

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Lockdown Exit

Funds to End Pandemic Amount to 'Rounding Error' for Rich Nations, WHO Head Says

The \$16 billion in funding needed to provide low-income countries with better access to Covid-19 vaccines, tests and treatments represents a “rounding error” in rich countries’ budgets, according to the head of the World Health Organization. Finance ministers of wealthy nations have indicated the money needed would be a relatively insignificant commitment, Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in an appeal to wealthy nations to fill the funding gap for the WHO’s ACT-Accelerator plan budget for 2022. “If there is commitment, it can be done,” Tedros said at a media briefing Wednesday. “If the finance ministers call it a rounding error I don’t think they are wrong because that is their job.”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-09/funds-to-end-pandemic-a-rounding-error-for-rich-nations-who>

CDC Studies Advice for Easing Mask Rules as States Drop Them

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention experts are developing guidance to help states ease Covid-19 rules for mask-wearing, even as U.S. health officials said it’s still premature to dispense of the measures, as some governors are doing. “We are working on that guidance,” CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Wednesday in a White House press call, cautioning that “our hospitalizations are still high, our death rates are still high. So as we work towards that, and as we are encouraged by the current trends, we are not there yet.”

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-09/cdc-studies-advice-for-easing-mask-rules-as-states-drop-them?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpid=google

Sweden declare pandemic over, despite warnings from scientists

Sweden scrapped almost all of its few pandemic restrictions on Wednesday and stopped most testing for COVID-19, even as the pressure on the healthcare systems remained high and some scientists begged for more patience in fighting the disease. Sweden's government, which throughout the pandemic has opted against lockdowns in favour of a voluntary approach, announced last week it would scrap the remaining restrictions - effectively declaring the pandemic over - as vaccines and the less severe Omicron variant have cushioned severe cases and deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-declare-pandemic-over-despite-warnings-scientists-2022-02-09/>

Exclusive: EU wants pandemic treaty to ban wildlife markets, reward virus detection

The European Union is pushing for a global deal aimed at preventing new pandemics that could include a ban on wildlife markets and incentives for countries to report new viruses or variants, an EU official told Reuters. International negotiators will meet for the first time on Wednesday to prepare talks for a potential treaty, said the official, who is not authorised to speak to media and so declined to be named. The aim is to reach a preliminary agreement by August.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/exclusive-eu-wants-pandemic-treaty-ban-wildlife-markets-reward-virus-detection-2022-02-09/>

UK PM Johnson speeds up plan to end COVID self-isolation rule

People in England with COVID-19 will from late February no longer be legally required to self-isolate to stem the spread of COVID-19, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Wednesday, proposing to speed up existing plans to live with the virus. Johnson ended almost all COVID-19 restrictions in England last July, and last month lifted "Plan B" measures that had been temporarily imposed to

slow the spread of the more recent Omicron variant of the coronavirus. He has said he wishes to go further as part of the shift towards learning to live with COVID, and England is set to become the first major economy to replace legal requirements for people to self-isolate with guidance

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uk-pm-johnson-says-end-covid-self-isolation-requirement-this-month-2022-02-09/>

COVID infections, deaths on the rise in Middle East - WHO

Middle Eastern countries have seen a rise in coronavirus infections in the last six weeks because of low vaccination rates, officials at the WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office said on Wednesday. Reported COVID-19 cases rose to a daily average of 110,000 in the past six weeks, while average daily deaths rose to 345 in the last three weeks, WHO regional director Ahmed Al-Mandhari said on Wednesday. More than 35% of the region's population is fully vaccinated. But one quarter of the countries have not yet reached 10% vaccination coverage, said Rana Hajjeh, director of programme management.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/covid-infections-deaths-rise-middle-east-who-2022-02-09/>

Japan to extend COVID-19 curbs for 13 regions by three weeks

Japanese Prime Minister said on Wednesday that the government would extend COVID-19 restrictions in Tokyo and 12 prefectures by three weeks as the Omicron variant continued to spread. Japan has been breaking daily records for coronavirus cases and deaths amid a surge in infections driven by the Omicron variant. It will add one more prefecture to the list of regions facing quasi-emergency measures, including restrictions on the business hours of eateries, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-extend-virus-quasi-emergency-13-regions-until-march-6-nhk-2022-02-09/>

Exit Strategies

Column: Has COVID finally killed inflation targeting?

The seismic supply shocks and wild price distortions of the pandemic could finally call time on 30 years of strict inflation targeting by the world's big central banks. Faced with headline and core inflation rates surging far above 2% target rates and at their highest in decades, central banks have scrambled to lift interest rates from historic lows or flag rate hikes ahead - even though they insist inflation will be close to or even below those targets within two years.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/has-covid-finally-killed-inflation-targeting-mike-dolan-2022-02-09/>

New York state set to drop indoor mask mandate

New York Governor Kathy Hochul was due to announce the end of her state's mask mandate for most indoor public places, The New York Times reported, joining several states due to lift face-covering rules as the latest COVID-19 surge eases. The Democratic governor intends to let the mask mandate, which has been challenged in court, expire rather than seeking to renew it, the newspaper said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/new-york-state-drop-indoor-mask-mandate-this-week-nyt-2022-02-09/>

On COVID vaccine: Scholz tells Germans 'Be like the Danish'

Germans could learn a lesson from Denmark's high COVID-19 vaccination rate, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Wednesday, calling on more Germans - particularly older people - to get vaccinated so the country can ease restrictions. "I'm impressed with the vaccination rate there. We can still learn a lesson," Scholz told a joint news conference with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Around 76% of the population in Germany has received at least one dose of a vaccine - fewer than many other western European countries and far from Denmark's 83% rate.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-vaccine-scholz-tells-germans-be-like-danish-2022-02-09/>

[2-02-09/](#)

Second doses of Covid-19 vaccine to be rolled out in Jersey secondary schools

In Jersey, second doses of the Covid-19 vaccine will be delivered in secondary schools in a bid to boost the levels of vaccination in the community. From Friday 11 February, children will be able to receive their first, second and booster doses in a school setting. Letters and leaflets are being sent to parents of all eligible students aged 12-18 about the programme. Health officials hope the move will encourage a higher take-up of the vaccine, with figures showing only around half of 12-15 year olds have had their first dose.

<https://www.itv.com/news/channel/2022-02-09/second-doses-to-be-rolled-out-in-jersey-secondary-schools>

COVID-19: Boris Johnson announces final restrictions including self-isolation could end a month earlier than planned

Boris Johnson has said he plans to remove all remaining coronavirus restrictions in England a month early. "Providing the current encouraging trends in the data continue, it is my expectation that we will be able to end the last domestic restrictions, including the legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive, a full month early," the prime minister told MPs. The current regulations were due to expire on 24 March.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-pm-announces-plan-to-end-final-restrictions-including-self-isolation-a-month-earlier-than-planned-12537224>

Uganda seeks law making COVID-19 jabs mandatory

Uganda is preparing legislation to make COVID-19 jabs mandatory in a country with low levels of vaccination, a senior health official said. Legislation was now with parliament and the health committee is scrutinising it, the head of the national immunisation programme, Alfred Driwale, told Reuters. "It is to help prevention of a disease, it's about prevention of deaths. Considering the impact the pandemic had on the economy this law is needed," he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-seeks-law-making-covid-19-jabs-mandatory-2022-02-08/>

UAE to lift gradually COVID-related restrictions - state news agency

The United Arab Emirates will gradually lift restrictions imposed to check the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the number of infections and hospitalisations has gone down, the state news agency WAM reported on Wednesday. Venues will be allowed to function at maximum capacity by mid-February, it said, citing the National Emergency Crisis Management Authority.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uae-lift-gradually-covid-related-restrictions-state-news-agency-2022-02-09/>

"Beginning of the end": upbeat Poland cuts COVID isolation

An end to the COVID-19 pandemic is in sight, the Polish health minister said on Wednesday, as he announced a cut to the isolation period for people infected with the coronavirus and looser quarantine rules. Poland saw record daily case numbers as recently as two weeks ago, but with infections falling and the effects of Omicron appearing to be milder than previous variants, authorities believe the time is right for a lighter touch. "We are dealing with the beginning of the end of the pandemic," Adam Niedzielski told a news conference. "In February, declines in infections should be relatively large."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-could-lift-covid-restrictions-march-minister-says-2022-02-09/>

Czech PM says could lift most COVID measures from March

The Czech Republic aims to increase the number of people allowed at public events in the coming weeks, with expectations that from March nearly all COVID-19 restrictions could be lifted, Prime Minister Petr Fiala said on Wednesday. The central European country of 10.7 million has faced its highest rates of COVID-19 so far since late January, but although the number of hospitalisations has

climbed, the number of patients is well below previous peaks. From Thursday, the government is going ahead with previously announced plans to allow the unvaccinated back into restaurants and other venues as infections start to ebb.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/czech-pm-says-could-lift-most-covid-measures-march-2022-02-09/>

Partisan Exits

Figure skating-Russian gold on hold amid reports of positive drug test

Russian media reported on Wednesday that 15-year-old figure skater Kamila Valieva had tested positive for a banned drug, after the ceremony to present her and her team mates with their Olympic gold medals was postponed for unexplained legal reasons. Newspapers RBC and Kommersant named the drug as Trimetazidine, which is typically used to treat chest pain. The news broke late at night in Beijing, where Valieva was part of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) ensemble that won the figure skating team event on Monday ahead of the United States and Japan.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/figure-skating-medals-ceremony-delayed-over-legal-consultation-2022-02-09/>

UK minister apologises for continuing meeting after positive COVID test

British health department minister Gillian Keegan has apologised for continuing a meeting after she was informed she had tested positive for COVID-19. In a thread on Twitter published late on Tuesday, Keegan said she was informed that a precautionary lateral flow test had returned a positive result whilst speaking to a group in her role as minister for care and mental health. "I told them the result and took further precautions but with their consent, I stayed for a short period to hear their stories," she said. The meeting was with three men who had lost their daughters to suicide.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-minister-apologises-continuing-meeting-after-positive-covid-test-2022-02-09/>

UK PM Johnson says to end COVID self-isolation requirement this month

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Wednesday he intended to end the legal obligation for people in England to self-isolate if they test positive for COVID-19 later this month when he sets out the government's strategy for living with the disease.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/uk-pm-johnson-says-to-end-covid-self-isolation-requirement-this-month/ar-AATEj31>

Canada scrambles to end vaccine protests as bridge blockades drag on

Truckers blocking U.S-Canada border crossings risk hurting the auto industry and agriculture, the White House said on Wednesday as Ottawa urged an end to the 13-day demonstration against coronavirus mandates. After nearly two years of pandemic measures in many countries, opposition has sprung up in different ways with copycat protests in Australia, New Zealand and France as the highly infectious Omicron variant begins to ease in many countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadian-authorities-scramble-end-anti-vaccine-mandate-protests-2022-02-09/>

New York Gov. Hochul lifts her mask mandate for most indoor public places

New York Governor Kathy Hochul said on Wednesday her state will end its mandate requiring people to wear a mask or prove they have received a COVID-19 vaccine when they are inside most indoor public places, starting on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/new-york-gov-hochul-lifts-her-mask-mandate-most-indoor-public-places-2022-02-09/>

COVID-19: Hundreds of thousands probably died due to 'bad behaviour' from politicians over AstraZeneca vaccine, says Oxford scientist

A scientist who worked on the AstraZeneca vaccine has said "hundreds of thousands of people"

probably died because some politicians and scientists unfairly damaged its reputation. "They have damaged the reputation of the vaccine in a way that echoes around the rest of the world," said Professor Sir John Bell from Oxford University. "I think bad behaviour from scientists and from politicians has probably killed hundreds of thousands of people - and that they cannot be proud of."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-hundreds-of-thousands-probably-died-due-to-bad-behaviour-from-politicians-over-astrazeneca-vaccine-says-oxford-scientist-12535495?dcmp=snt-sf-twitter>

Anti-vaxxers are trying to stop Covid vaccinations with bizarre new conspiracy plot

Anti-vaxxers are continuing their efforts to shut down Covid immunisation programmes in the UK by falsely claiming crimes are being committed. Activists with large followings on the Telegram encrypted messaging app have been encouraging people to report the "crimes" at local police stations and obtain a record of the report. Crime reference numbers, which are automatically generated for any allegation, are then used online and at protests to wrongly claim investigations are underway and that vaccinations must be stopped. A number obtained from the Metropolitan Police in December has become a focus, being displayed on leaflets and banners at protests in London.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/covid-vaccine-crime-numbers-police-antivaxx-b2011166.html>

Canada's Covid-19 trucker protests go global

A trucker protest that has clogged the streets of the Canadian capital for weeks has spread to cities across the world, and impeded access to the busiest land crossing between the United States and Canada as drivers and their supporters demonstrate against vaccine mandates and pandemic control measures. The so-called "Freedom Convoy" began at the end of January in Ottawa as an objection to a vaccine mandate requiring truckers entering Canada to either be fully vaccinated or face testing and quarantine requirements, Paula Newton and Travis Caldwell report. Other protesters then joined to rail against mask mandates, lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings and other Covid-19 preventative measures. The protests, which have seen demonstrators leave trucks idling on roads, have infuriated politicians and business owners, with some in downtown Ottawa complaining about financial losses. "Individuals are trying to blockade our economy, our democracy, and our fellow citizens' daily lives. It has to stop," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in parliament on Monday, the same day the Ambassador Bridge, which runs across the border between Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, was obstructed by demonstrators.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/09/world/coronavirus-newsletter-intl-02-09-22/index.html>

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-minister-apologises-continuing-meeting-after-positive-covid-test-2022-02-09/>

Canadian authorities scramble to end protests against COVID measures

Truckers blocking U.S.-Canada border crossings risk hurting the auto industry and agriculture, the White House said on Wednesday as Ottawa urged an end to the 13-day demonstration against coronavirus mandates. After nearly two years of pandemic measures in many countries, opposition has sprung up in different ways with copycat protests in Australia, New Zealand and France as the highly infectious Omicron variant begins to ease in many countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadian-authorities-scramble-end-anti-vaccine-mandate-protests-2022-02-09/>

Spain's King Felipe tests positive for COVID-19

Spain's King Felipe tested positive for COVID-19 earlier on Wednesday after displaying mild symptoms overnight and will remain in isolation for seven days, the Royal Palace said in a statement. "His Majesty's general state of health is good and he will keep up his institutional activities from his residence," it said, adding that Queen Letizia and their daughter Princess Sofia showed no symptoms.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spains-king-felipe-tests-positive-covid-19-2022-02-09/>

Continued Lockdown

Trucker Fury Belies Reality of Canada's Ever-Looser Covid Rules

Canada's capital is in its second week under siege from truckers and other activists demanding Covid-19 restrictions be removed, but many of those rules are already being rolled back by provincial governments. Two western provinces announced they're ending their vaccine passports on Tuesday, and Quebec -- whose curfew was the strictest measure imposed in Canada -- laid out a schedule to remove many of its remaining Covid measures. The spread of the protests this week to U.S. border crossings like the Ambassador Bridge to Detroit has added urgency to the process. It's also exposed an underlying irony: while the truckers are camped outside the federal parliament buildings, it's provincial legislatures where most Covid public-health orders are made.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-09/trucker-fury-belies-reality-of-canada-s-ever-looser-covid-rules>

Japan to extend COVID-19 curbs for 13 regions by three weeks

Japanese Prime Minister said on Wednesday that the government would extend COVID-19 restrictions in Tokyo and 12 prefectures by three weeks as the Omicron variant continued to spread. Japan has been breaking daily records for coronavirus cases and deaths amid a surge in infections driven by the Omicron variant. It will add one more prefecture to the list of regions facing quasi-emergency measures, including restrictions on the business hours of eateries, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-extend-virus-quasi-emergency-13-regions-until-march-6-nhk-2022-02-09/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Discovery of Omicron in New York deer raises concern over possible new variants

The discovery of the Omicron variant in white-tailed deer in New York has raised concerns that the species, numbering 30 million in the United States, could become hosts of a new coronavirus strain, a lead researcher said. Blood and some nasal swab samples from 131 deer captured on New York's Staten Island revealed that nearly 15% had virus antibodies. The finding suggested that the animals had previous coronavirus infections and were vulnerable to repeated reinfections with new variants, researchers led by Pennsylvania State University scientists said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/discovery-of-omicron-in-new-york-deer-raises-concern-over-possible-new-variants/ar-AATCIQj>

Indonesia starts testing homegrown COVID vaccine on humans

Indonesia has begun testing a homegrown COVID-19 vaccine on humans after getting the green light from the drug regulator, as the country faces a rising wave of cases. Research on the "Merah Putih" ("Red White") vaccine - named after the colours of the Indonesian national flag - is led by Airlangga University and Biotis Pharmaceutical Indonesia.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/indonesia-starts-testing-homegrown-covid-vaccine-on-humans>

EU regulator reviews extending Pfizer COVID booster for kids aged 12-15

The European Union's drug regulator launched a review to evaluate whether the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine can be used as a third booster shot in adolescents aged 12 to 15, even after

several countries in the region have already started such a campaign. The European Medicines Agency added that a review of booster shots given to 16- and 17-year-old teenagers was ongoing. Germany's vaccine committee last month recommended that all children between the ages of 12 and 17 receive a booster, following the initial two-shot course

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-regulator-reviews-extending-pfizer-covid-booster-kids-aged-12-15-2022-02-08/>

Can you get long COVID after an infection with omicron?

Can you get long COVID after an infection with omicron? It's too early to know for sure, but many doctors believe it's possible to have long-term effects from the omicron variant of the virus. Long COVID is usually diagnosed many weeks after a bout with COVID-19. Any long-lasting effects typically appear about 90 days after symptoms of the initial infection go away, Maria Van Kerkhove of the World Health Organization said this week. Overall, some estimates suggest more than a third of COVID-19 survivors will develop some symptoms of long COVID.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-lifestyle-f87fd7ec5680e1833006b6016357b367>

Serious illness, death more common in pregnant women with COVID-19

Pregnant COVID-19 patients are about 40% more likely to develop serious complications or die than their uninfected peers, suggests a study led by University of Utah Health researchers published in JAMA. The retrospective cohort study examined the outcomes of 41,104 women who delivered at 17 US hospitals from Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020, following them up to Feb 11, 2021. Among the patients, 2,352 had COVID-19 and 11,752 did not.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/02/serious-illness-death-more-common-pregnant-women-covid-19>

As Pfizer reaps megablockbuster COVID-19 sales, CEO doesn't see virus going away for 'foreseeable future'

Among all biopharma companies, Pfizer has had the most successful response to COVID-19 by bringing to market a hugely lucrative vaccine and a new antiviral pill. Despite its pandemic wins, Pfizer scientists think it's "unlikely that [SARS-CoV-2] will be fully eradicated in the foreseeable future," the company's CEO said. That's because the virus' global distribution makes it difficult to contain, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told analysts on the company's fourth-quarter conference call. The virus also has the ability to "mutate often," which makes it tough for companies to "stay ahead," he said. Meanwhile, natural infections don't confer the sort of durable protection needed to stop mutations and spread, Bourla said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-eyes-pandemic-long-haul-as-prevnar-sales-lag>

J&J pauses COVID-19 vaccine production at Dutch plant in temporary pivot to RSV shot: NYT

Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine has taken a back seat to mRNA programs from Pfizer and Moderna in many developed nations, but it's still in high demand around the world. That's why news the company recently paused production came as a surprise to some people, including J&J's top customers. Late last year, Johnson & Johnson halted production of its COVID-19 vaccine from its facility in the Dutch city of Leiden, The New York Times reports. Thanks to vaccine stockpiles, it's unclear whether the pause has affected vaccine supplies, the NYT notes. The pause is only temporary, with J&J gearing up to resume production in Leiden of its COVID shot in March

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/j-j-temporarily-freezes-covid-19-vaccine-production-at-key-leiden-plant-report>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Coronavirus: Five deaths, 2,779 new infections

Five deaths attributed to Covid-19 and 2,779 new infections were announced on Wednesday out of 95,572 PCR and rapid tests. The deaths were four men, aged 65, 85, 88 and 90. A woman, aged 94, also died – raising the total deaths attributed to the virus to 761. There are 199 people in hospital with the virus of whom 49 are in serious condition. The health ministry said patients in hospital without a vaccination history stands at 65.33 per cent. Wednesday's 95,572 tests identified the 2,779 infections, at a positivity rate of 2.91 per cent. The 5,990 PCR tests yielded 484 positives, a positivity rate of 8.08 per cent.

<https://cyprus-mail.com/2022/02/09/coronavirus-five-deaths-2779-new-infections/>

WHO: Global COVID-19 case counts decline 17% in latest week

The World Health Organization says coronavirus case counts fell 17% worldwide over the last week compared to the previous week, including a 50% drop in the United States while deaths globally declined 7%, the World Health Organization says. The weekly epidemiological report from the U.N. health agency, released late Tuesday, shows that the omicron variant is increasingly dominant — making up nearly 97% of all cases tallied by the international virus-tracking platform known as GISAID. Just over 3% were of the delta variant.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world-health-organization-who-geneva-united-states-iran-b2011032.html>

Slovakia reports 20582 coronavirus cases, highest on record

Slovakia reported 20,582 new COVID-19 infections for Tuesday, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday, the highest daily tally since the pandemic started as the country is hit like others in central Europe by the spread of the Omicron variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovakia-reports-20582-coronavirus-cases-highest-record-2022-02-09/>

Russia's daily coronavirus cases hit new record high

Russia reported 183,103 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, a record daily high, as the Omicron variant continued to spread. Russia also confirmed 669 deaths in the past 24 hours, the government coronavirus task force said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-daily-coronavirus-cases-hit-new-record-high-2022-02-09/>

Hong Kong's daily COVID-19 infections surge to record

Hong Kong's daily COVID-19 infections nearly doubled to a record 1,161 cases on Wednesday, authorities said, as the global financial hub battles a rapid surge that is shaping as the biggest test yet of its 'dynamic zero' policy. The city has reported close to 4,000 infections over the past two weeks, up from just two in December, taking its tally to more than 17,000 since the outbreak began in 2020, with 215 deaths, although the figures are lower than other major cities in the world.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-reports-first-covid-linked-death-five-months-2022-02-09/>

England's COVID-19 prevalence edges higher - ONS

England's COVID-19 prevalence was 1 in 19 people in the week ending Feb. 5, the Office for National Statistics said on Wednesday, slightly higher than the 1 in 20 recorded the previous week.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/englands-covid-19-prevalence-edges-higher-ons-2022-02-09/>

COVID cases surpass 400 million as Omicron grips world

Global COVID-19 cases surpassed 400 million on Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, as the highly contagious Omicron variant dominates the outbreak, pushing health systems in several countries to the brink of capacity. The Omicron variant, which is dominating the surge around the world, accounts for almost all new cases reported daily. While cases have begun to level off in many countries, more than 2 million cases are still being reported on average each day, according to a Reuters analysis.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-cases-surpass-400-mln-omicron-grips-world-2022-02-09/>

[2-02-09/](#)

New Covid surge batters Afghanistan's crumbling health care

Only five hospitals in Afghanistan still offer COVID-19 treatment, with 33 others having been forced to close in recent months for lack of doctors, medicines and even heat. This comes as the economically devastated nation is hit by a steep rise in the number of reported coronavirus cases. At Kabul's only COVID-19 treatment hospital, staff can only heat the building at night because of lack of fuel, even as winter temperatures drop below freezing during the day. Patients are bundled under heavy blankets. Its director, Dr. Mohammed Gul Liwal, said they need everything from oxygen to medicine supplies. The facility, called the Afghan Japan Communicable Disease Hospital, has 100 beds. The COVID-19 ward is almost always full as the virus rages. Before late January, the hospital was getting one or two new coronavirus patients a day. In the past two weeks, 10 to 12 new patients have been admitted daily, Liwal said.

<https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-kabul-9e983468daac7ef86367b6b9f76a704f>

Hospitals begin to limp out of the latest COVID-19 surge

As omicron numbers drop at Denver Health, Dr. Anuj Mehta is reminded of the scene in the 1980 comedy "The Blues Brothers" when John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd pile out of a battered car after a police chase. Suddenly, all the doors pop off the hinges, the front wheels fall off and smoke pours from the engine. "And that's my fear," said Mehta, a pulmonary and critical care physician. "I'm worried that as soon as we stop, everything's just going to fall apart." Across the U.S., the number of people in the hospital with COVID-19 has tumbled more than 28% over the past three weeks to about 105,000 on average, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the ebbing of the omicron surge has left in its wake postponed surgeries, exhausted staff members and uncertainty over whether this is the last big wave or whether another one lies ahead.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-john-belushi-dan-aykroyd-3f8b5a787a95c8499b2b0a32c34f89a7>