

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 5th Mar 2021

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### Five Minute Briefing

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#### **Google and the University of Oxford launch global COVID-19 tracker platform**

[An enormous international database, funded by Google launched to track coronavirus cases.](#) The repository at Global.health is more detailed than John Hopkins' COVID-19 database, collecting 40 variables on subjects, such as the date symptoms first appeared, the date of their first positive test and travel history. The data will help researchers discover how rapidly new variants spread, whether vaccines protect against them and how long immunity lasts.

#### **AstraZeneca makes progress on global rollout of COVID-19 vaccine via COVAX**

First shipments of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccines have been arriving in low and middle income countries through the COVAX worldwide initiative. Working in tandem with the manufacturing giant the Serum Institute of India, [AZ sent vaccines to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire last week, with more shipments soon to follow to Philippines, Mongolia, Indonesia, Fiji and Moldova](#)

### Vaccinating the hard to reach and the most at risk

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#### **California to set aside 40% of COVID-19 vaccine doses for hardest-hit communities**

California Governor Gavin Newsom said on Thursday the state would set aside 40% of its COVID-19 vaccine doses for the hardest-hit communities and establish a "vaccine equity metric," to make sure that inoculations are conducted fairly. Newsom, a first-term Democrat facing a recall effort amid criticism of his strict lockdown measures, said the move was necessary because lower-income households were suffering coronavirus infections at double those of families making \$120,000 or more. Newsom said California's wealthiest populations were also being vaccinated at nearly twice the rate of those at the bottom of the income scale.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-california/california-to-set-aside-40-of-covid-19-vaccine-doses-for-hardest-hit-communities-idUSKCN2AW20F>

#### **'Urgent need' for carers to get priority in Covid-19 jab rollout, Dail hears**

In Ireland, family carers are at their "wits' end" over the lack of priority being afforded to them in the national Covid-19 vaccination programme, the Dail has heard. Sinn Fein's Pearse Doherty said there was an "urgent need" for carers to be given priority in the rollout of the vaccines. In response, Tanaiste Leo Varadkar said that carers should not be prioritised over healthcare workers, people over the age of 70 or those under 70 with medical conditions.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/urgent-need-for-carers-to-get-priority-in-covid-19-jab-roll-out-dail-hears-40159201.html>

#### **'Falling through cracks': Vaccine bypasses some older adults**

Older adults have top priority in COVID-19 immunization drives the world over right now, and hundreds of thousands of them are spending hours online, enlisting their children's help and traveling hours to far-flung pharmacies in a desperate bid to secure a COVID-19 vaccine. But an untold number like Andrade are getting left behind, unseen, because they are too overwhelmed, too

frail or too poor to fend for themselves.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/falling-through-cracks-vaccine-bypasses-some-older-adults/ar-BB1ef2Fk>

### **David Oliver: Has covid-19 shown society's disregard for old and sick people?**

People with physical or learning disabilities are also at relatively higher risk. Many people in their 60s, 70s, 80s, or beyond are still active and valued members of society. And even if they aren't, are we really saying that they have less moral worth or human dignity than younger, fitter people? I've also seen far too many unfortunate comments blaming and shaming people for obesity (which does put people at higher risk from covid) or other "lifestyle" factors such as smoking or drinking, with no regard to the wider socioeconomic factors leading to those risks. We've seen a failure to give adequate support, protection, or guidance to social care workers or care homes until weeks into the pandemic's first wave, after mass outbreaks in care homes. This put some of the most vulnerable citizens and low paid (often ethnic minority) workers at avoidable risk, showing just where our priorities lay. Those older, disabled, or sick people could be us one day, or members of our families. The "othering" and labelling, the judgment and language of blame, and characterising people as an inconvenience all show a lack of empathy and humanity that troubles me deeply. I hope that covid hasn't acted as a mirror, reflecting the truth of our society, and that this is an unfortunate reaction driven by extreme circumstances.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n531>

### **In Palm Beach, Covid-19 vaccines intended for rural Black communities are instead going to wealthy white Floridians**

Individually, each person who arrived was desperate for a life-protecting injection. Collectively, their demographics reflected a pattern that has played out within Florida and across the United States, where the Black and Hispanic populations disproportionately affected by Covid-19 have been left behind in the vaccine rollout. In Palm Beach County, while Black people make up 18% of residents and Hispanic people 21.7%, these communities had received just 4.1% and 4.7% of vaccines respectively, as of March 1.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/03/04/covid19-vaccines-for-rural-black-communities-going-to-wealthy-white-floridians/>

### **Prioritising vaccinating teachers to get schools open**

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#### **Biden's announcement moves teachers up in the vaccine line. Will it make a difference?**

In school systems where classrooms remain shuttered, or where children may only attend school once or twice a week, President Biden hopes his move to press states into prioritizing teachers for coronavirus vaccination will help them move toward normalcy. But his announcement Tuesday — and his pledge to make vaccination available to all educators and day-care workers by the end of March — was met with mixed emotions. Union leaders, who had lobbied hard for the move, applauded the action. But critics charged it comes far too late in the school year to make much of a difference for schoolchildren.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/03/03/biden-teacher-vaccines-school-reopening/>

### **The mask wearing mandate**

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#### **Alabama's Republican governor extends face mask mandate**

Breaking with other Southern GOP governors, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey extended her state's mask order for another month Thursday but said the requirement will end for good in April. The move came a day after President Joe Biden slammed the governors of Texas and Mississippi for deciding to lift their mask mandates, saying their actions reflect "Neanderthal thinking." Ivey has faced political pressure to lift the mask order like her Republican counterparts but said she will follow the recommendations of medical officials and keep the mandate that was set to expire Friday in place until April 9.

<https://apnews.com/article/kay-ivey-extends-alabama-mask-order-coronavirus-bd11f67b77915a7cd9320b714f222869>

### **Fauci slams Texas and Mississippi's 'inexplicable' decisions to risk another 'surge' in COVID-19 cases by lifting mask mandates**

Dr. Anthony Fauci, Biden's chief medical advisor, criticized states lifting COVID-19 restrictions. Texas and Mississippi announced Tuesday that they would lift mask mandates. "What we don't need right now is another surge," Fauci said, calling the decisions "inexplicable."

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/fauci-slams-texas-mississippi-inexplicable-103844218.html>

### **Battling new variants**

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#### **COVID-19: UK to fast-track modified coronavirus vaccines designed to combat new variants**

Coronavirus vaccines that have been tweaked to deal with new variants of the disease will be fast-tracked for authorisation, the UK regulator has said. According to new guidance, manufacturers must provide robust evidence that the modified jab triggers an immune response, but lengthier clinical studies that don't offer data on safety or effectiveness won't be required. The new guidance has come from Access Consortium - a group made up of regulatory bodies from the UK, Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-to-fast-track-modified-coronavirus-vaccines-designed-to-combat-new-variants-12235434>

#### **Covid-19: Latest Manx outbreak will be 'more difficult' to eliminate**

The Isle of Man began a 21-day circuit-breaker on Wednesday after a rise in coronavirus cases. Dr Henrietta Ewart said the current spike was already more "widespread" and was expected to peak in a week. Recent positive tests have all been the Kent variant which is much more transmissible, she added. Prior to the latest surge in cases, the island had not had community spread of any of the more virulent Covid-19 variants.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-56280558>

#### **Ukraine confirms two cases of British coronavirus variant**

Ukraine has confirmed two cases of the British coronavirus variant, detected in the west of the country, the Ukrainian Institute of Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases said on Thursday. Ukraine has faced a sharp jump in coronavirus cases in recent weeks, which Prime Minister Denys Shmygal called a "third wave" of the pandemic. He said three regions had already imposed serious restrictions which may be introduced elsewhere in coming days.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-ukraine-strain/ukraine-confirms-two-cases-of-british-coronavirus-variant-idUSKBN2AW19K>

### **Sounding the alarm**

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#### **Brazilian experts warn of deepening COVID crisis; European cases rise**

Brazil's Fiocruz Institute yesterday sounded an alarm that the country's pandemic situation is worsening, as health officials in Europe warned that virus activity is surging again in central and eastern Europe, with virus levels also on the rise in western parts of the region where rates are already high. In a special bulletin yesterday, the Fiocruz Institute warned that for the first time in Brazil, several indicators are worsening simultaneously, with intensive care unit (ICU) bed occupancy above 80% in 19 of Brazil's 27 federal districts.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/03/brazilian-experts-warn-deepening-covid-crisis-european-cases-rise>

#### **Raging pandemic shuts down Sao Paulo as Brazil nears Pfizer deal**

Brazil set a daily record for COVID-19 deaths for a second straight day on Wednesday, as a raging resurgence of the virus led Sao Paulo state to shutter businesses and the government to try to close vaccine deals with Pfizer and Janssen. With a new coronavirus variant from the Amazon spurring more infections, according to studies, 1,910 people died from the virus in the past 24 hours, according to Health Ministry data. In a year, Brazil's death toll has nearly topped 260,000, the world's second-worst after the United States.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-brazil/update-3-raging-pandemic-shuts-down-sao-paulo-as-brazil-nears-pfizer-deal-idUSL2N2L123Z>

## **Lockdown caution continues**

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### **Buenos Aires reopens as virus surge forces Sao Paulo to shut**

Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires were a tale of two cities this week, with Brazil's megalopolis partially shutting down and bracing for possibly the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, while residents of Argentina's capital were stepping out to movie theaters and restaurants. The two biggest cities in the South American neighbors are headed in opposite directions, a trend that experts say demonstrates how places that loosen restrictions against the advice of scientists see a spike in the pandemic while those that keep social distancing measures in place can reopen their economies sooner.

<https://apnews.com/article/brazil-health-south-america-buenos-aires-coronavirus-pandemic-329a9a893377e3c5e7db72cfdde45f98>

### **Germany's Merkel set to agree to cautious easing of COVID-19 lockdown**

Chancellor Angela Merkel and German state leaders have agreed a phased easing of coronavirus curbs along with an "emergency brake" to let authorities reimpose restrictions if case numbers spike again. With elections looming, Merkel and the regional leaders have faced growing pressure to set out plans to restore normal activities after four months of lockdown. However, daily cases are creeping up again and only around 5% of the population have received a first vaccine shot.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany/update-1-germanys-merkel-set-to-agree-to-cautious-easing-of-covid-19-lockdown-idUSL2N2L10E9>

### **Japan to extend Tokyo area state of emergency to March 21**

The Japanese government plans to extend a state of emergency to combat COVID-19 for Tokyo and three neighbouring prefectures until March 21, two weeks longer than originally scheduled, Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura said on Friday. Under the state of emergency, the government has requested restaurants and bars close by 8 p.m. and stop serving alcohol an hour earlier. People are also asked to stay home after 8 p.m. unless they have essential reasons to go out. Tokyo, Chiba, Kanagawa and Saitama prefectures, which make up 30% of the country's population, sought the extension past the originally scheduled end date of March 7 as new coronavirus cases had not fallen enough to meet targets. The government had an early-morning meeting with advisers and they approved the extension, Nishimura, who is in charge of the government's coronavirus response, told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-idUSKCN2AW2ZT>

### **Hungary toughens COVID-19 lockdown to curb 'very strong' third wave**

Hungary announced new COVID-19 lockdown measures on Thursday to try to curb a "very strong" third wave of the pandemic, closing most shops and shifting to remote learning in primary schools. With new cases hitting a three-month daily high of 6,278 on Thursday, mainly because of the spreading coronavirus variant first found in Britain, Prime Minister Viktor Orban faces a growing political challenge. Orban, who faces an election battle early next year, had kept shops and industries open to try to limit the economic effects of the pandemic, which caused a 5% recession last year. "The third wave (of the pandemic) is strong, very strong and worse than the second wave

had been," Gergely Gulyas, Orban's chief of staff, told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-hungary-cases/update-3-hungary-toughens-covid-19-lockdown-to-curb-very-strong-third-wave-idUSL2N2L20KT>

### **Macron spares Paris region from weekend lockdown, for now**

The French government spared the Paris region from a weekend coronavirus lockdown for now and pledged to accelerate the vaccine rollout in two dozen high-risk zones in an effort to ease the load on hospitals and stave off further restrictions. President Emmanuel Macron is determined to keep the economy open as long as possible even as the COVID-19 infection rate rises nationally. Prime Minister Jean Castex did however announce on Thursday a weekend lockdown for the northerly Pas-de-Calais area, like that already imposed on the French Riviera. A nationwide nightly curfew has been in place since mid-December.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL2N2L225D>

### **Vaccine export controls**

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#### **Italy, EU block AstraZeneca vaccine shipment to Australia**

A shipment of a quarter-million AstraZeneca vaccines destined for Australia has been blocked from leaving the European Union in the first use of an export control system instituted by the bloc to make sure big pharma companies would respect their contracts. Italy's order blocking the dispatch of 250,000 doses was accepted by the European Commission, which has fiercely criticised the Anglo-Swedish company this year for supplying just a fraction of the vaccine doses it had promised to deliver to the bloc.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/4/eu-italy-stop-astrazeneca-vaccine-exports-to-australia>

### **Vaccine approvals**

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#### **Covid: Germany approves AstraZeneca vaccine for over-65s**

Germany's vaccine commission has approved the use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab in people aged over 65. The country previously approved it for under-65s only, citing insufficient data on its effects on older people. That led to public scepticism about its effectiveness, with some Germans spurning it and leaving many doses unused. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel said recent studies had now provided enough data to approve it for all ages. Announcing the commission's decision on Thursday, Health Minister Jens Spahn said the move was "good news for older people who are waiting for an injection".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56275342>

#### **European Regulator Begins Review of Russia's Sputnik V Coronavirus Vaccine**

The European Medicines Agency has started its rolling review of Sputnik V, the coronavirus vaccine developed by Russia. The agency said on Thursday that its decision to begin the review process is "based on results from laboratory studies and clinical studies in adults." The studies indicate that Sputnik V triggers the production of antibodies and immune cells that target the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 and protects people against the virus.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-03-04/european-regulator-begins-review-of-russias-sputnik-v-coronavirus-vaccine>

### **Encouraging vaccine acceptance**

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has come from Access Consortium - a group made up of regulatory bodies from the UK, Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-to-fast-track-modified-coronavirus-vaccines-designed-to-combat-new-variants-12235434>

### **An Uncertain Public — Encouraging Acceptance of Covid-19 Vaccines | NEJM**

Having explored multiple polls, we believe that there is great potential for public willingness to receive Covid-19 vaccines but that effective public education and outreach are needed to maximize the proportion of the population that will do so quickly. We also believe that clinical physicians, rather than pharmaceutical companies, political leaders, or even medical scientists, should be at the fore of education and outreach strategies. Featuring clinicians in messaging is particularly important given that many people will not see their own physician when making vaccination decisions: current vaccine policy and cold-chain logistics mean that people will largely be attending mass-vaccination clinics. To reach communities that are less trusting of vaccine efforts, outreach should be led by, or should meaningfully incorporate, physicians reflecting the diversity of the relevant communities.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2100351>

### **'The best coronavirus vaccine is the one that reaches my arm first'**

The good news is that, out of the currently available vaccines - in Europe and Canada these are Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca, while the United States is administering the first two and has recently authorized the Janssen shots from Johnson & Johnson - it is not possible to say that one is clearly better than the other. At least not at this point in time. As the epidemiologist Carlos Álvarez puts it: "The best vaccine is the one that reaches my arm first."

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-03-04/the-best-coronavirus-vaccine-is-the-one-that-reaches-my-arm-first.html>

## **Research, study and survey news**

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### **Antibodies from S Africa COVID variant may offer cross-protection**

Research by South African scientists suggests that antibodies triggered by exposure to the country's dominant coronavirus variant can prevent infection by other variants. The findings in laboratory studies offer hope that COVID-19 vaccines based on the 501Y.V2 variant first identified late last year could protect against multiple mutations circulating in different parts of the world, scientists said on Wednesday.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/4/antibodies-from-south-africa-covid-variant-may-offer-protection>

### **Covid-19 vaccination data made available for research**

The England Covid-19 immunisations dataset and the Welsh Covid-19 vaccination dataset is available upon request through the Health Data Research Innovation Gateway, an online resource that provides access to UK health datasets for research and innovation. Over the weekend, the UK hit a milestone of 20 million people vaccinated for Covid-19, but questions about the real-world effectiveness of the jab remain. This includes its effectiveness on different population groups, impact on disease transmission and how vaccines will affect the course of the pandemic. Answering these questions requires access to real-world data on vaccine delivery, infections and the NHS response, according to Health Data Research UK. Andrew Morris, director Health Data Research UK, said: "The level of work and collaboration that has taken place to ensure the UK's health researchers are able to access this crucial data safely and efficiently should not be underestimated.

<https://www.digitalhealth.net/2021/03/covid-19-vaccination-data-made-available-for-research/>

### **COVID-19: 5 blood proteins predict critical illness and death**

A study suggests that among people hospitalized for COVID-19, blood levels of five proteins are higher in those who will go on to require critical care. These proteins are associated with a type of immune cell that may promote excessive inflammation and blood clotting in the lungs. Some of the

same proteins are at elevated levels in people with obesity. If further studies confirm the findings, the discovery could lead to new tests and treatments for severe COVID-19.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-5-blood-proteins-predict-critical-illness-and-death>