# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis
4th Feb 2021

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## News Highlights

### Vaccine confidence rising globally, but pockets of hesistancy remain

Globally, the number of those prepared to be inoculated against Covid-19 is on an upswing according to a survey of fifteen countries covering 37,500 people. A similar survey taken in November last year found just forty percent were willing, but now vaccine trust is markedly higher, with people in Britain most willing to have a shot (78%), followed by Denmark (67%). However, there are disparities. While vaccine trust is highest in European countries - France being an exception - in Asia Pacific countries such as Japan, Singapore and Australia, vaccine trust has slipped back a little.

### Israel makes vaccine available to the Over-16s

With the majority of its older and most vulnerable population vaccinated against Covid-19, Israel is now offering the jab to those over sixteen. One in three Israelis have received at least one dose - a markedly higher number than any other country. Its rapid vaccination campaign is, however, facing hurdles with a decrease in the number of people attending appointments forcing some clinics to discard expired doses. Apathy and misinformation are possible concerns, officials say.

### China announces commitment to COVAX

The global COVAX initiative, which seeks to shore up access to COVID-19 vaccines for lower-income countries, will receive ten million vaccine doses from China. The country has been developing vaccines against Covid-19 throughout the pandemic. COVAX has assumed significant importance as vaccine rollout begins, amidst fears that the global immunisation campaign will leave developing countries behind.

### Johnson casts doubt on closing UK borders

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said 'it's not practical to completely close off the UK,' citing the volume of food imports and medicine the country receives.Opposition leader Sir Keir Starmer called for tougher border controls due to the emergence of a number of new COVID-19 variants around the world. Johnson, though, replied; 'We already have one of the toughest border regimes in the world.' The government has indicated it will mandate quarantine for anyone arriving from countries with worrying COVID-19 variants, though it is unclear when this policy might starts.

## Lockdown Exit

**Denmark: ‘Digital corona passport’ will be ready in months**
Denmark’s government has said it is joining forces with businesses to develop a digital passport that would show whether people have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, allowing them to travel and help ease restrictions on public life. Finance Minister Morten Boedskov told a news conference on Wednesday that “in three, four months, a digital corona passport will be ready for use in, for example, business travel.” “It is absolutely crucial for us to be able to restart Danish society so that companies can get back on track. Many Danish companies are global companies with the whole world as a market,” he added. As a first step, before the end of February, citizens in Denmark would be able to see on a Danish health website the official confirmation of whether they have been

vaccinated.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/3/denmark-digital-corona-passport-will-be-ready-in-months

**Covid is the greatest test of global solidarity in decades – we have to work with, not against, each other**

In September 2000, 189 countries signed the Millennium Declaration, shaping the principles of international cooperation for a new era of progress towards common goals. Emerging from the Cold War, we were confident about our capacity to build a multilateral order capable of tackling the big challenges of the time: hunger and extreme poverty, environmental degradation, diseases, economic shocks, and the prevention of conflicts. In September 2015, all countries again committed to an ambitious agenda to tackle global challenges together: the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/covid-vaccines-macron-merkel-von-der-leyen-b1796793.html

**Travellers at Perth hotel at centre of WA coronavirus lockdown 'shocked' by poor communication and PPE use**

They might be quarantining at the same hotel that produced Western Australia's first COVID-19 case in 10 months, but returned travellers at the Four Points by Sheraton say they are being left in the dark on key issues. An unknown number were due to leave the hotel yesterday after undergoing 14 days of quarantine but — only a short time before they were due to leave — they learned the plan had changed when they saw a press conference broadcast live on television. At the media briefing, WA Premier Mark McGowan said the travellers would have to produce another negative test before they could be released.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-03/guests-at-perth-hotel-at-centre-of-covid-19-case-speak-out/13114584

**Global vaccine trust rising, but France, Japan, others sceptical**

People’s willingness to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is rising around the world and more than half of those questioned said they would take the shot if it were offered next week, an updated survey of global vaccine confidence found on Thursday. But attitudes and confidence vary widely in the 15 countries covered in the survey, with France showing high levels of scepticism and some Asian countries showing declining trust in vaccines, while some European nations see rising confidence. Overall, vaccine confidence is higher than in November, when the same survey - conducted in 15 countries and covering 13,500 people each time - found that only 40% would be willing to get vaccinated.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-vaccines-confidenc/global-vaccine-trust-rising-but-france-japan-others-sceptical-idUSKBN2A400T

**Vaccination sites opening in hard-hit California communities to tackle COVID disparities**

New vaccination centers are due to open this month in the heart of two California communities especially hard hit by the coronavirus, as state and federal officials try to tackle racial and economic disparities hindering U.S. immunization efforts. Joint plans to launch the two sites on Feb. 16, at the Oakland-Alameda Coliseum in Oakland and the California State University campus in east Los Angeles, were detailed separately on Wednesday by Governor Gavin Newsom and the Biden administration’s COVID-19 response coordinator, Jeff Zients.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-california/vaccination-sites-opening-in-hard-hit-california-communities-to-tackle-covid-disparities-idUSKBN2A402M

## Exit Strategies

**Slow COVID-19 vaccine rollout expected in war- ravaged Syria**

The success of the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in war-ravaged Syria depends on their availability and distribution and may initially cover only 3% of the population, a World Health Organization

official said Tuesday. Akjemal Magtymova, WHO's representative in Syria, said the country is eligible to receive vaccines for free through the global COVAX effort aimed at helping lower-income countries obtain the shots. But Magtymova couldn't say when the first shipment would arrive, how many vaccines were expected, or how they would be rolled out in a divided country still at war. The COVAX rollout is expected to begin in April. Magtymova spoke to The Associated Press in the capital Damascus amid concerns over the equitable distribution of coronavirus vaccines across the country, where the health care sector has been devastated by a decade of war and remains divided into three rival parts.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/slow-covid19-vaccine-rollout-expected-in-war-ravaged-syria-country-vaccines-population-vaccines-success-b1796578.html

**Israel opens coronavirus vaccines to all over-16s**
Israel's health ministry has said it will offer coronavirus vaccines to anyone over the age of 16, as part of a rapid campaign that has already seen the majority of older and vulnerable populations receive shots. The ministry has told healthcare providers they can start booking appointments for the new age group starting on Thursday. One in three Israelis has received at least one injection, a far higher fraction than anywhere else. The country of 9 million had previously allowed anyone over 35, as well as at-risk groups and exam-taking students aged 16 to 18, to be inoculated.
https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/world/israel-opens-coronavirus-vaccines-to-all-over-16s/ar-BB1dlTuK

**COVID-19: 10 million people have had a first coronavirus vaccine in the UK, Hancock says**
Ten million people in the UK have now had their first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has said. "This is a hugely significant milestone in our national effort against this virus. Every jab makes us all a bit safer - I want to thank everyone playing their part," Mr Hancock said. A further 1,322 people have died in the UK within 28 days of a positive test, and another 19,202 cases have been recorded. It brings the total number of UK deaths to 109,335 and the total number of cases to 3,871,825.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-10-million-people-have-had-a-first-coronavirus-vaccine-in-the-uk-hancock-says-12207628

**Hundreds of coronavirus vaccines wasted after fridge switched off**
More than 400 doses of Covid-19 vaccines went to waste after a fridge was accidentally turned off in a vaccination centre, it has been reported. Staff are understood to have discovered the issue when they checked the fridge temperature early in the morning of January 8. A total of 450 doses of the Pfizer jab had to be binned following a "power-related issue" with a fridge at Montgomery Hall in Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham, last month. Ninety vials of the vaccine – each containing up to five doses – were wasted when the fridge was inadvertently switched off overnight at the venue, sources confirmed to the PA news agency.
https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vaccines-wasted-rotherham-fridge-switched-off-b918485.html

**Australia places no upper age limit on Pfizer coronavirus vaccine**
Australian regulators have decided to place no upper age limit on use of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine despite reports of dozens of deaths among the elderly in Norway. Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration said in a statement Tuesday that it received reports on Jan. 14 of about 30 deaths in more than 40,000 elderly people vaccinated with Pfizer PFE, -0.43%. But it added that "no causal link between vaccination and deaths could be established." The agency says that "elderly patients can receive this vaccine and there is no cap on the upper age limit." The regulator last month gave provisional approval for the use of the Pfizer vaccine in Australia and the first doses are due to be administered to people aged 16 and older in late February.
https://www.marketwatch.com/story/australia-places-no-upper-age-limit-on-pfizer-coronavirus-vaccine-01612324258

**Some U.S. pharmacies to begin getting direct shipments of coronavirus vaccine**

Several thousand pharmacies across the United States will start to receive direct shipments of coronavirus vaccine next week in the first phase of a strategy intended to simplify the ability to get shots, White House officials said Tuesday. Jeff Zients, coordinator of the White House's covid-19 response, said the 1 million doses that will be sent to pharmacies starting Feb. 11 come on top of a modest increase in vaccine allocations to states that is beginning this week. And to help states cope with financial burdens created by the pandemic, Zients said, the government will reimburse them retroactively for emergency expenses associated with fighting the public health crisis, including the purchase of masks and gloves, and the mobilization of the National Guard.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/some-us-pharmacies-to-begin-getting-direct-shipments-of-coronavirus-vaccine/2021/02/02/b9d6424a-6572-11eb-886d-5264d4ceb46d_story.html

**China announces plan to provide 10 million coronavirus vaccine doses to developing nations through global COVAX facility**

China announces plan to provide 10 million coronavirus vaccine doses to developing nations through global COVAX facility.
https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/china-announces-plan-provide-10-million-coronavirus-vaccine-75652600

**MP encourages city's Black community to get covid jab**

A Merseyside MP has visited a health centre to encourage the city's Black community to take up the offer of a coronavirus vaccine. Liverpool Riverside MP Kim Johnson visited Princes Park Health Centre, which recently began its Covid-19 vaccination programme. Ms Johnson, along with Dr Katy Gardner, Cllr Steve Munby and Cate Murphy, a member of the MP's team, were given a full tour of the centre. Ms Johnson said: "We were blown away by the dedication and expertise of all the staff, including Dr David Lewis, Fiona Lemmens, Michelle Fairhurst and the fantastic team of medical students. "While I welcome the development, the delay has been frustrating.
https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mp-visits-covid-19-vaccine-19746614

**Covid-19: Study showing Oxford vaccine slows virus spread 'superb' - Hancock**

Results that show the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine might reduce the spread of coronavirus have been hailed as "absolutely superb" by the health secretary. Matt Hancock said the study shows "vaccines are the way out of this pandemic". It is the first time a vaccine has been shown to reduce transmission of the virus. The UK has given a first Covid jab to more than 10 million people so far. The results of the study, which has not yet been formally published, suggest that the vaccine may have a "substantial" effect on transmission of the virus. It means the jab could have a greater impact on the pandemic, as each person who is vaccinated will indirectly protect other people too.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55913913

**COVID-19: Nicola Sturgeon aims for phased return of Scotland schools within three weeks**

A phased return of pupils to classrooms in Scotland could begin from 22 February, the first minister has announced. Nicola Sturgeon revealed the news as she confirmed the country's COVID-19 lockdown restrictions would be extended until at least the end of February. Ms Sturgeon said the measures were having an effect, noting that the prevalence of the virus has fallen in Scotland, but stressed "continued caution" was required with pressure on the NHS still "severe". She held out the prospect of a "careful and gradual" easing of restrictions from the start of next month, if progress continues to be made, adding she would update MSPs on a possible relaxation of measures in two weeks.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-nicola-sturgeon-announces-phased-return-of-schools-in-scotland-from-february-22-12206593

**Oxford vaccine study marks moment of vindication for roll-out plan, but hopes of easing lockdown are premature**

The latest data on the Oxford/AztraZeneca vaccine which reveals is both effective in protecting patients and cutting transmission of the virus is a moment of victory for the Government's immunisation policy. The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommended the strategy of waiting longer than three-to-four-weeks between the first and second dose of vaccines in the face of scepticism from health bodies and criticism from other countries. But the new analysis from Oxford University showed the jab offers 76 per cent protection up to three months after just one dose.
https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/oxford-vaccine-study-marks-moment-of-vindication-for-roll-out-plan-but-hopes-of-easing-lockdown-are-premature/ar-BB1dINAO

**Ukraine government to allow regions with lower COVID cases to ease lockdown measures**
The Ukrainian government is ready to cancel a nationwide lockdown and allow health authorities to ease lockdown measures in regions where COVID-19 cases are lower, Prime Minister Denys Shmygal said on Wednesday. The decision may be taken in the coming days, he told a televised cabinet meeting.
https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-ukraine-lockdown/ukraine-government-to-allow-regions-with-lower-covid-cases-to-ease-lockdown-measures-idUSL8N2K93M8

## Partisan Exits

**Guaido: Maduro refuses to access US-held funds to buy vaccines**
Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido said on Wednesday that Venezuelan funds controlled by the United States Treasury Department could be used to pay for coronavirus vaccines but that President Nicolas Maduro's government is refusing to cooperate. The government has not accepted an implementation plan laid out by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) that would enable Venezuela to join the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX) programme, and has not fulfilled a prior deal regarding distribution of COVID-19 tests.
https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/2/3/guaido-maduro-refuses-to-access-us-held-funds-to-buy-vaccines

**New U.S. transportation chief optimistic about future of travel despite COVID-19**
U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Wednesday he was "deeply optimistic" about the future of travel despite the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on airlines, airports, transit systems and road use. The pandemic has sent tens of millions of workers home for months, slashed tourism and business travel demand and placed significant burdens on transportation services to deliver packages, vaccines and other critical goods. Much of the nation's travel sector is again asking Congress for a new round of emergency funding. "We will break new ground in ensuring that our economy recovers and rebuilds, in rising to the climate challenge, and in making sure transportation is an engine for equity in this country," said Buttigieg, who was sworn in Wednesday, in an email to staff.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-transportation-idUSKBN2A32X8

**UK compromising Covid-19 vaccine safety, says Ursula von der Leyen**
Britain failed its "gigantic responsibility" to ensure the proper safety of vaccines and the European Union should be proud of its strategy, Ursula von der Leyen said today.Amid growing criticism of
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/uk-compromising-safety-over-covid-19-vaccine-says-ursula-von-der-leyen-lbk60pzlf

**Covid: 'Not practical' to close UK borders, says Boris Johnson**
It is "not practical" to completely close the UK's borders given the amount of medicines and food imported into the country, the prime minister has said. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer called for tougher restrictions to prevent new coronavirus variants entering the UK. Boris Johnson said the government had already tightened travel restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus. He said it

would be going ahead with its plan for quarantine hotels for people arriving from Covid hotspots. It is not yet clear when the scheme - announced a week ago - will start or when there will be further details. Speaking during Prime Minister's Questions, Sir Keir said government scientists had recommended "a complete pre-emptive closure of borders".
https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55921150

**COVID-19: Chinese police break up group selling fake vaccines to other countries**
More than 80 suspected members of a criminal group that was manufacturing and selling fake COVID-19 vaccines - including to other countries - have been arrested in China. Police in the capital Beijing, as well as in Jiangsu and Shandong provinces, broke up the group which was producing a simple saline solution that was being sold as fake vaccines. According to state media, the group - led by a suspect with the surname Kong - had been active since last September and the false jabs were being sold in China and abroad.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-chinese-police-break-up-group-selling-fake-vaccines-to-other-countries-12207191

## Continued Lockdown

**The rise of parental burnout in lockdown**
On top of usual household duties, for the last 10 months parents have been educating children, working remotely and keeping relationships intact - so it's no wonder they're feeling the strain of lockdown. Even Kate Middleton has urged parents to seek help when they need it. Dr Punam joins us to discuss the warning signs of parental burnout and what you can do about it.
https://www.itv.com/thismorning/articles/the-rise-of-parental-burnout-in-lockdown

**COVID-19: SEND children suffered 'profound disruption' during first lockdown, report**
Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) experienced "profound disruption" to their well-being and family life during the first lockdown, according to new research. The study, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, paints a "concerning picture" of teachers and professionals struggling to support pupils and their families. Almost all (98%) providers said they had pupils who would find it hard to keep to social distancing, while 75% had pupils who require personal care which involves close contact with others.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-send-children-suffered-profound-disruption-during-first-lockdown-report-12207147

**Domestic abuse soared 10 per cent in lockdown official statistics show**
Domestic abuse rose by 10% in a year, although overall crime was down during the Covid-19 pandemic, official figures show. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 842,813 domestic abuse-related offences were recorded by police forces in England and Wales in the year ending September 2020 – up from 769,691 the previous year. Total police recorded crime dropped by 6% to around 5.7 million offences, driven by substantial falls during April to June, particularly in theft offences, as the country spent most of the period under strict lockdown restrictions, a report published on Wednesday said. But the results of a separate survey carried out by the ONS show the number of victims of crime in July to September 2020 returned to a similar level as in the pre-coronavirus period of January to March following a 19% drop in April to June.
https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/domestic-abuse-soared-10-per-19759156

**Covid: Teachers pushed to 'breaking point' under lockdown**
Teachers have said working through another lockdown has pushed the profession "close to breaking point". While most pupils across England have been told to learn remotely, schools remain open for vulnerable students and the children of key workers. School staff in the South West said they were working "incredibly hard" to make the lives of students "as normal as possible". Some said their

workload had "never been higher" as a result. Teachers across England had to "start from scratch" when they were faced with the prospect of lockdown learning, said Dan Hayward from Ivybridge Community College in Devon.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-55737787

**Europe Struggles as Vaccine Delays Force Further Lockdown Extensions**
Concern about more infectious variants of the coronavirus continue to shape governments' responses to the pandemic despite stabilizing or falling infection numbers as Europe struggles with a slow vaccine rollout. The Dutch government Tuesday extended a national lockdown until March 2, with a reassessment on Feb. 23, in response to new strains of the coronavirus. The extension of the lockdown, imposed on Dec. 19, comes despite a slight improvement in the country's health situation. Dutch primary schools and day-care centers will reopen on Monday, meaning almost 2 million young children will resume in-person education. In Germany, the federal and regional governments will meet on Feb. 10 to discuss a possible extension of the current lockdown, which expires on Feb. 14.
https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/covid-2021-02-03/card/eJkGpiholZmGEFAwQemv

**WA Premier says COVID-19 restrictions will continue past lockdown**
Mark McGowan said the Government would need to see 14 days of no community transmission for restrictions to completely end.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-03/mark-mcgowan-covid-restriction-quarantine-coronavirus/13117756

**WA lockdown to remain as state records no new cases**
Western Australia's five-day lockdown will remain as the state records a second day of zero COVID-19 cases.
https://www.9news.com.au/videos/health/coronavirus-wa-lockdown-to-remain-as-state-records-no-new-cases/ckknq44rb001p0hlkaqcw1hdj

**Dutch PM Rutte confirms lockdown to last until at least March**
Prime Minister Mark Rutte said on Tuesday that most of the lockdown measures in the Netherlands, many of which have been in place since October, will remain in place for weeks due to fears over a surge in cases as a result of variant strains. Rutte's government is still weighing whether to continue an evening curfew that has triggered rioting in some Dutch cities beyond next week, the prime minister told a press briefing. The government announced earlier this week that primary schools and daycares will reopen on Feb. 8, adding that it is also looking at possibly reopening secondary schools but that will not happen before March.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-netherlands-lockdo/dutch-pm-rutte-confirms-lockdown-to-last-until-at-least-march-idUSKBN2A22LW

**Scotland toughens quarantine rules, hopes for lockdown easing in March**
Scotland will toughen its coronavirus controls on international travellers but it also hopes to start relaxing its lockdown restrictions in early March, the head of the country's devolved government, Nicola Sturgeon, said on Tuesday. Everyone arriving directly in Scotland from overseas will be required to quarantine, regardless of where they have come from, Sturgeon said.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-scotland/scotland-toughens-quarantine-rules-hopes-for-lockdown-easing-in-march-idUKKBN2A21XZ

## Scientific Viewpoint

**Britain trial to test combining Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines in two-shot regimen**
Britain on Thursday launched a trial to assess the immune responses generated if doses of the COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer Inc and AstraZeneca Plc are combined in a two-shot schedule. The British researchers behind the trial said data on vaccinating people with the two different types of

coronavirus vaccines could help understanding of whether shots can be rolled out with greater flexibility around the world. Initial data on immune responses is expected to be generated around June. The trial will examine the immune responses of an initial dose of Pfizer vaccine followed by a booster of AstraZeneca's, as well as vice versa, with intervals of 4 and 12 weeks.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-vaccine-mi/britain-trial-to-test-combining-pfizer-and-astrazeneca-vaccines-in-two-shot-regimen-idUSKBN2A400P

**Promising results from FIRST COVID-19 pill vaccine tested in humans**
Vaxart, Inc., a clinical-stage biotechnology company developing oral vaccines administered by tablet, today announced preliminary data from its Phase 1 study of VXA-CoV2-1 showing that its oral COVID-19 tablet vaccine candidate was generally well-tolerated, and immunogenic as measured by multiple markers of immune response to SARS-CoV-2 antigens. "Our Phase I results highlight the importance of our differentiated vaccine design, as they suggest VXA-CoV2-1 could have broad activity against existing and future coronavirus strains. These results are timely, as we are seeing the emergence of new variants less responsive to first generation vaccines, thus making potential cross-reactivity another important advantage of next-generation vaccines," said Andrei Floroiu, Vaxart's Chief Executive Officer.
http://outbreaknewstoday.com/promising-results-from-first-covid-19-pill-vaccine-tested-in-humans-53237/

**France to start producing coronavirus vaccines at four labs amid pressure to speed up innoculations**
France will soon begin production coronavirus vaccines from four laboratories, the president has said, as the country faces pressure to speed up inoculations. Emmanuel Macron said all French people who are willing to be vaccinated against the virus will be offered a jab by the end of the summer.
https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/france-to-start-producing-coronavirus-vaccines-at-four-labs-amid-pressure-to-speed-up-innoculations/ar-BB1dlZQp

**Glaxo and Curevac to develop vaccines to tackle Covid-19 variants**
Glaxosmithkline and a German biotechnology company are to develop a new generation of Covid-19 jab to tackle multiple emerging variants in one vaccine as part of a €150 million collaboration. The FTSE 100 pharmaceuticals group, which is based in west London, will also support the manufacture of up to 100 million doses of Curevac's existing "first-generation" vaccine candidate, which is in trials, through its facilities in Belgium this year.
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/glaxo-and-curevac-to-develop-vaccines-to-tackle-covid-19-variants-0xxbcgx3p

**What do we know about China's Covid-19 vaccines?**
China has been developing vaccines since the start of the pandemic. What do we know?
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-55911045

**Can you still transmit Covid-19 after vaccination?**
It was 17 June 2009. An 11-year-old boy returned to the US from the UK – and inadvertently brought something with him. Later that week, while attending a religious education programme in Sullivan County, New York, he developed a mysterious swelling of his salivary glands. He had mumps, a respiratory infection spread by contact with droplets in the air. Meanwhile, the religious course continued. The 400 children in attendance spent hours each day engaging in prolonged face-to-face contact – specifically, a kind of Orthodox Jewish education involving facing a study partner, a chavrusa, across a narrow table, while analysing and debating text from the Talmud. By the time the programme ended, 22 others had been infected, along with three adults.
https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210203-why-vaccinated-people-may-still-be-able-to-spread-covid-19

**COVID-19: Work starts on coronavirus vaccine that will target variants**

Drugs giant GlaxoSmithKline and German biotech firm CureVac have struck a €150m (£130m) deal to develop next-generation COVID-19 vaccines that target several variants of the virus in one product. The companies said in a joint statement that they were targeting a launch of the vaccine in 2022. It comes as public health experts around the world raise concerns about whether mutations in the virus may make existing vaccines less effective.
https://news.sky.com/story/plan-to-develop-new-vaccine-that-targets-covid-19-variants-in-one-product-12207253

**More Than 20% of Londoners Have Covid-19 Antibodies, ONS Study Shows**
More than one in five people in London would have tested positive for Covid-19 antibodies in January, according to a new study that highlights how widespread the disease has become in the U.K. capital. The capital city, which was particularly hard hit during the winter wave of the virus, has the highest rate of positive tests in the whole of England. Nationwide, one in seven likely have the anitbodies, which suggest a person had the infection in the past, the Office for National Statistics said Wednesday.
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-03/more-than-20-of-londoners-have-covid-19-antibodies-ons-says?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpId=google

**New Zealand provisionally approves use of Pfizer coronavirus vaccine**
New Zealand's medicine regulator Medsafe has provisionally approved the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are expected to arrive in New Zealand by the end of March, the Government said, adding that people at highest risk would be vaccinated before the broader community from the second half of the year. "The provisional approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is a positive step in New Zealand's fight against COVID-19," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-03/new-zealand-provisionally-approves-pfizer-coronavirus-vaccine/13117492

**New Zealand regulator approves Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine**
New Zealand on Wednesday warned against “vaccine nationalism” that could delay the rollout of international shipments after its medicines regulator provisionally approved the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she still expected supplies of the Pfizer-BioNTech product to arrive in the country by end-March, but expressed concern at any attempt to limit exports. “The world just can’t afford for that to happen. We won’t be safe until we have widespread rollout across the globe,” she told a news conference. “So it’s in everybody’s interest that we see vaccine programmes continuing to roll out in other countries.”
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand/new-zealand-regulator-approves-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-idINKBN2A303Y

**GSK and CureVac sign £132m deal to develop multi-variant Covid vaccine**
GlaxoSmithKline and Germany’s CureVac have reached a €150m (£132m) agreement to develop a next generation of Covid-19 vaccines targeting new emerging variants in the pandemic. The two companies said they planned to work jointly to develop a shot next year that could address “multiple emerging variants in one vaccine”. GSK, the UK’s second biggest pharmaceutical firm and the world’s biggest vaccine maker, will also support the manufacture of up to 100m doses of CureVac’s first-generation Covid-19 vaccine candidate, CVnCoV, this year.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/03/glaxosmithkline-curevac-deal-develop-multi-variant-covid-vaccine?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=twt_b-gdnnews&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1612349612

**COVID-19: Coronavirus antibodies last for at least six months after infection, study finds**
Coronavirus antibodies last for at least six months after infection for the majority of people who have had the virus, according to a new study. It found 99% of participants who had tested positive for previous infection retained coronavirus antibodies for three months after being infected, while 88% did so for the full six months of the study. The research from UK Biobank also found that 8.8% of the

UK population had been infected by December 2020, rising as high as 12.4% in London and as low as 5.5% in Scotland.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-virus-antibodies-last-for-at-least-six-months-after-infection-study-finds-12207174

**Adults 20 to 49 may have driven 72% of US COVID-19 surges**

Adults 20 to 49 years old may have kindled 72.2% of US COVID-19 resurgences starting in late summer 2020, with those 35 to 49 especially contributing, a study published yesterday in Science suggests. A team led by researchers from Imperial College London analyzed age-specific cell phone mobility data of more than 10 million Americans and linked them to age-specific COVID-19 death data starting on Mar 15, 2020. Data from 42 US states, Washington, DC, and New York City showed that the number of visits to places such as supermarkets and restaurants began to rebound across all age-groups in August after a significant initial reduction due to public health interventions such as lockdowns in the spring. COVID-19 infections and deaths followed a similar pattern in both the United States and Europe. The authors called for targeting interventions such as transmission-reducing vaccines to people 20 to 49 years as a strategy to reduce the likelihood of future COVID-19 surges and related deaths in areas not yet affected by highly transmissible new coronavirus variants.
https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/adults-20-49-may-have-driven-72-us-covid-19-surges

**New AstraZeneca COVID vaccine data ease worries over 2nd-dose delay**

New data from clinical trials of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University COVID-19 vaccine suggest it provides strong protection after the first of two doses and could slow the spread of the virus, according to a new preprint study. The development comes amid a flurry of other vaccine developments today and as health officials look more toward spacing out the two-dose vaccines as a way to protect more people, especially as the threat of more transmissible variants and ones that can escape immunity darken the horizon.
https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/new-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-data-ease-worries-over-2nd-dose-delay

**GSK inks deal to produce CureVac's COVID-19 vaccine—and develop a next-gen version, too**

After a recent trial setback, GlaxoSmithKline and partner Sanofi's COVID-19 vaccine program looks to be a more distant contender in the first wave of immunizations. But as one of the world's largest vaccine makers, the British pharma doesn't want to miss out on this pandemic opportunity. GSK will help CureVac manufacture up to 100 million doses of the German biotech's first-generation mRNA COVID vaccine candidate, CVnCoV, in 2021, the two companies said Wednesday. In the meantime, the two companies will also work on a next-gen vaccine to tackle emerging variants. "The key is to make sure that we follow and get ahead of the future of this virus," GSK CEO Emma Walmsley said. The mRNA technology's ability to be quickly modified and manufactured makes it a good platform for this purpose, she added.
https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/gsk-amid-sanofi-delay-teams-curevac-multivalent-covid-19-vaccine-to-tackle-variants

**With a seductive number, AstraZeneca study fueled hopes that eclipsed its data**

A new paper released this week suggested that a vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University not only protected clinical trial participants from developing disease, but also may significantly reduce transmission of the virus that causes the disease. In the recent burst of data on Covid-19 vaccines, that suggestion stood out. The question of whether Covid-19 vaccines reduce transmission has been a critical and unanswered one, creating uncertainty over whether people who have been vaccinated will still be able to be infected by and transmit onward SARS-Cov-2 to those who have not yet been vaccinated. Media reports seized on a reference in the paper from Oxford

researchers that a single dose of the vaccine cut positive test results by 67%, pointing to it as the first evidence that a vaccine could prevent transmission of the virus. But the paper, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, does not prove or even claim that — although it hints at the possibility.
https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/03/with-a-seductive-number-astrazeneca-study-fueled-hopes-that-eclipsed-its-data/

**Pfizer Vaccine Is Just as Effective Against COVID U.K. Strain, Israeli Data Shows**
The coronavirus vaccines administered in Israel are effective at curbing infection rates, the incidence of serious COVID-19 cases and at protecting against the British variant of the coronavirus, according to new studies conducted by an Israeli health maintenance organization based on real-world data and reported here for the first time. The first study, conducted by Leumit Health Services on the basis of patient data collected since Israel's vaccination campaign began in December, provides invaluable insight into the effectiveness of the vaccine in the real world, as opposed to efficacy rates measured in the course of controlled experiments in laboratories. According to the second study, the Pfizer vaccine is similarly effective at affording protection against the U.K. variant
https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-pfizer-vaccine-effective-covid-u-k-strain-1.9507594

**Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine cuts COVID transmission: Study**
The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine may reduce the transmission of the coronavirus by up to two-thirds, a study has suggested, marking the first time a jab has been shown to have such an effect. The Oxford University study published on Tuesday, which is awaiting peer review, found that those who had been vaccinated with a single dose of the vaccine were 67 percent less likely to test positive with a PCR test. The paper suggested the vaccine, which was developed by Oxford University in partnership with British-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, may have a "substantial effect on transmission of the virus" as a result and also prevent severe disease. Health secretary Matt Hancock said the study, which also suggested the Oxford-AstraZeneca shot is highly protective after a single dose, showed "vaccines are the way out of this pandemic". "This news about the Oxford vaccine is absolutely superb," Hancock tweeted. "This vaccine works & works well."
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/3/oxford-astrazeneca-jab-cuts-covid-transmission-new-study-shows

**Coronavirus: WHO team visits research lab in Wuhan, China**
World Health Organization investigators on Wednesday visited a research centre in the Chinese city of Wuhan that has been the subject of speculation about the origins of the coronavirus, with one member saying they'd intended to meet key staff and press them on critical issues. The WHO team's visit to the Wuhan Institute of Virology was a highlight of their mission to gather data and search for clues as to where the virus originated and how it spread.
https://globalnews.ca/news/7616207/who-wuhan-research-lab/

**A single shot of Pfizer's Covid vaccine might NOT be enough to protect over-80s from South African variant, Cambridge study finds**
Lab tests suggested single shot did not stimulate big enough immune response UK Government delayed giving second dose for 12 weeks as part of jab strategy South African variant already spotted in 105 Brits and fears it's more widespread Mass testing started today to find cases with crucial South African mutation.
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9214537/Study-suggests-Pfizers-COVID-19-vaccine-effective-against-S-African-variant.html

**German Pharma Company Bayer to Produce New COVID Vaccine**
German pharmaceutical giant Bayer announced Monday it will help a smaller German biomedical company, CureVac, produce its experimental COVID-19 vaccine, the latest drug maker to offer up manufacturing capacity as supplies fall behind demand worldwide. At a virtual news conference

hosted in Berlin Monday by Health Minister Jens Spahn, Bayer's pharmaceutical chief, Stefan Oelrich, said the company expects to produce 160 million doses of CureVac's experimental vaccine, which is currently in late-stage testing, in 2022. Bayer and CureVac reached an agreement last month to work together on a vaccine. Oelrich said Bayer has experience and capacity to expand CureVac's production capacity.
https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/german-pharma-company-bayer-produce-new-covid-vaccine

## Coronavirus Resurgence

**Coronavirus outbreak at vaccine lab visited by Boris Johnson**
An outbreak of coronavirus has been confirmed at the vaccine laboratory which was visited by Boris Johnson in Scotland last week. There were a number of cases reported at the Valneva site in Livingston ahead of the Prime Minister's visit on Thursday - an event which had already received some criticism. Valneva's chief financial officer David Lawrence told the Daily Record that Downing Street was informed of the outbreak ahead of the trip
https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/19061770.coronavirus-outbreak-vaccine-lab-visited-boris-johnson/

**Up to 600 players, staff and officials at Australian Open to isolate after hotel worker's positive Covid-19 test**
The build-up to the Australian Open has been plunged into fresh chaos after 600 people associated with the tournament were ordered to immediately isolate, forcing the complete cancellation of Thursday's schedule involving the various warm-up events at Melbourne Park. More than 100 players, plus coaches, staff and officials staying at the Grand Hyatt in Melbourne's city centre have been deemed as "casual contacts" of a hotel quarantine worker who tested positive for Covid-19. All must remain inside their rooms until a negative result has been confirmed.
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/up-to-600-players-staff-and-officials-at-australian-open-to-isolate-after-hotel-worker-s-positive-covid-19-test-950q62550

**Over 300 million Indians may have COVID-19 - source citing government study**
About one in four of India's 1.35 billion people may have been infected with the coronavirus, said a source with direct knowledge of a government serological survey, suggesting the country's real caseload was many times higher than reported. India has confirmed 10.8 million COVID-19 infections, the most anywhere outside the United States. But the survey, whose findings are much more conservative than a private one from last week, indicates India's actual cases may have crossed 300 million. The state-run Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which conducted the survey, said it would only share the findings at a news conference on Thursday
https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-india/over-300-million-indians-may-have-covid-19-source-citing-government-study-idUSL4N2K92QN

**Seventy-five per cent of all Covid-19 cases in Leeds are the new variant**
Around three-quarters of all coronavirus cases in Leeds are currently from the new Kent variant, the council has revealed. The news was revealed in a press briefing held by Leeds City Council to update the public on the district's continuing fight against Covid-19. Providing an update on infections in the city, Victoria Eaton said that around 75 per cent of all cases currently recorded in the region are from the Kent variant. Yesterday, scientists revealed a "mutation of concern" had been detected in the Kent variant of coronavirus and described the development as a "worrying development."
https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/seventy-five-per-cent-covid-19759069

**U.S. response to coronavirus variants emphasizes masks and vaccines instead of lockdowns**
As America faces the potential for catastrophic coronavirus spikes fueled by highly infectious variants, public health authorities remain wary of imposing the stricter measures adopted by other

nations. Instead, they continue to embrace a stick-to-the-basics strategy: Wear a mask, maybe even two. Avoid crowds. And get vaccinated — fast. The restrained approach differs from strict preemptive measures taking place in Europe, including lockdowns, classroom closures and requirements to wear medical-grade masks. It also illustrates the realities of the pandemic response in America, where there is little appetite for more limitations to curb viral spread. The federal government and individual states have taken steps to expand genetic monitoring, but authorities are flying blind in the meantime.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/02/02/coronavirus-variants-response-lockdowns/

**ICU faces constant pressure as France waffles over lockdown**
While France holds its breath to see if a daily 12-hour curfew and other restrictions are enough to keep a new crisis at bay, all eyes are on hospitals like La Timone, which has been a flashpoint in France throughout the pandemic. France has lost more than 77,000 lives to the virus, and more than 400 on Tuesday alone. Virus infections have stabilized in recent days but remain stubbornly high. But President Emmanuel Macron's government says it won't shut down the country again unless its hospitals are again at risk of overflowing with virus patients.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/icu-faces-constant-pressure-as-france-waffles-over-lockdown-icu-france-one-patient-hospital-b1796954.html

**UK begins door-to-door testing of 80,000 people to halt South African variant**
Volunteers and police officers in several parts of England began knocking on people's doors to hand out COVID-19 testing kits on Tuesday to try to halt the spread of a highly infectious variant that originated in South Africa. The testing surge was announced by the government on Monday after 11 people in different regions tested positive for the variant without having any links to people who had travelled to South Africa. In total, Britain has found 105 cases of the variant, of which all but those 11 were people who had either been to South Africa or been in contact with someone who had
https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-variant/uk-begins-door-to-door-testing-of-80000-people-to-halt-south-african-variant-idUKKBN2A20P9

**France's COVID situation fragile but new lockdown not inevitable -government spokesman**
The COVID-19 situation in France remains fragile but a new national lockdown is not necessarily inevitable, French government spokesman Gabriel Attal told reporters on Wednesday.
https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-france/frances-covid-situation-fragile-but-new-lockdown-not-inevitable-government-spokesman-idUSFWN2K90LB

**CDC: COVID-19 cases drop to pre-Thanksgiving levels**
After 2 months of record-setting case counts, hospitalizations, and deaths, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said today the United States has finally returned to pre-Thanksgiving levels of COVID-19 transmission. "We are now averaging 144,000 cases per day, and though deaths continue to increase, a recent decline in hospitalizations gives us hope those will also soon fall," said Rochelle Walensky, MD, during today's White House coronavirus press briefing.
https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/cdc-covid-19-cases-drop-pre-thanksgiving-levels

**Coronavirus: German medics fly in to aid Portugal's hospital emergency**
The sight of a German military plane touching down in Lisbon on Wednesday, carrying intensive care specialists and ventilators to help save lives in Portugal's embattled hospitals, recalls the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe. Last spring, when Italy was overwhelmed by the first wave of infections, it was helped out by several other European countries taking in patients - even if many Italians felt it was too little, too late. Now, almost a year on, it is Portugal's turn. The country's national health service is overwhelmed. There's a shortage of beds and specialist nurses, and in one hospital last week, potentially life-threatening problems in an overburdened oxygen system.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55902317

## New Lockdown

### Covid-19 Lockdown Exposes Fragility in Aging Chinese City

When the city of Tonghua in China's northeast shut residents in their homes in response to new coronavirus cases in January, it forced a reckoning with some harsh economic realities in the aging rust-belt city. Thousands complained on social media that they were running out of necessities such as food and medicine. It was the kind of hardship that hadn't been seen since the lockdown of Wuhan for the first Covid-19 outbreak a year earlier. As many pleaded that they were starving, saying "Don't forget us," city officials apologized and said they were short-handed.
https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-lockdown-exposes-fragility-in-aging-chinese-city-11612353618

### Bushfire smoke blankets Australian city under COVID-19 lockdown

Strong winds threatening to fan a bushfire prompted Australia on Wednesday to urge thousands of people to leave their homes in the provincial capital of Perth, complicating a lockdown after the state detected its first coronavirus infection in 10 months. As firefighters battled a blaze in steep, inhospitable terrain, authorities told residents of Bullsbrook, a suburb of 6,600 in Australia's fourth largest city, to ignore a stay-home order and leave immediately as hot, dry weather picked up.
https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/bushfire-smoke-blankets-australian-city-under-covid-19-lockdown/ar-BB1dkLlw

### Australia Bushfire Drives People From Covid Lockdown

Just days after residents of Perth, Australia's fourth-largest city, were ordered to stay in because of the coronavirus, some were forced to flee their homes on Tuesday as a ferocious wildfire bore down on the city's outskirts. "It's still a very, very active and very aggressive fire and very much out of control," said Kevin Bailey, mayor of the City of Swan, a region within the Perth metropolitan area where the blaze had done the most damage. He added that it was not realistic to expect residents to adhere to lockdown conditions in a deadly fire zone.
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/world/australia/perth-wooroloo-fire-covid.html

### Qatar announces new restrictions amid fears of second COVID wave

Qatar has announced new restrictions amid a surge in coronavirus cases that authorities said could lead to a second wave of infections. The 32-point plan, made public on Wednesday, includes provisions to limit at 80 percent the number of staff present at their workplace. Among other things, it also reimposes a ban on indoor weddings, with some exceptions. The announcement came as Qatar announced an 85 percent increase in the number of hospitalisation cases in January compared with the previous month. "We have seen an 85 percent increase in January compared to December in the number of COVID-19 patients being admitted to hospital," Dr Abdullatif al-Khal, chair of the National Health Strategic Group on COVID-19 and head of Infectious Diseases at Hamad Medical Corporation, said.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/3/qatar-imposes-new-restriction-amid-fears-of-second-covid-wave