as £10 million (\$12 million) a year for up to 10 years. About 1,700 patients a year with severe bacterial infections will be eligible for the drugs. With germs becoming increasingly resistant to

current antibiotics, the NHS said the drugs will provide a lifeline to patients with life-threatening infections like sepsis or hospital or ventilator pneumonia.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-15/uk-to-roll-out-drugs-from-pfizer-shionogi-to-fight-superbugs>

### **The inside story of Recovery: how the world's largest COVID-19 trial transformed treatment - and what it could do for other diseases**

Two years ago this week, the Recovery trial transformed the care of COVID patients with its dexamethasone announcement. Within four hours, the steroid was included in NHS treatment recommendations. Almost overnight, treatment of COVID patients around the world changed completely. It has been estimated that dexamethasone may have saved a million lives in the first nine months following the announcement. Recovery, jointly led by Oxford Population Health and the Nuffield Department of Medicine, is a groundbreaking scientific machine which, from the outset, moved at unprecedented speed. Within 15 days, more than 1,000 participants around the UK had joined the trial; five weeks later, that number had risen to 10,000. In the first 100 days alone, the trial produced three groundbreaking results that would completely reshape COVID care.

<https://theconversation.com/the-inside-story-of-recovery-how-the-worlds-largest-covid-19-trial-transformed-treatment-and-what-it-could-do-for-other-diseases-184772>

### **Europe's medicines watchdog publishes new report identifying COVID-19 lessons learned**

In 2021, the European Commission, Parliament and Council gave the EMA greater tools enabling it to both support innovation and respond to emergencies, in an acknowledgement of the agency's vital role in tackling the pandemic. The EMA approved five treatments and four new vaccines against COVID-19. It also passed regulation on medical devices—a year later than planned because of the pandemic—and took steps towards developing an information network designed to generate data about health patterns across the continent, called the Data Analysis and Real World Interrogation Network (DARWIN EU).

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/emea/europe-s-medicines-watchdog-publishes-new-report-identifying-covid-19-lessons-learned>

### **Beijing Covid cluster bar loses licence as staff face criminal probe**

The authorities in the Chinese capital say the Heaven Supermarket bar in the Sanlitun nightlife district did not enforce controls properly. The Covid cluster, which has been linked with 320 cases, is the latest outbreak linked to bars stretching from Hong Kong to Beijing.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3181783/bar-centre-latest-beijing-covid-cluster-loses-its-licence-staff>

### **2,153 new Covid cases, 17 more deaths**

The country registered 17 more Covid-19 fatalities and 2,153 new cases during the previous 24 hours, the Public Health Ministry announced on Thursday morning. This compared with the 18 coronavirus-related fatalities and 2,263 new cases reported on Monday morning.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2327498/2-153-new-covid-cases-17-more-deaths>

### **How months-long COVID infections could seed dangerous new variants**

virologist Sissy Sonnleitner tracks nearly every COVID-19 case in Austria's rugged eastern Tyrol region. So, when one woman there kept testing positive for months on end, Sonnleitner was determined to work out what was going on. Before becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 in late 2020, the woman, who was in her 60s, had been taking immune-suppressing drugs to treat a lymphoma relapse. The COVID-19 infection lingered for more than seven months, causing relatively mild symptoms, including fatigue and a cough. Sonnleitner, who is based at a microbiology facility in Außervillgraten, Austria, and her colleagues collected more than two dozen viral samples from the woman over time and found through genetic sequencing that it had picked up about 22 mutations (see 'Tracking spike's evolution'). Roughly half of them would be seen again in the heavily mutated

Omicron variants of SARS-CoV-2 that surged around the globe months later<sup>1</sup>. “When Omicron was found, we had a great moment of surprise,” Sonnleitner says. “We already had those mutations in our variant.”

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01613-2>

### **Long Covid Is Showing Up in the Employment Data**

Given that you have to be unable to work for at least 12 months to qualify for Social Security disability and going on the program is a momentous step that effectively requires leaving the labor market, the still-new phenomenon that is Long Covid is probably not playing a big role (the Social Security Administration has said that only about 1% of recent claims mention Covid). Still, the turnaround in disability applications is at least not incompatible with a rise in long-term health problems related to the disease — and it turns out there are stronger signs of Long Covid in other employment-related data.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-06-15/long-covid-is-showing-up-in-the-employment-data>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Full COVID-19 vaccination still required for Hajj, says ministry**

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah said that full immunization with one of the approved COVID-19 vaccines is still required for those planning to perform Hajj this year. The confirmation comes less than 24 hours after the Saudi authorities announced the lifting of various COVID-19 preventative measures, including the requirement to wear face masks in closed places. The ministry reaffirmed that all those intending to perform Hajj this year must have completed their immunization program with one of the COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Public Health Authority. This vaccine requirement is listed on the electronic registration portal for this year’s Hajj, which will accommodate 1 million pilgrims.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2103141/saudi-arabia>

### **Pfizer already agreed to delay supply of COVID-19 shots to EU, now the bloc wants more**

Last month, in response to a decrease in demand, Pfizer and its COVID-19 vaccine partner BioNTech agreed to delay supplies of their shot to the European Union. Jobs due to be shipped from June to August would instead be sent in September and the fourth quarter. Now, four weeks later, the bloc is putting heat on Pfizer to further restrict supplies, Reuters reports. This move comes two weeks after the EU reached an agreement with Moderna to postpone its scheduled delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. Responding to a request for comment, a Pfizer spokesperson referenced a previous statement it issued following last month's agreement with the EU.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-already-agreed-delay-supply-covid-19-shots-eu-now-bloc-wants-more>

### **FDA Advisers Review Pfizer, Moderna Covid-19 Vaccines in Young Children**

Health experts advising U.S. health regulators backed giving Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE and from Moderna Inc. to children as young as 6 months old. The panel voted 21 to 0 in a pair of votes on Wednesday in support of expanding access to the vaccines. The positive recommendations will likely lead soon to expanding the U.S. Covid-19 vaccination campaign to the 19.6 million children from 6 months to under 5 years of age, one of the last groups of people in the U.S. waiting for shots. The Food and Drug Administration, which doesn’t have to follow the panel’s recommendations but usually does, is expected to authorize the shots within days. Vaccinations could begin as early as June 21, according to the Biden administration.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/fda-advisers-to-review-pfizer-moderna-covid-19-vaccines-in-young-children-1165528540>

[1](#)

### **EU governments pressure manufacturers to renegotiate contracts for COVID-19 vaccines**

Pressure on COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers is being mounted as European Union (EU)

governments are in a push to renegotiate contracts, with a caution issued by EU officials that millions of vaccine doses could be wasted. When vaccines became available earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic, countries vied for supply contracts. However, as the need for vaccines begins to slow in Europe, some countries want to amend their contracts to reduce spending and to prevent receiving more vaccines than are needed. During the most acute phase of the pandemic, the European Commission and EU governments agreed to buy huge volumes of vaccines, mostly from Pfizer and its partner BioNTech, amid fears of insufficient supplies

[https://www.pmlive.com/pharma\\_news/eu\\_governments\\_pressure\\_manufacturers\\_to\\_renegotiate\\_contracts\\_for\\_covid-19\\_vaccines\\_1449983](https://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/eu_governments_pressure_manufacturers_to_renegotiate_contracts_for_covid-19_vaccines_1449983)

### **North Korea COVID-19 Vaccination Plan Facing Challenges**

As North Korea faces a rising number of COVID-19 cases, simply having vaccines may be insufficient to roll out a countrywide immunization process that experts say needs to be accompanied by adequate cold storage units and trained medical and technical staff that the nation lacks. Pyongyang announced on Tuesday that "more than 32,810 fevered cases" were detected in the country from June 12 to 13, through its state media Korea Central News Agency (KCNA). The total, "since late April," surged past 4.5 million as of June 14, added the KCNA.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/challenges-face-north-korea-covid-19-vaccination-/6618124.html>

### **WTO draft IP deal on COVID vaccines 'very good', UK minister says**

Britain, one of the main opponents to waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, praised a draft agreement and expressed hope a deal would be reached at the World Trade Organization (WTO) this week. India, South Africa and other developing countries have sought a waiver of IP rights for vaccines, treatments and diagnostics for over a year, but faced opposition from countries with major pharmaceutical producers, such as the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/wto-draft-ip-deal-covid-vaccines-very-good-uk-minister-2022-06-14/>

### **U.S. FDA panel weighs COVID vaccines for children as young as 6 months**

Advisers to the U.S Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday unanimously recommended the agency authorize COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna Inc and Pfizer Inc/BioNTech SE for millions of the youngest American children. The committee's recommendation is an important step toward immunizing children under the age of 5 and as young as 6 months old who have not yet been eligible for the shots.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-panel-weighs-covid-vaccines-children-young-6-months-2022-06-15/>

### **Pfizer gives up on Paxlovid in less vulnerable COVID patients after data fail to impress**

Pfizer's Paxlovid has proven useful in COVID-19 patients at high risk of severe disease. But the antiviral drug may not help less vulnerable patients. Pfizer has stopped enrollment into the EPIC-SR trial that's been evaluating Paxlovid in standard-risk patients, the company said Tuesday. These include unvaccinated adults without additional risk and vaccinated people who have at least one risk factor for progressing to severe disease. The clinical trial previously flopped on its primary goal, showing the Pfizer antiviral was no better than placebo at sustaining symptom relief for four consecutive days. Now, the company is calling it quits on the study after finding it hard to read any signs of potential benefit because of an already low rate of hospitalization or death in the standard-risk population.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-stops-paxlovid-work-less-vulnerable-covid-19-patients-after-no-benefit-symptom-relief>

## **Partisan Exits**

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### **Fauci tests positive for COVID-19**

Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday but is experiencing "mild symptoms," the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said. "He is fully vaccinated and has been boosted twice," the agency said. "He is currently experiencing mild symptoms. Dr. Fauci will isolate and continue to work from his home. He has not recently been in close contact with President Biden or other senior government officials."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/fauci-tests-positive-for-covid-19/ar-AAyvuoQ>

### **Hong Kong police chief defends enforcement of Covid-19 rules**

The head of the Hong Kong Police Force has defended officers' enforcement of Covid-19 rules while attending a district council meeting on Tuesday. After the meeting, Commissioner of Police Raymond Siu told the press that the Force would reach "total mobilisation" for the 25 anniversary of the city's handover to China, and that a new counter-terrorism reporting hotline had already received more than 1,000 calls. Siu attended the North District Council meeting to brief councillors on crime data in the district. He was also asked to explain the relationship between police enforcement actions and control of the disease and the effectiveness of anti-epidemic work in the North District, according to the meeting's agenda.

<https://hongkongfp.com/2022/06/15/hong-kong-police-chief-defends-enforcement-of-covid-19-rules/>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Moderna to Study Its Covid-19 Vaccine in Babies as Young as 3 Months**

Moderna Inc. is planning to test its Covid-19 vaccine in babies 3 months to 6 months old, the youngest age group studied to date. The Cambridge, Mass., company said Wednesday it is in the final stages of planning the study, to be called BabyCove and expected to begin enrolling as many as 700 babies in September. BabyCove would be the first study of Moderna's vaccine in infants younger than 6 months. Moderna's vaccine is authorized for use in adults 18 and older. The company has requested expanding the vaccine's use to children ages 6 months through 17 years, and a decision by the Food and Drug Administration on that request could come within days.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/moderna-to-study-its-covid-19-vaccine-in-babies-as-young-as-3-months-11655319036>

### **WHO to Convene Emergency Meeting on Monkeypox Amid Spread**

The World Health Organization will hold an emergency meeting to assess whether the current spread of monkeypox constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, or PHEIC. A special committee will meet next week to advise on the spread in non-endemic countries, Hans Kluge, regional director of the WHO for Europe, said at a media briefing Wednesday. A PHEIC is the WHO's highest alert level, and such a declaration can be used to encourage nations to cooperate on countermeasures, while letting the agency recommend steps such as travel advisories.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-15/who-to-convene-emergency-meeting-on-monkeypox-amid-rising-spread>

### **NTAGI to review Covaxin, Corbevax vaccine data for 6-12 years on Thursday**

Government advisory panel NTAGI will meet on Thursday to review data on Covaxin and Corbevax vaccines for the 6-12 age group and also deliberate on reducing the gap between the second and precaution doses from the current nine to six months. The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) will hold its meeting amid a fresh spike in COVID-19 cases in the country. Currently, those aged 12 years and above are vaccinated against COVID-19.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ntagi-to-review-covaxin-corbevax-vaccine-data-for-6-12-years-on-thursday-122061500769\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ntagi-to-review-covaxin-corbevax-vaccine-data-for-6-12-years-on-thursday-122061500769_1.html)

### **Vaccine makers claim efficacy against Omicron variant of Covid-19**

With Omicron and its sub-variants spreading rapidly across the globe, vaccine makers have started claiming efficacy of their Covid-19 vaccines against this Sars-CoV-2 variant.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/vaccine-makers-claims-efficacy-against-omicron-variant-of-covid-19-122061500934\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/vaccine-makers-claims-efficacy-against-omicron-variant-of-covid-19-122061500934_1.html)

### **Covid-19: Omicron infection is poor booster to immunity, study finds**

People infected with the omicron variant show poor immunity boosting against future covid-19 infection, researchers have found. This may explain why breakthrough and repeat infections have been a common feature of the omicron wave of the pandemic, even among people who have been triple vaccinated, said the research team. Omicron is “an especially stealthy immune evader” said Danny Altmann, study coauthor from Imperial College London. “Not only can it break through vaccine defences, it looks to leave very few of the hallmarks we’d expect on the immune system,” he said. “It’s more stealthy than previous variants and flies under the radar, so the immune system is unable to remember it.”

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o1474>

### **Pfizer halts Paxlovid trial in less vulnerable COVID patients after failing to find evidence of benefit**

Pfizer’s Paxlovid has proven useful in COVID-19 patients at high risk of severe disease. But the antiviral drug may not help less vulnerable patients. Pfizer has stopped enrollment into the EPIC-SR trial that’s been evaluating Paxlovid in standard-risk patients, the company said Tuesday. These include unvaccinated adults without additional risk and vaccinated people who have at least one risk factor for progressing to severe disease. The clinical trial previously flopped on its primary goal, showing the Pfizer antiviral was no better than placebo at sustaining symptom relief for four consecutive days.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-stops-paxlovid-work-less-vulnerable-covid-19-patients-after-no-benefit-symptom-relief>

### **FDA panel unanimously backs Moderna’s Covid vaccine for children ages 6 to 17**

A panel of experts convened by the Food and Drug Administration voted unanimously Tuesday to recommend the agency authorize the Moderna Covid vaccine for children ages 6 to 17. The authorization would mirror the current emergency use authorization of the Covid vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, which is authorized for individuals 6 years and older. “I believe this vote, and I am happy to say it was unanimous, is standing up for vulnerable populations that merit protection against this virus,” said Ofer Levy, a member of the FDA’s expert panel and director of the precision vaccines program at Boston Children’s Hospital. “I believe this will provide families with an important option.”

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/06/14/fda-panel-unanimously-backs-modernas-covid-vaccine-for-children-ages-6-to-17/>

### **Pfizer’s Paxlovid study fails to answer key questions over benefit for broader populations**

Pfizer said Tuesday that a much-watched study of its antiviral Paxlovid in patients who have Covid but don’t have risk factors for severe disease failed to show a benefit in speeding alleviation of Covid symptoms, but did seem to prevent doctor’s visits and hospitalizations. Additionally, because of the small number of hospitalizations overall in the study, it failed to produce a statistically significant finding on whether patients who had previously been vaccinated against Covid were hospitalized less often if they received Paxlovid. The data in no way invalidate earlier results that show that Paxlovid prevents hospitalizations and saves lives in patients at high risk of severe Covid.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/06/14/pfizers-paxlovid-study-fails-to-answer-key-questions-over-benefit-for-broader-populations/>

### **Severe covid-19 symptoms linked to more than 1300 genetic variants**

More than 1000 genes may contribute to a person’s risk of developing severe covid-19, on top of life circumstances such as their age, ethnicity and any health conditions. Most of the genes, discovered

in a study of more than 1 million people, affect the functioning of two kinds of immune cell. If the results are confirmed, they could inform a test that assesses a person's risk of getting badly ill with covid-19, says Johnathan Cooper-Knock at the University of Sheffield, UK. "We know there are young people who are otherwise fit that get severe covid," he says. "We are trying to get at the genetic determinants that put people at risk irrespective of the more obvious things." Cooper-Knock's team used artificial intelligence to analyse results from a global data set called the COVID-19 Host Genetics Initiative, a genetics project run by a group of researchers and companies.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2324296-severe-covid-19-symptoms-linked-to-more-than-1300-genetic-variants/>

### **People who caught Covid in first wave get 'no immune boost' from Omicron**

People who caught Covid during the first wave of the pandemic get no boost to their immune response if they subsequently catch Omicron, a study of triple vaccinated people reports. Experts say that while three doses of a Covid jab help to protect individuals against severe outcomes should they catch Omicron, previous infections can affect their immune response. "If you were infected during the first wave, then you can't boost your immune response if you have an Omicron infection," said Prof Rosemary Boyton, of Imperial College London, a co-author of the study. The team also found an Omicron infection offered little extra protection against catching the variant again. "When Omicron started flying around the country, people kept saying that's OK, that will improve people's immunity," said Boyton. "What we're saying is it's not a good booster of immunity."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/people-who-caught-covid-in-first-wave-get-no-immune-boost-from-omicron>

### **How long is your COVID vaccine good for? You can soon find out, thanks to a new test that informs patients of their immunity's 'magnitude and duration'**

Until recently, it's been nearly impossible to say. Immunity, whether from vaccine or prior infection, is thought to wane after three or four months, but it varies by person. That knowledge is based on what's known about typical antibody response—but antibodies are only half of the picture. The other half: T-cell response, which hasn't been examined in patients nearly as often owing to technical challenges. Now that response can be tested affordably and en masse, researchers at Mount Sinai Health System in New York say. Along with researchers at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, they developed a rapid blood test called the dqTACT assay that measures the activation of such cells in response to COVID. The test will allow for mass monitoring of the population's immunity and effectiveness of vaccines new and old, they said in a study published Tuesday in Nature Biotechnology.

<https://fortune.com/2022/06/15/how-long-is-your-covid-vaccine-good-for-new-test-t-cell-antibody-mount-sinai-health-system-new-york/>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **COVID-19: Is the UK on the brink of a new wave - and is 'immune imprinting' to blame?**

Scientists tell Sky News that it is getting harder to predict how the UK will fare with different COVID variants because of 'immune imprinting', which means everyone's immune system reacts to them differently depending on their specific infection and vaccine history.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-is-the-uk-on-the-brink-of-a-new-coronavirus-wave-and-should-we-be-worried-12634228>

### **Health boss warning over rise in East Yorkshire Covid cases**

Coronavirus cases are expected to increase in East Yorkshire over the coming weeks, a council meeting heard. East Riding Council's Public Health Director Andy Kingdom said more people were getting coronavirus as their vaccine protection began to fade. He added that hospital admissions and deaths were expected to rise by mid-July, but the size of the wave would be smaller than

previous ones. The county's current infection rate is estimated at around 2%. "We're expecting more waves but they won't be as big because of our levels of immunity, Mr Kingdom said. "Infections are rising in working-age groups because they had their third jabs in around November and December so the effectiveness is beginning to wane.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-61802787>

### **Covid 19 Omicron outbreak: Latest cases as Auckland trust concerned over reinfections**

Today there are 5554 new cases of Covid-19 in the community, says the Ministry of Health. The ministry is also reporting 11 virus-related deaths, and 368 people in hospital, including seven in intensive care. Of today's deaths, two were in their 60s, five were in their 70s, one in their 80s, and three were aged over 90. The average age of those in northern regional hospitals is 61. Today's community cases are in Northland (138), Auckland (1659), Waikato (372), Bay of Plenty (194), Lakes (76), Hawke's Bay (179), MidCentral (223), Whanganui (54), Taranaki (188), Tairāwhiti (46), Wairarapa (71), Capital and Coast (506), Hutt Valley (219), Nelson Marlborough (227), Canterbury (839), South Canterbury (76), Southern (442), West Coast (40), Unknown (5). There are also 70 new imported border cases. The ministry says they have been planning for a challenging winter.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-omicron-outbreak-latest-cases-as-auckland-trust-concerned-over-reinfections/N4VUFQAUZ7CHHFAAPMLVDHINN4/>

### **COVID-19: Is the UK on the brink of a new coronavirus wave - and should we be worried?**

New COVID data suggests that after months of declining case rates, the number of people testing positive across the UK is starting to go up again. For the week ending 2 June, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said there were "early signs of a possible increase in percentage of people testing positive for coronavirus". It was most noticeable in England and Northern Ireland, where the positivity rate is one in every 70 people and one in every 65 people respectively. And it is being driven by new sub-variants of Omicron - BA.4 and BA.5. A separate Imperial College study released on Tuesday suggests that being infected with Omicron does not provide much immune protection from being reinfected.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-is-the-uk-on-the-brink-of-a-new-coronavirus-wave-and-should-we-be-worried-12634228>

### **Chinese capital has reported 327 COVID cases linked to bar - health official**

China's capital Beijing has reported a total of 327 COVID cases linked to a bar as of Wednesday afternoon, a health official said. Beijing reported seven new local COVID cases on Wednesday up to 3 p.m., Liu Xiaofeng added.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-capital-has-reported-327-covid-cases-linked-bar-health-official-2022-06-15/>

### **Hong Kong reports 1047 new coronavirus infections**

Hong Kong reported 1,047 new COVID-19 infections on Wednesday, the first time the daily tally has topped 1,000 since mid-April, as cases crept up ahead of celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the city's handover to mainland China.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-reports-1047-new-coronavirus-infections-2022-06-15/>

### **Beijing in 'race against time' to contain COVID surge**

Authorities in China's capital warned on Tuesday that a COVID-19 surge in cases linked to a 24-hour bar was critical and the city of 22 million was in a "race against time" to get to grips with its most serious outbreak since the pandemic began. The flare-up means millions of people are facing mandatory testing and thousands are under targeted lockdowns, just days after the city started to lift widespread curbs that had run for more than a month to tackle a broader outbreak since late April

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijing-launches-probe-into-24-hour-bar-blamed-capitals-latest-covid-surge-2022-06-15/>

[2-06-14/](#)

**Omicron sub-variants BA.4, BA.5 account for 21% of COVID variants in U.S. - CDC**

The BA.4 and BA.5 sub-variants of Omicron are estimated to make up about 8.3% and 13.3% of the coronavirus variants in the United States as of June 11, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Tuesday. The two fast-spreading sublineages were added to the World Health Organization's monitoring list in March and have also been designated as variants of concern in Europe. The European Union's disease prevention agency said on Monday the new subvariants are spreading more quickly than other variants, which could lead to more hospitalizations and deaths as they become dominant in the continent.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/omicron-sub-variants-ba4-ba5-account-21-covid-variants-us-cdc-2022-06-14/>