

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

28th Jan 2021

News Highlights

AstraZeneca hasn't withdrawn from talks with the EU, drugmaker says

The company announced [it will supply 31 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine in the first quarter, compared to the eighty million first forecast, sparking anger due to reduced manufacturing yield](#). It denied that it had failed to honour its commitment to the bloc. The reduced number of doses for delivery has led to talks of export controls and even legal action by some member states.

YouTube takes action on misinformation

More than half a million videos containing misinformation about COVID-19 have been removed from YouTube, as social media platforms take action against the 'infodemic.' [Videos spreading misinformation are coming thick and fast, according to CEO Susan Wojcicki](#). She said 'we've continued to make updates to our COVID-19 policies to stay current with the science.'

Italy's row over COVID-19 leads to Prime Minister's resignation

Giuseppe Conte has resigned the Italian premiership amidst a row over the country's COVID-19 response. [His response to COVID-19 included strict lockdown measures and securing a U.S.\\$243 billion recovery fund from the EU](#). While enjoying public popularity, Conte's approach led to division in his cabinet and ultimately lost him his Senate majority. He will remain in office until a new government is formed.

Moderna, Pfizer working to counteract new variants

The emergence of new strains of COVID-19 globally have prompted Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech to work on developing booster shots as a countermeasure. [Fears over the vaccines' efficiency against mutant strains has been widespread](#). 'If the virus mutates in a way that an update to our vaccine is required to guarantee that it would provide protection against COVID-19, we believe the flexibility of the mRNA vaccine platform will allow us to move quickly to adjust the vaccine as needed,' Pfizer added.

Lockdown Exit

All countries should pursue a Covid-19 elimination strategy: here are 16 reasons why

The past year of Covid-19 has taught us that it is the behaviour of governments, more than the behaviour of the virus or individuals, that shapes countries' experience of the crisis. Talking about pandemic waves has given the virus far too much agency: until quite recently the apparent waves of infection were driven by government action and inaction. It is only now with the emergence of more infectious variants that it might be appropriate to talk about a true second wave. As governments draw up their battle plans for year two, we might expect them to base their strategies on the wealth of data about what works best. And the evidence to date suggests that countries pursuing elimination of Covid-19 are performing much better than those trying to suppress the virus. Aiming for zero-Covid is producing more positive results than trying to "live with the virus".

https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/jan/28/all-countries-should-pursue-a-covid-19-elimination-strategy-here-are-16-reasons-why?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1611799115

Lucky break or gold standard? How NSW got Covid under control

After weeks of no reported community cases of the virus, a man from south-west Sydney tested positive on 16 December. By the end of that day, two further cases were announced, affecting Sydney's northern beaches. By mid-January, the summer outbreaks had reached a total of 217 cases. But not long after, on 26 January, NSW marked nine days in a row without any new cases of the virus in the community. NSW's containment was achieved without the premier, Gladys Berejikian, resorting to the drastic statewide lockdowns or business closures that many called for. Instead, the NSW approach was to focus lockdowns on the most affected suburbs and to reintroduce limits on indoor and outdoor gatherings without banning them altogether. It is not the first time NSW has contained an outbreak with potential to spiral beyond control.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/27/lucky-break-how-nsw-got-covid-under-control>

Mexico's pandemic policy: No police. No curfews. No fines. No regrets.

As the coronavirus swept the globe early last year, Mexican officials made an unusual decision: They would not impose "coercive" measures to force citizens to obey pandemic restrictions. No curfews. No arrests. No fines. Mexico had lived through 70 years of authoritarian rule. The country had "a sad, unfortunate, shameful history" of abuse by security forces, said Hugo López-Gatell, the coronavirus czar. Nearly a year later, Mexico is battling a severe epidemic. Hospitals are at the breaking point. Residents flouting stay-at-home messages fueled a new explosion of cases during the Christmas holidays. Deaths have soared past 150,000 — the fourth-highest total in the world and 19th-highest based on population. So was Mexico wrong? The answer is nuanced, say health experts and human rights advocates, and reflects the difficulty of balancing public health and civil rights.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/coronavirus-mexico-lockdown-lopez-obrador/2021/01/25/8d6311aa-50fc-11eb-a1f5-fdaf28cfca90_story.html

One year after lockdown, Wuhan clubbers hit the dancefloor

Glow-in-the-dark rabbit ears, pulsating beats, and a flexible attitude to masks: nightlife in China's Wuhan is back with a vengeance almost a year after a lockdown brought life to a standstill in the city of 11 million. As the rest of the world continues to grapple with lockdowns and soaring infections, young people in the city, once the epicentre of the novel coronavirus, are enjoying their hard-earned freedom. The hedonistic vibes and champagne on ice are far from the austerity preached by authorities in Beijing. But Chen Qiang, a man in his 20s, praised the Communist Party for having practically eliminated the epidemic, despite a recent surge in cases in other parts of the country in the past few days.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/one-year-after-lockdown-wuhan-clubbers-hit-the-dancefloor/articleshow/80473147.cms>

Serena Williams praises 'super intense' Australian Open coronavirus quarantine rules

Seven-time Australian Open singles champion Serena Williams has backed Tennis Australia's quarantine rules ahead of the season-opening major amid criticism of the arrangements from other players. Williams has been quarantining in Adelaide, as have the likes of Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, and has been spared the hard 14-day lockdown that has affected 72 players who arrived in Melbourne almost a fortnight ago. Several players based in Melbourne have publicly voiced their frustration about being confined to their rooms after passengers on the charter flights that carried them to Australia tested positive for COVID-19.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-27/covid-19-serena-williams-praises-australian-open-quarantine/13096594>

South Auckland GPs 'burnt out and tired' after Covid-19 outbreak, lockdown

South Auckland GPs and medical practices are still feeling the pressure after the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown, according to a new report. The report, to the Counties Manukau District Health Board's

Community and Public Health Advisory Committee, shows low staff morale and burnout are exacerbating the problem. “The overall morale in general practice is low at the moment. People are feeling burnt out and tired and the stress levels are probably at a greater level than in the general population,” it said.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/local-democracy-reporting/300215602/south-auckland-gps-burnt-out-and-tired-after-covid19-outbreak-lockdown>

New Zealand borders to stay closed until citizens are 'vaccinated and protected'

Jacinda Ardern has said New Zealand and “the world” need to return to some semblance of normality before she opens the country’s borders to foreign nationals. The prime minister shut the border in mid-March and said on Tuesday she would not open it again until New Zealanders were “vaccinated and protected” – a process that will not start for the general population until the middle of this year. Ardern also cast doubt on the prospects for a travel bubble with Australia in the near future, and said she was “disappointed” with the Australian government’s decision to suspend quarantine-free access for New Zealanders for three days in the light of the case of community transition in Northland.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/new-zealand-borders-to-stay-closed-until-citizens-are-vaccinated-and-protected>

Positive COVID-19 tests linked to Australian Open downgraded to eight

The number of positive COVID-19 tests linked to the Australian Open has been downgraded to eight after authorities reclassified one of the results as a previous infection, health officials said on Wednesday. “One case has been reclassified due to evidence of previous infection, meaning there is now a total of eight positive cases related to the AO cohort,” COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria (CQV) said. The agency confirmed that another positive case had been “medically cleared” to leave isolation, leaving the total number of active cases at seven.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-tennis-ausopen/update-2-tennis-positive-covid-19-tests-linked-to-australian-open-downgraded-to-eight-idUSL1N2K207S>

Exit Strategies

AstraZeneca denies pulling out of Covid-19 vaccine talks with EU amid row over doses shortfall

AstraZeneca has denied pulling out of vaccine talks with the European Union amid a row over a shortfall of doses for EU member states. The pharmaceutical company says it plans to meet with EU officials in Brussels later on Wednesday. The latest disagreement between the two sides came after AstraZeneca rejected the EU’s accusation that the company had failed to honour its commitments for the delivery of the coronavirus vaccine. The company says figures in its contract with the EU were targets that could not be met because of problems in rapidly expanding production capacity.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/newslondon/astrazeneca-denies-pulling-out-of-covid-19-vaccine-talks-with-eu-amid-row-over-doses-shortfall/ar-BB1d8SP5>

Philadelphia let ‘college kids’ distribute vaccines. The result was a ‘disaster,’ volunteers say.

Philadelphia is home to some of the most venerated medical institutions in the country. Yet when it came time to set up the city’s first and largest coronavirus mass vaccination site, officials turned to the start-up Philly Fighting COVID, a self-described “group of college kids” with minimal health-care experience. Chaos ensued. Seniors were left in tears after finding that appointments they’d made through a bungled sign-up form wouldn’t be honored. The group switched to a for-profit model without publicizing the change and added a privacy policy that would allow it to sell users’ personal data. One volunteer alleged that the 22-year-old CEO had pocketed vaccine doses. Another described a “free-for-all” where unsupervised 18- and 19-year-olds vaccinated one another and

posed for photos.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/27/philly-fighting-covid-vaccine/>

Madrid region to halt new vaccinations as supplies run out

Supplies of coronavirus vaccines have become so scarce that the Madrid region of Spain will stop all new jabs for at least 10 days, a top official said on Wednesday, as Catalonia complained its supply was also running out. Madrid's move appears to be the first such pause in the EU, highlighting the bloc's mounting problems with distributing the vaccine. Ignacio Aguado, the deputy head of Madrid's regional government, said shortages of both the BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna vaccines — the only ones so far approved by the EU — meant it was impossible at "the current pace" to meet national and European targets of vaccinating 70 per cent of the population by the end of June. Instead, "we would take until 2023 to arrive at this level", he added.

<https://www.ft.com/content/fc3825ee-c0bd-4ae8-b1ff-9702192ae02c>

Kamala Harris receives second dose of coronavirus vaccine

Vice President Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff have received a second dose of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine. She sat for her shot at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland on Tuesday. The vice president urged "everyone to take the vaccine when it is your turn." "It is really pretty painless, and it will save your life," she said.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/kamala-harris-covid-vaccine-b1793228.html>

"Vaccine nationalism" disputes threaten European nations' COVID-19 vaccine supplies

Disputes over the production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines are threatening supplies between the United Kingdom and the European Union, as some world leaders accuse wealthy countries of hoarding doses. The scramble for vaccinations in Europe has never been more critical, CBS News' Charlie D'Agata reports, and the tension never higher. In the Netherlands, a night-time curfew that sparked riots this week was one of the more aggressive measures taken to stem the spread of a new variant of the coronavirus first identified in the U.K. — where a grim-faced Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the country had become the first in Europe to surpass 100,000 COVID-linked deaths.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-vaccine-astrazeneca-european-union-supply-nationalism/>

Coronavirus UK: Britain falls off pace in Covid vaccine rollout

NHS England figures revealed today that there were 260,307 vaccinations administered across the country. The data revealed that the highest number of first doses were administered in the Midlands with 1,166,017. Britain remains ahead of all countries in Europe in vaccine drive and has one of the highest per-person rates

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9193023/England-managed-260-000-jabs-Tuesday-marking-three-days-row-400-000-day-target.html>

UK's Johnson hopes schools in England can reopen on March 8

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson indicated Wednesday that the coronavirus lockdown in England will remain in place until at least March 8 as he ruled out any imminent return to school for most students. In a statement to lawmakers, Johnson also confirmed new restrictions for travelers arriving in England from countries deemed to be high-risk. He said the U.K. remains in a "perilous situation" with more than 37,000 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, nearly double the number during the country's previous peak in April.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uks-johnson-hopes-schools-in-england-can-reopen-on-march-8-boris-johnson-uk-england-schools-school-b1793571.html>

Boris Johnson promises plan next month for 'phased' easing of lockdown

The PM has said he hopes a "gradual and phased" relaxation of Covid restrictions can begin in early

March. Boris Johnson told MPs he intended to set out a plan for how the lockdown in England could be eased and the criteria involved in the final week of February. Factors will include death and hospitalisation numbers, progress of vaccinations and changes in the virus. He has ruled out schools in England re-opening after the February half term, instead setting an 8 March target. In a statement to Parliament, Mr Johnson said the scientific data was not sufficiently clear to make any decisions now but he hoped to publish a detailed roadmap in just under a month's time as the "picture became clearer".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-55823364>

Vaccine's role in tackling transmission crucial to easing UK lockdown

The UK government has commissioned a study to investigate the effects of Covid-19 vaccination on transmission of the virus, which will play a big role in Boris Johnson's decision on when to ease England's lockdown. Coronavirus vaccines have been found to have a high degree of efficacy in providing immunity from the disease, but their impact on transmission of the disease is less clear. Downing Street officials said cutting transmission was a "critical factor" in easing the current restrictions. The study, which is being overseen by Public Health England, is focused on frontline healthcare workers who were given jabs early in the vaccination programme. Jonathan Van-Tam, deputy chief medical officer, is closely involved with the research, which is expected to conclude in late February.

<https://www.ft.com/content/f87523c9-5500-439e-bff2-28c6e2642254>

Covid England: Boris Johnson to unveil 'road map' out of lockdown

Boris Johnson has again insisted he takes responsibility for Government's handling of the coronavirus crisis. The PM said there were no 'easy' answers' as Keir Starmer highlighted the UK death toll topping 100,000. Mr Johnson said 'perpetual lockdown is no answer' as he said he will unveil a road map out of lockdown soon. Border crackdown is also set to be unveiled later with travellers from 'red list' countries in 'quarantine hotels.' Infection figures were down from 68,000 cases recorded on January 7 to just over 20,000 yesterday, he said

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9191773/Robert-Jenrick-claims-ministers-took-right-decisions-right-time-Covid.html>

Cyprus eases second virus lockdown

Cyprus announced Wednesday a cautious easing from February 1 of its national lockdown following a decline in the spread of Covid-19 infections that peaked after Christmas. The Mediterranean island went into lockdown on January 10 for the second time since last March after daily cases hit a record 907 on December 29. Health Minister Constantinos Ioannou said the government has been relying on testing, restrictions and vaccinations to keep the pandemic in check.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210127-cyprus-eases-second-virus-lockdown>

Boris Johnson hopes to publish criteria for easing lockdown next month

The PM has said he hopes a "gradual and phased" relaxation of Covid restrictions can begin in early March. Boris Johnson told MPs he intended to set out a plan for how the lockdown in England could be eased and the criteria involved in the final week of February. Factors will include death and hospitalisation numbers, progress of vaccinations and changes in the virus. He has ruled out schools in England re-opening after the February half term, instead setting an 8 March target. In a statement to Parliament, Mr Johnson said the scientific data was not sufficiently clear to make any decisions now but he hoped to publish a detailed roadmap in just under a month's time as the "picture became clearer".

https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-55823364?at_custom4=twitter&at_custom2=twitter&at_campaign=64&at_medium=custom7&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D

South Korea willing to share COVID-19 vaccines with North, PM says

South Korea is willing to share excess COVID-19 vaccines with North Korea as part of an overall effort to resume relations with its nuclear-armed neighbor, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said on Wednesday.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2021/01/27/South-Korea-willing-to-share-COVID-19-vaccines-with-North-P-M-says/5881611741105/

Free vaccines and India's humanitarian diplomacy

Large parts of the world are still reeling from the spread of the coronavirus, with renewed lockdowns in effect in many places. With every stricken country focused on tackling its COVID-19 crisis, there is little international generosity in donating large quantities of medicines or vaccines when demand for them is sky-high. So, when India in recent days delivered millions of COVID-19 vaccines as gifts to countries in the Indian Ocean region, it attracted international attention. More than 5 million Indian-made vaccines were airlifted last week to countries extending from Myanmar and Bangladesh to Mauritius and the Seychelles. And millions of more free vaccines are on their way this week.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2021/01/27/commentary/world-commentary/free-vaccines-india-coronavirus-diplomacy/>

Ireland plans to exit lockdown 'very slowly' after March 5 - deputy PM

Ireland is set to extend a shutdown of the economy until March 5 and will ease restrictions very gradually similar to its exit from an initial lockdown last year if it can suppress COVID-19 again, Deputy Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said on Monday. COVID-19 cases have begun to fall sharply in Ireland after exploding at the fastest rate in Europe at the turn of the year, fuelled by a four-week relaxation of restrictions and increasing prevalence of a new, more transmissible variant first detected in England. But with 766 COVID-19 infections per 100,000 people still recorded in the past 14 days, Varadkar and senior ministers will advise the Cabinet on Tuesday to keep most shops, building sites and all hospitality closed until March 5.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-ireland/ireland-plans-to-exit-lockdown-very-slowly-after-march-5-deputy-pm-idUSL1N2K02SF>

Cyprus to ease lockdown measures gradually after fall in COVID cases

Cyprus announced on Wednesday a staggered easing of lockdown measures following a fall in the number of COVID-19 infections, including the reopening of primary schools and shopping malls on Feb. 8. The island has been in a strict lockdown since Jan. 10 after a spike in COVID-19 cases and the detection of a more contagious variant of the virus first identified in Britain. Bans on large gatherings and the closure of shopping centres and restaurants had already been announced in December.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-cyprus/cyprus-to-ease-lockdown-measures-gradually-after-fall-in-covid-cases-idUSL8N2K23AZ>

India Has Plenty of Coronavirus Vaccines But Few Takers

Most of the world is struggling to secure enough vaccines to inoculate their populations. India has the opposite problem: Plenty of shots, but a shortage of people willing to take them. As India rolls out one of the world's biggest inoculation programs, some health-care and other frontline workers are hesitating because of safety concerns over a vaccine that has yet to complete phase III trials. As of Monday, only about 56% of people eligible to get the shot have stepped forward in a nation with the world's second-worst Covid-19 outbreak. Unless the inoculation rate significantly increases, India will fall far short of its target of inoculating 300 million people -- or about a quarter of the population -- by July. That will setback global efforts to contain the virus and snuff out optimism that a recovery is taking root in an economy set for its biggest annual contraction in records going back to 1952.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-26/india-s-unusual-vaccine-problem-plenty-of-shots-but-few-takers>

Bomb scare sparks evacuation of plant making AZ COVID-19 vaccine

A plant in Wales manufacturing the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine was evacuated on the advice of the authorities today after it was sent a suspicious package. Bomb disposal experts were called in to investigate the parcel at the fill and finish facility in Wrexham, operated by Wockhardt UK, which has the capacity to produce around 300 million doses of the vaccine per year. Production has since resumed, according to Wockhardt, which said the "temporary suspension of manufacturing has in no way affected our production schedule."

<https://pharmaphorum.com/news/bomb-scare-sparks-evacuation-of-plant-making-az-covid-19-vaccine/>

Bomb squad called to incident near AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine factory

Police and a bomb disposal unit have been called to an incident near coronavirus vaccine factory. The emergency response is in place on Wrexham Industrial Estate and is currently closed off near the Wockhardt factory. The plant is being used to help produce the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, North Wales Live reports. A spokesman for North Wales Police said: "We are currently dealing with an ongoing incident on the Wrexham Industrial Estate. "The roads are currently closed and we would ask the public to avoid the area until further notice."

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/uk-news/bomb-squad-called-incident-near-19710774>

89 foreigners arrested at Thai bar flouting COVID-19 rules

Police in Thailand say they have arrested 89 foreigners for violating coronavirus regulations at a party organized by a bar on a popular resort island

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/89-foreigners-arrested-at-thai-bar-flouting-covid19-rules-bar-bar-police-party-for-eigners-b1793594.html>

YouTube has removed more than half a million videos spreading Covid-19 misinformation

YouTube has removed more than half a million videos spreading misinformation about Covid-19, it has said. Technology platforms from YouTube to Facebook have struggled with keeping public health misinformation in check as the pandemic has spread across the world. False information posted on the site includes information suggesting the virus is not real to discouraging vaccines that can prevent disease. YouTube boss Susan Wojcicki that such videos have been posted in vast numbers the site, even as it looks to stop their spread.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/youtube-has-removed-more-than-half-a-million-videos-spreading-covid-19-misinformation/ar-BB1d8APk>

Why Are Illegal Raves Still Taking Place During Lockdown?

Despite stringent lockdown measures being put in place by the government to combat the spread of COVID-19, illegal raves and parties have continued to take place across the U.K. Police issued over £15,000 (\$20,500) in fines after breaking up an illegal rave in London after around 300 people were found at an illegal party in Hackney in the northeast of the capital. In the summer, 6,000 revelers attended two illegal raves in Manchester, where a woman was raped and a man died of a suspected drug overdose.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/why-are-illegal-raves-still-taking-place-during-lockdown/ar-BB1d92Jg>

Germany has 50,000 Covid dead. Tragically, that's a relative success story

Germany, it seems, barely noticed when it hit 50,000 deaths from Covid-19. To be fair, there has been a lot of news lately - had we arrived at this grim milestone earlier, when it didn't have to compete with Donald Trump's ignominious exit from the White House, the beginning of Joe Biden's presidency, and the election of Armin Laschet to the leadership of the Christian Democratic Union, there surely would have been an avalanche of opinion pieces and memorials. Instead, it was buried. And while leaders in the UK have been scrambling and bickering, lest Britain become "a failed

state”, as Gordon Brown has warned, German politicians seem more tired than anything else. The election of Laschet seems to indicate that the CDU leadership intends to try to carry Merkel’s legacy – and, with a 72% approval rating for the chancellor, the relative competence with which Germany has handled the pandemic seems to be recognised by the public.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/26/germany-50000-covid-dead-relative-success-vaccine>

Italy's Prime Minister Quits As COVID-19 Response Splits Coalition Government

Italy's Prime Minister Conte to Resign Amid Struggle Against Covid-19 and RecessionThe Wall Street JournalAfter Government Falls, Italy Must Navigate Pandemic on ‘Cruise Control’The New York TimesItalian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns, in calculated move amid coronavirus crisisCNNItalian prime minister Giuseppe Conte resigns in tactical bid to form new coalitionThe IndependentView Full coverage on Google News

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/26/960744631/italys-prime-minister-quits-as-covid-19-response-splits-coalition-government>

Dozens injured in Covid-19 lockdown protests in Lebanon's Tripoli

Overnight clashes in northern Lebanon between security forces and demonstrators angered by a coronavirus lockdown injured at least 45 people, the Lebanese Red Cross said on Wednesday. At least nine of the injured were treated in hospital following rolling scuffles in the main northern city of Tripoli, the Red Cross said.

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20210127-dozens-injured-in-covid-19-lockdown-protests-in-lebanon-s-tripoli>

Covid-19 death toll: where did the UK make mistakes?

You can, of course, quibble with the numbers. And yes, of course, comparing figures with other countries that use different measures is fraught with difficulties. But it doesn’t matter. When the toll by several measures passes 100,000, the conclusion is unavoidable. Something has gone badly wrong. Our first Covid-19 death was on March 5, a septuagenarian woman in Reading. Over the year that followed her fellow Britons had more than twice the likelihood of joining her compared with a German. Or, if you prefer a comparison to a state without the vast healthcare resources of Europe’s economic powerhouse, we had 4,000 times the chance of dying compared with someone from Vietnam. When we went into the first lockdown, 20,000 deaths was considered a good outcome.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/with-the-uks-covid-19-death-toll-theres-only-one-conclusion-we-did-something-wrong-qxtlg3hv9>

Here are five ways the government could have avoided 100,000 Covid deaths

Yesterday Britain passed a grim milestone. A further 1,631 deaths from Covid-19 were recorded, taking the official tally above 100,000, though data from the Office for National Statistics suggests the total number will now be nearer 120,000. In a briefing, Boris Johnson has said his government did everything it could to minimise the loss of life, but these deaths were far from inevitable. While the number of UK deaths has entered the hundreds of thousands, New Zealand has recorded only 25 deaths from Covid-19 so far. Taiwan has recorded seven, Australia 909, Finland 655, Norway 550 and Singapore 29. These countries have largely returned to normal daily life.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/27/five-ways-the-government-could-have-avoided-100000-covid-deaths>

Covid-19: Dutch justice minister vows prosecution of lockdown rioters

People arrested during three nights of rioting sparked by the Netherlands' new coronavirus curfew will face swift prosecution, the Dutch justice minister says, as the nation faces its worst civil unrest in years. Minister Ferd Grapperhaus said rioters would be quickly brought before the courts by public prosecutors and will face possible prison terms if convicted.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/europe/300215148/covid19-dutch-justice-minister-vows-prosecution-of-lockdown-rioters>

Hospital incursions by Covid deniers putting lives at risk, say health leaders

Lives are being put at risk and the care of patients disrupted by a spate of hospital incursions from Covid-19 deniers whose online activity is channelling hatred against NHS staff, say healthcare and police chiefs. In the latest example of a growing trend, a group of people were ejected by security from a Covid-19 ward last week as one of them filmed staff, claimed that the virus was a hoax and demanded that a seriously ill patient be sent home "He will die if he is taken from from here," a consultant tells the man on footage, which was later shared on social media. Following contact by the Guardian, Facebook took down footage and other shocking posts in which conspiracy theorists described NHS staff as "ventilator killers".

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/27/hospital-incursions-by-covid-deniers-putting-lives-at-risk-say-leaders?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Continued Lockdown

German lockdown beginning to take effect, new CDU leader says

Germany's coronavirus lockdown is starting to take effect, the new leader of the ruling Christian Democrats said on Wednesday, noting that the seven-day infection rate had fallen to 97.2 per 100,000 in his state of North Rhine Westphalia. "The current development is encouraging," Armin Laschet, also state premier, told the regional parliament, adding that Chancellor Angela Merkel's office and regional leaders were working on a "sequence of steps for possible openings" after the current lockdown is due to end on Feb. 14. But he said there should be no hasty decisions. The number of confirmed cases in Germany increased by 13,202 to 2,161,279, data showed on Wednesday, down from a rise of 15,974 a week ago, although the reported death toll rose by 982 to 53,972.

<https://www.metro.us/german-lockdown-beginning-to/>

Boris Johnson extends England's coronavirus lockdown into March

England's coronavirus lockdown is set to be extended for at least three more weeks, with schools not reopening until the second week of March at the earliest, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said. Johnson told the House of Commons there was "not enough data" currently available to announce the end of restrictions in the country, but said the government would publish a review of restrictions on February 22, before potentially reopening schools from the week of March 8. He said it would "not be possible" to reopen schools as early as the February half-term, due to the continuing high levels of infections in the country.

<https://www.businessinsider.in/politics/world/news/boris-johnson-extends-englands-coronavirus-lockdown-into-march/articleshow/80483395.cms>

UK plans tough new border measures to combat coronavirus

Prime Minister Boris Johnson indicated on Wednesday the COVID-19 lockdown in England would last until March 8 when schools could start to reopen as the government announced new measures to clamp down on travel to and from Britain. A highly contagious new variant of the virus, which emerged in southeast England at the end of last year, has led to a soaring number of infections across Britain with cases and deaths reaching record levels. On Tuesday, Britain's COVID-19 death toll surpassed 100,000, the first European state to reach that figure, leading to questions about Johnson's handling of a crisis that has also battered the economy.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-idUSKBN29W1L0>

German lockdown beginning to take effect, new CDU leader says

Germany's coronavirus lockdown is starting to take effect, the new leader of the ruling Christian Democrats said on Wednesday, noting that the seven-day infection rate had fallen to 97.2 per 100,000 in his state of North Rhine Westphalia. "The current development is encouraging," Armin Laschet, also state premier, told the regional parliament, adding that Chancellor Angela Merkel's

office and regional leaders were working on a “sequence of steps for possible openings” after the current lockdown is due to end on Feb. 14. But he said there should be no hasty decisions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany/german-lockdown-beginning-to-take-effect-new-cdu-leader-says-idUSKBN29W167>

German govt slashes GDP growth forecast as extended lockdown bites

The German government on Wednesday slashed its growth forecast for Europe’s largest economy to 3% this year, a sharp downward revision from last autumn’s estimate of 4.4% caused by a second coronavirus lockdown. “We are currently seeing a flattening of the number of infections, which is giving hope,” Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said, but he cautioned that the situation remained serious due to a more infectious virus variant. “We must therefore not gamble away what has been achieved,” Altmaier said against the backdrop of calls to ease lockdown measures soon.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/germany-economy-gdp/german-govt-slashes-gdp-growth-forecast-as-extended-lockdown-bites-idUSL8N2K234A>

Scientific Viewpoint

French firm agrees to manufacture vaccine developed by German rival

Sanofi pledges to manufacture 125 million doses of Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine. European Union is currently struggling with vaccine supply issues amid a row over shortages. Also, a stark warning from South Africa about future danger posed by new Coronavirus variants,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0958lgs>

North Korea 'is testing its own coronavirus vaccine'

North Korea has begun developing its own coronavirus vaccine using data that it hacked from foreign scientists, it is claimed. Despite the claims of supreme leader Kim Jong-un that the isolated kingdom has not recorded a single case of Covid-19, vaccine developers are thought to be testing their product on people with virus-like symptoms. A source told Seoul-based outlet Daily NK that scientists at Kim Il Sung University are using expertise gathered through 'hacking activities' to carry out their work at a biological research institute.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9191953/North-Korea-testing-coronavirus-vaccine.html>

How much does one coronavirus vaccine dose protect you and others?

About 70 million doses of vaccines against covid-19 have now been administered worldwide, including in excess of 20 million in the US. In the UK, where more than 7 million people have received a first dose, most people will be required to wait for about three months before they receive the second dose. This has left many wondering how protected they are, and what measures they still need to take for their safety and that of others. Here’s what you need to know. ...

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24933192-900-how-much-does-one-coronavirus-vaccine-dose-protect-you-and-others/>

Coronavirus: EU demands UK-made AstraZeneca vaccine doses

The EU has urged pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca to supply it with more doses of its Covid-19 vaccine from UK plants, amid a row over shortages. The company has infuriated the bloc by saying it can deliver only a fraction of the doses it promised for the first quarter of the year. It blames production issues at European plants, but the EU says doses made elsewhere should make up the shortfall. The EU has been criticised for the slow rollout of its vaccinations. The contract between the EU and AstraZeneca contains a confidentiality clause but the EU has asked the company to release the details nevertheless

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55822602>

People with schizophrenia are THREE TIMES more likely to die from Covid-19 than those without mental health issues - with old age the only higher risk factor

Researchers studied records of more than 7,000 hospitalised Covid-19 patients. Age was the biggest risk factor, with over 75s at 35 times increased risk of death But schizophrenia is second biggest risk factor, increasing risk by 2.67 times.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9192869/Schizophrenics-THREE-TIMES-likely-die-Covid-19.html>

Covid-19 cases were widespread in UK much earlier than previously thought, experts say

The coronavirus outbreak across the UK may have begun much earlier than previously thought with European ski resorts believed to be an epicentre of infection, according to experts. When the first two Covid-19 cases were confirmed in the UK on January 31 2020, it was thought at that time the risk of onward transmission was very low. Two Chinese nationals who had recently arrived were staying in a hotel in York when one of them fell ill and was taken to hospital. Both later tested positive for coronavirus. At that time, the UK's chief medical officer Professor Chris Whitty said the UK had been preparing for cases of novel coronavirus and "we have robust infection control measures in place to respond immediately".

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/covid-19-cases-widespread-uk-january-2020-b901284.html>

Scottish company launches Covid-19 antibody test for use by medical professionals

Medical diagnostics company Omega has launched its rapid antibody test for Covid-19. The Alva-headquartered company is launching its Mologic ELISA test through its in-house laboratory service in Littleport, Cambridgeshire. A capillary blood sample collection pack is sent to healthcare professionals, who then send the patient's sample back to the company's laboratory where the test is run. Test results then go back to each healthcare professional, who informs the patient of their result and provides advice as necessary. The company expects to offer this testing service to selected commercial occupational health partners, clinics and health care professionals in the UK. Omega chief executive Colin King said: "We are pleased that we have delivered on our committed timeline for the launch of the lab testing service.

<https://www.insider.co.uk/news/scottish-company-launches-covid-19-23384979>

COVID-19: Breakthrough treatment claims to stop 100% of symptomatic infections

The makers of an experimental drug, now being trialled by the NHS, say it is 100 per cent effective in protecting against symptomatic cases of the virus. US-based Regeneron Pharmaceuticals says its two-antibody cocktail called REGEN-COV also reduces overall coronavirus infection rates by about 50 per cent. The claims are based on interim results and the "confirmatory stage" of the trial will not be complete until the second quarter of this year, but the company has said it is hopeful it may "break the chain" of rising infections.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-breakthrough-treatment-claims-to-stop-100-of-symptomatic-infections-12200072>

Covid-19: 'Poor decisions' to blame for UK death toll, scientists say

"A legacy of poor decisions" by the UK before and during the pandemic led to one of the worst death rates in the world, scientists have said. Labour also criticised "monumental mistakes" by the prime minister in delaying acting on scientific advice over lockdowns three times. After UK deaths passed 100,000, Boris Johnson said he took "full responsibility" for the actions taken. But he said it was too soon to learn the lessons from the pandemic response. Prof Linda Bauld, public health expert from the University of Edinburgh, said the UK's current position was "a legacy of poor decisions that were taken when we eased restrictions".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55820178>

Scientists highlight low risk of COVID-19 spread in schools

Only 3.7% of COVID-19 cases at 17 in-person K-12 schools in Wood County, Wisconsin, were tied to in-school transmission, and incidence was 37% lower than that in the surround community, according to a study published yesterday in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). In a

commentary in JAMA on the topic, experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) give recommendations for safe reopening in US schools. The study, led by a physician from Aspirus Doctors Clinic in Wisconsin Rapids, used school and public health records to identify 191 COVID-19 cases in 4,876 students and 654 staff across five rural school districts. Only 7 of the 191 cases (3.7%), all of them in students, were linked to in-school transmission. Five of the cases occurred at elementary schools (3 in a single class), and 2 were associated with secondary schools. No staff member infections were tied to in-school spread.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/scientists-highlight-low-risk-covid-19-spread-schools>

Order up: U.S. calls on Pfizer, Moderna for 200 million more vaccine doses

Pfizer and Moderna have agreed to deliver another 200 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the U.S., bringing the total on tap to 600 million, or enough to vaccinate 300 million people. President Joe Biden announced the pending deals on Tuesday, noting the extra doses would be delivered this summer. Moderna confirmed the negotiations in a press release Wednesday, although it said the discussions are for “delivery in the third quarter of 2021.” Pfizer also confirmed the negotiations but didn't specify the timing. The stepped-up orders come as the Biden administration aims to bulk up vaccine supplies and dramatically speed up immunizations around the country. The options to buy these additional doses were included in Pfizer and Moderna's original contracts with the U.S. government.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/order-up-u-s-goverment-calls-pfizer-moderna-for-200-million-more-vaccines>

AstraZeneca, EU officials duke it out in the press as COVID-19 vaccine supply battle heats up

Within days of AstraZeneca's surprise cut to first-quarter COVID-19 vaccine deliveries to Europe, a fierce debate between the drugmaker and government officials is playing out behind the scenes—and in the press. CEO Pascal Soriot said the company has no legal obligation to deliver vaccines on a specific timeline. The EU maintains AZ's new delivery schedule is “not acceptable.” The sides were set to meet Wednesday, but an EU official told Politico the drugmaker had pulled out. AstraZeneca told Fierce Pharma via email it hadn't.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-plays-defense-amid-covid-19-vaccine-shortfall-as-europe-presses-for-more-supply>

First Moderna, now Pfizer-BioNTech working on booster shot amid rise of COVID-19 variants

One major concern over emerging coronavirus variants focuses on their impact on the efficacy of existing vaccines. But drugmakers appear to have countermeasures in the works. Pfizer and partner BioNTech are developing booster shots so that their COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty can protect against new, highly contagious variants, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said Tuesday, according to Bloomberg. “Every time a new variant comes up we should be able to test whether or not [our vaccine] is effective,” Bourla was quoted as saying. “Once we discover something that it is not as effective, we will very, very quickly be able to produce a booster dose that will be a small variation to the current vaccine.”

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/first-moderna-now-pfizer-biontech-also-working-booster-shot-amid-rise-covid-19-variants>

Those Covid-19 variants? ‘Don't worry yet,’ vaccine expert says

In Tuesday, Paul Offit, the vaccine developer and a professor of pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, dropped by, virtually, for a conversation with STAT+ subscribers. During the discussion, he addressed a question on everyone's mind: How worried should we be about new variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19? Offit — who, overall, believes “we're going to turn the corner,” with the help of vaccines — had plenty of worries. A rare side effect of the vaccines could

emerge and scare people away from them, even when the benefits far outweigh its risks. It could take a long time to fix vaccine distribution and manufacturing problems. But he said his biggest concern is that a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus will learn to evade the vaccines. He also explained, at length, why he doesn't think it's time for you to worry yet. The transcript of that explanation follows; it has been edited for clarity and length.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/27/those-covid-19-variants-dont-worry-yet-vaccine-expert-says/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Battling COVID-19, South Africa prepares for first vaccines

Battling a COVID-19 resurgence driven by a more infectious variant, South Africa is preparing to roll out its first vaccines to frontline healthcare workers. A delivery of 1 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to arrive imminently at Johannesburg's international airport and there are plans for jabs to be given to doctors and nurses starting next week. Health Minister Zweli Mkhize has said South Africa intends to vaccinate 67% of its 60 million people in 2021, starting with the most vulnerable health workers.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/battling-covid19-south-africa-prepares-for-first-vaccines-south-africa-vaccine-vaccines-healthcare-workers-b1793512.html>

Spanish PM appoints new health minister amid worsening pandemic

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez appointed Regional Policy Minister Carolina Darias as the new health minister on Tuesday after her predecessor resigned to run in an election in a move criticised by the opposition amid rising COVID-19 infections. In her previous job, the 55-year-old lawyer-turned-politician from the Canary Islands helped coordinate Spain's response to the pandemic, overseeing weekly meetings of regional health chiefs. Spain's cumulative infections now total 2,629,817, while the death toll is at 56,799. Despite the two-week number of infections tripling over the past month to a record 893 cases per 100,000 people on Tuesday, Spain, unlike many European countries, has chosen not to impose a new nationwide lockdown after the first one ended in May.

<https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2021/01/27/78165/spain-new-health-minister-amid-worsening-pandemic.html>

France inches toward new lockdown

The French government admitted on Wednesday that current restrictions designed to contain the spread of coronavirus were not enough, raising the prospect of a third nationwide lockdown. "Maintaining the current regime looks very unlikely", spokesman Gabriel Attal said after a cabinet meeting, amid concern about the spread of the more contagious UK variant of COVID-19. A nationwide night curfew, which was introduced on January 14, is "not sufficient at this stage", Attal added, leaving the government to study new options. President Emmanuel Macron was reported at the weekend to favour a new lockdown, but the government decided to hold off for several days to analyse the data on new infections and hospital admissions.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-france-inches-lockdown.html>

France Holds Off On New Lockdown, Worries About Unrest Risk

The French government is delaying an agonizing decision to lock down the country once more, mulling options to slow new variants of Covid-19 as the current curfew is considered insufficient. President Emmanuel Macron "has asked for additional analysis" on the spread of the virus before deciding on any new restrictions. Macron is under pressure to shut down the economy for the third time in less than a year, as doctors and researchers raise the alarm about mutations of the coronavirus spreading through the country. Yet with a presidential race coming up next year, the French leader also has to navigate criticism of his handling of the crisis, including a slow start to the vaccination campaign. And while surging U.K. cases and deaths demonstrate the perils of the new virus variants, riots in the Netherlands against a government curfew show the risks of tighter

measures.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/france-holds-off-on-new-lockdown-worries-about-unrest-risk/ar-BB1d8Gyf>

New coronavirus cases rise in France, third national lockdown feared

The daily number of new coronavirus infections in France stayed above 20,000 on average for the fourth straight day on Tuesday while hospitalisations reached an eight-week high of 27,041, increasing fears of a third national lockdown. President Emmanuel Macron still hopes a 6 p.m. curfew put in place 11 days ago will be enough to rein in the surge in new cases caused by the emergence of more contagious variants of the virus. Despite calls from some doctors and medics for a new lockdown, government minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said earlier there was no need to make a decision on such a measure at this stage.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-infections-idUSKBN29V28A>

Outbreaks in S Korean schools drive Covid surge

South Korean authorities moved to rein in coronavirus outbreaks centred on Christian schools as the country reported a jump in infections, dampening hopes of a speedy exit from a third wave of the pandemic. At least 323 Covid-19 cases had been traced to churches and mission schools run by a Christian organisation in two cities. More than 100 cases were confirmed overnight among people linked to churches and its mission schools in Gwangju, about 270kms south of Seoul, officials said.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0127/1192283-coronavirus-global/>

Willingly or pressured, Slovaks take COVID tests to avoid tough lockdown

Slovak physiotherapist Katarina Caklosova was ready to close shop for two weeks rather than heed government requirements to undergo a coronavirus test - until she found that new rules would also ban her from her favourite nature walks. That tipped the balance and Caklosova, 50, will join almost 3 million Slovaks who have taken a test to avoid stricter lockdown measures kicking in on Wednesday and aimed at curbing the number of new COVID-19 cases. Under the new rules to be applied until Feb. 7, people who cannot show a certificate proving they tested negative in the previous week or had the infection in the past, are barred from moving around even for work and exercise.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20210127133244-67fdr>

Global COVID-19 cases surpass 100 million as nations tackle vaccine shortages

Global coronavirus cases surpassed 100 million on Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, as countries around the world struggle with new virus variants and vaccine shortfalls. Almost 1.3% of the world's population has now been infected with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and more than 2.1 million people have died. Around 56 countries have begun vaccinating people for the coronavirus, administering at least 64 million doses.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-global-cases/global-covid-19-cases-surpass-100-million-as-nations-tackle-vaccine-shortages-idUSKBN29W0B5>

Malta tightens restaurant closing times to curb COVID-19 infections

Malta on Wednesday cancelled carnival events and imposed an 11 p.m. closing time on restaurants to contain the spread of COVID-19, although Prime Minister Robert Abela said there would be no lockdown or curfew. Abela said a surge of cases in January had been the result of gatherings over Christmas and the New Year. "February is a particular time with many enjoying carnival and mid-term holidays. We are asking people to be responsible and businesses to make some sacrifices," Abela said. Police and other law enforcement officers will have a stronger presence in the streets and crack down on large gatherings in rented premises.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-malta/malta-tightens-restaurant-closing-times-to-curb-covid-19-infections-idUSL1N2K20TU>

Sweden registers 4,183 new COVID-19 cases, 178 deaths on Wednesday

Sweden, which has spurned a lockdown throughout the pandemic, registered 4,183 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, Health Agency statistics showed. The country of 10 million inhabitants registered 178 new deaths, taking the total to 11,425. The deaths registered have occurred over several days and weeks. Sweden's death rate per capita is several times higher than that of its Nordic neighbours, but lower than several European countries that opted for lockdowns.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-sweden-cases/sweden-registers-4183-new-covid-19-cases-178-deaths-on-wednesday-idUSL8N2K240X>

Cases drop in main global pandemic hot spots but surge elsewhere

In its weekly snapshot of COVID-19 activity, the World Health Organization (WHO) said cases fell for the second week in a row, mainly in the highest-burden countries, but it warned that the pattern masks sharp rises in other countries in some regions. Meanwhile, the world's level of deaths, often a lagging indicator, stayed about the same as the previous week. And more countries reported detections of variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In its weekly situation report, the WHO said cases declined 15% from last week. The largest drops were in the European and African regions. Of the five countries reporting the highest number of cases, all had drops except for France, where the illness level rose 10%. Those that had the biggest decreases included the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (24%) and the United States (20%).

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/cases-drop-main-global-pandemic-hot-spots-surge-elsewhere>

New Lockdown

Sweeping Covid-19 lockdown in Peru as virus cases soar

Sixteen million Peruvians will enter a two-week coronavirus lockdown covering a third of the country at the end of January, Peru's interim president said. The South American nation's healthcare system has been overwhelmed by the Covid-19 pandemic -- with only 500 intensive care beds for a population of 32 million -- with authorities reporting a spike in deaths as infections increase. The country's lockdown will run from January 31 to February 14, interim president Francisco Sagasti said in a televised address, blaming the soaring Covid infections on end-of-year gatherings.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210127-sweeping-covid-19-lockdown-in-peru-as-virus-cases-soar>

Peru orders total lockdown across 10 states as second wave bites

President Francisco Sagasti of Peru announced a total lockdown of the capital and nine other regions following a significant increase in COVID cases, which he said had pushed hospitals close to collapse. Sagasti said the new measures covering central Peru would remain in effect until at least Feb. 14. They include instructions to work from home, the closure of all non-essential shops, the suspension of interregional land and air travel and the extension of a ban on flights coming from Europe to flights from Brazil in a bid to curb new, more contagious strains of the virus.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-peru-idUSKBN29W0B3>