

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

30th Dec 2020

Hope everyone had a good Christmas break

Just a reminder that the next edition will be Monday 4th January, 2021.

Happy New Year - Bonne Annee - Ein Gluckliches Neues Jahr - Buon Anno - Feliz Ano Nuevo -
Voorspoedige Nuwe Jaar

News Highlights

Vaccine uptake higher than expected, despite fears over vaccine hesitancy in the UK

Despite fears over misinformation linked to Covid-19 vaccines and a lack of trust in governments and drugmakers causing vaccine hesitancy, [uptake in the UK is high](#), according to doctors. NHS chief executive, [Sir Simon Stevens says 22 million vulnerable people could receive a vaccine by the spring](#). However, it is thought that [two million shots will be needed weekly, to prevent a third wave](#), as [concerns mount over pressures on the NHS and calls for stricter preventative infection measures](#)

Journalist sentenced to four-year jail sentence for reporting on the outbreak in Wuhan

Chinese journalist Zhang Zhan has been sentenced to four years in prison, following a closed-door trial, for her reporting on the plight of overwhelmed hospitals and communities in Wuhan at the start of the pandemic in China. [The verdict has been criticised. Leo Lan of Chinese Human Rights' Defenders said 'it will have a deterrent effect of silencing others who witnessed what happened in Wuhan earlier this year.'](#)

Covid-19 cases top nineteen million in U.S. as concerns over vaccine rollout mount

'The worst is yet to come,' [says Dr Anthony Fauci](#), as Covid-19 [cases topped nineteen million in the USA](#) during its deadliest month of the pandemic so far. The Trump administration is weathering criticism over vaccine rollout. [Data suggests only 2.1 million of the 11.4 million doses have been administered, despite Trump administration predictions of twenty million inoculations by year-end](#). President-elect Joe Biden is pledging tougher action once in office.

Multiple countries now home to new variant of Covid-19

The new Covid-19 variant first identified in the UK has now reached several other countries. South Africa saw a surge in infections after the new variant was detected there. [A woman who arrived in Japan from South Africa subsequently tested positive for the new variant](#). Meanwhile, [the U.S. recorded its first case of the new variant in Colorado](#). Nonetheless, [a recent study suggests that it does not cause more severity in illness than other strains of the virus](#), although, this new variant is more transmissible

Lockdown Exit

Care homes still waiting weeks for Covid vaccines - despite 'tsunami' of cases

Care homes are still waiting for coronavirus jabs, weeks after the Tories promised them. One boss warned they face a Covid “tsunami” as they battle the new virus variant. Raj Sehgal said: “We’ve had no vaccines at all.” And staff fear the growing crisis could leave them on their knees as they battle a worrying shortage of workers struck down by the virus. It comes as officials last night said approval of the Oxford vaccine was “imminent”, which would be a game-changer for care homes. Mr Sehgal, who runs homes in Norfolk, including Summerville House in Heacham, said he was still desperately waiting for jabs, despite those in care being identified as the most urgently in need of them.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/government-breaks-promise-urgently-vaccinate-23237051>

Wuhan's low-income workers struggle to find jobs eight months after Covid-19 lockdown lifted

Hundreds of low-income workers gather at a roadside in the central Chinese city of Wuhan at 4am each morning, waiting for employers to come and offer them odd jobs. Most are looking for construction work. But eight months after the city lifted lockdown measures put in place to stop the spread of Covid-19, many workers at the morning job market say there are still very few jobs, and they are struggling to make a living.

<https://www.scmp.com/video/scmp-originals/3115677/wuhans-low-income-workers-struggle-find-jobs-eight-months-after-covid>

Greece hoping for tourism recovery from summer 2021 after pandemic slump

Greece’s tourism sector is expected to recover next summer following a dramatic fall in revenues due to the coronavirus pandemic this year, a senior industry official said on Tuesday. Tourism is the main driver of Greece’s economy, accounting for about 20% of its output and employing one in five workers. Yannis Retsos, head of the country’s tourism confederation, said tourism revenues this year had reached 4 billion euros, down from 18 billion in 2019, due to global travel restrictions to contain the spread of the coronavirus. “We need to wait for the second half of the year to see some sort of action in tourism,” Retsos told a Greek radio station.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-greece-tourism/greece-hoping-for-tourism-recovery-from-summer-2021-after-pandemic-slump-idUKKBN293176>

Britain to place more parts of country in tier 4 of COVID curbs

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has approved placing more parts of the country into tier 4 restrictions, as the country battles a new variant of COVID-19 which scientists say can spread more rapidly, The Times reported. Ministers were considering imposing the toughest measures on parts of southwest England and Cumbria, where the variant appears to be gaining ground even though cases remain relatively low, said the report.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-restrictio/britain-to-place-more-parts-of-country-in-tier-4-of-covid-curbs-the-times-idUKKBN29324A>

China meat association calls for exporters to disinfect shipments to prevent COVID-19

Chinese meat importers and processors have called on exporters in countries with COVID-19 outbreaks to step up checks on shipments before they are sent to the world’s biggest market, China’s top industry group said. “China has been importing a large quantity of meats this year, and has detected virus on the packaging of cold chain products many times, even as lots of disinfection has been done domestically,” Gao Guan, spokesman for the China Meat Association, said on Tuesday. It would be better to handle virus control at the point of origins and carry out disinfection at production plants as the cost would be lower and efficiency higher, Gao said. China has ramped up disinfection and virus testing on frozen food after it found coronavirus on imported products and packaging.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-food/china-meat-association-calls-for-exporters-to-disinfect>

Exit Strategies

Ministers push to speed up Covid vaccine so that rules can be lifted after first 15m people get the jab

In England, the Government is pushing to speed up the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines as the best chance for ending restrictions on everyday life in the coming months. Ministers are reportedly targeting the goal of vaccinating 15 million people in the UK before it is possible to lift the rules designed to slow the spread of coronavirus. Matt Hancock has previously said that the restrictions would be removed once those who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 have been protected. Rishi Sunak described the vaccination programme as “light at the end of the tunnel”.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/ministers-push-speed-up-covid-19-vaccine-so-rules-can-be-lifted-809610>

Hungary receives 6000 doses of Russia's coronavirus vaccine

Hungary said it received 6,000 doses of Russia's controversial coronavirus vaccine on Monday (28 December), in a new display of Budapest's maverick vaccine policy. “6,000 doses of Russian vaccine crossed Hungary's border with Slovakia,” Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in a Facebook video message. The consignment was taken to Budapest for a decision by Hungarian experts on how to use it, he said, without providing details on the vaccine's potential rollout. The announcement comes after Hungary started vaccinations on Saturday ahead of most European Union countries after receiving its first delivery of the Belgian-made Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus jabs.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/hungary-receives-6000-doses-of-russias-coronavirus-vaccine/>

79-year-old grandmother first in Ireland to receive coronavirus vaccine

A 79-year-old grandmother from Dublin has become the first person in the Republic to receive a coronavirus vaccination. Annie Lynch received the vaccine at St James's Hospital in Dublin. It was the first Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 jab to be administered at four hospitals across the country: St James's and Beaumont Hospital in Dublin, Cork University Hospital and University Hospital Galway. Mrs Lynch said: “I feel very privileged to be the first person in Ireland to receive the vaccine.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/79-year-old-grandmother-first-in-ireland-to-receive-coronavirus-vaccine-39910316.html>

22 million vulnerable people to get Covid vaccine by spring

All vulnerable Brits, including everyone over the age of 50, could receive a coronavirus vaccine by the spring, the chief executive of the NHS has said. Sir Simon Stevens said 22 million people being vaccinated so soon was a ‘fresh chink of hope’, after a grim end to the year saw hospitalisations in England surpassing April's peak. Roughly 200,000 people are being vaccinated every week at the moment, but this is set to rise to one million by mid-January, the Daily Telegraph reports. But a study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine warns this must be doubled to two million if the UK is to avoid a third wave.

<https://metro.co.uk/2020/12/29/22-million-vulnerable-people-to-get-covid-vaccine-by-spring-13818317/>

Covid vaccine uptake high despite concerns over hesitancy

Uptake of the Covid-19 vaccine has been high among those offered it, doctors say, despite fears that vaccine hesitancy could undermine efforts to control the pandemic. Experts have feared mass uptake of the jab could be jeopardised by widespread misinformation, concerns among the public about the speed at which the vaccine has been developed and approved, and lack of trust in vaccines and the pharmaceutical companies and governments calling for it. But for now, at least, it seems few are shying away from vaccination. “We've had reports from our members that despite inevitable teething problems – to be expected when delivering a completely new and complicated

vaccine at scale and speed – the programme seems to be running well overall with very positive take-up rates, so far,” said Prof Martin Marshall, chair of the Royal College of GPs and a practising GP in east London.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/29/covid-vaccine-uptake-high-despite-concerns-over-hesitancy>

Harris receives COVID-19 shot in bid to boost U.S. vaccine confidence

U.S. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris received a COVID-19 vaccination live on television on Tuesday, as the incoming Biden administration seeks to boost confidence in the inoculation even while warning it will be months before it is available to all. Senator Harris, who is Black and Asian-American, will become the second high-profile person from an ethnic minority background to receive the vaccine after Surgeon General Jerome Adams on Dec. 18. Democratic President-elect Joe Biden, who takes office on Jan. 20, has said he will make the fight against the coronavirus, which has infected more than 19 million Americans and killed over 334,000, his top priority.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa/harris-receives-covid-19-shot-in-bid-to-boost-us-vaccine-confidence-idUKKBN2931EJ>

Kamala Harris receives Covid-19 vaccine dose

Vice president-elect Kamala Harris has received her first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at United Medical Center in Washington DC. The centre’s registered nurse Patricia Cummings administered a shot of the Moderna vaccine into the incoming vice president’s left arm on Tuesday. “That was easy,” she said, laughing. “I barely felt it.” President-elect Joe Biden received a first dose of the vaccine on 21 December at ChristianaCare's Christiana Hospital in Delaware.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/kamala-harris-covid-vaccine-b1780022.html>

The UK and the US need to learn from countries that better handled Covid-19

In October 2019, in those halcyon pre-Covid-19 days, a chart was published that ranked 195 countries according to their capacity to deal with outbreaks of infectious disease. Drawn up by the Washington DC-based Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore, Maryland, the 2019 Global Health Security Index (GHSI) placed the US and UK first and second, respectively. South Korea came ninth, New Zealand 35th and China 51st, while a number of African countries brought up the rear.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/29/us-uk-covid-sars-vietnam-senegal-ebola>

Covid-19: First vaccine patient has her second jab

The first person in the world to be given the Pfizer Covid-19 jab as part of a mass vaccination programme has received a second dose. Margaret Keenan was given the follow-up vaccine at University Hospital in Coventry earlier - three weeks after the first. The hospital's chief executive Andy Hardy said the hospital was "delighted" to welcome Margaret back. Two doses of the vaccine are required to achieve full immunity. The grandmother, who is originally from Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, received a first injection on 8 December, a week before her 91st birthday, and described it as the "best early birthday present".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-55478675>

Covid: Military back-up for pupil testing as heads urge delay to start of term

Members of the armed forces are to give remote support to secondary schools and colleges in England setting up mass Covid testing as the new term begins. Military personnel will hold webinars and give phone support to school staff. But head teachers say they need support on the ground and more time to make the plan workable. They are calling for a delay to the start of term. The government wants pupils to go back in the first two weeks of January, but is keeping the situation under review.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55471095>

Pressure grows on Government to keep schools closed despite plans for military to help coronavirus testing of pupils

Military personnel will be drafted in to support coronavirus testing of school and college students in England if the Government withstands the growing pressure to delay the reopening of secondaries.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/newslondon/pressure-grows-on-government-to-keep-schools-closed-despite-plans-for-military-to-help-coronavirus-testing-of-pupils/ar-BB1cjwqg>

E.U. Starts Effort to Vaccinate 450 Million

From nursing homes in France to hospitals in Poland, older Europeans and the workers who care for them rolled up their sleeves on Sunday to receive coronavirus vaccine shots in a campaign to inoculate more than 450 million people across the European Union. The inoculations offered a rare respite as the continent struggles with one of its most precarious moments since the pandemic began. Despite national lockdowns, restrictions on movement, shuttering of restaurants and cancellations of Christmas gatherings, the virus has stalked Europe into the dark winter months. The spread of a more contagious variant of the virus in Britain has raised such alarm that much of continental Europe rushed to close its borders to travelers coming from the country, effectively plunging the nation as a whole into quarantine.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/12/27/world/covid-19-coronavirus-updates>

German Town Finds a Blueprint for Lowering Covid-19 Deaths

At the peak of the first wave in April, the town had 70 Covid-19 patients in its biggest hospital—out of 89,000 inhabitants—including 33 in intensive care, forcing doctors to cancel elective surgery. Now, at the height of the far more devastating current surge, patients number just 35, many transferred from other regions. Fifteen of them are in intensive care, of whom fewer than half are Tübingen residents. The hospital hasn't canceled non-urgent surgery. Local authorities say such numbers are no accident. The town, they point out, started earlier than most German municipalities in carrying out frequent Covid-19 tests on care-home staff, residents and visitors. It subsidizes taxi rides for those over age 65 so they don't have to use public transit. Younger residents are discouraged from shopping between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. so as to avoid seniors having to mingle with people who are more likely to carry the virus without symptoms.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/german-town-finds-a-blueprint-for-lowering-covid-19-deaths-11609257334>

Michael Gove: We can ease Covid restrictions early if Oxford vaccine roll-out works

Michael Gove has backed Chancellor Rishi Sunak's suggestion that tough coronavirus restrictions could be lifted if the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is rolled out in the new year. Over the weekend the Chancellor hailed vaccination efforts as the key to unlocking the tier system, which was toughened days before Christmas following the emergence of a new infectious strain of Covid-19.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-rules-michael-gove-oxford-vaccine-b533414.html>

French Retailers Seek Aid as Sales Fail to Recover From Lockdown

French retailers called for government support after sales failed to rebound fully from a second lockdown, suggesting measures to fight the coronavirus pandemic are changing consumer patterns. Despite a good pick-up in spending thanks to Black Friday discounts and year-end purchases, many clothing, shoe, jewelry, beauty-product and perfume retailers face a drop in revenue of more than 20% in 2020, the French Council of Commerce, a group of about 30 business federations, said in a statement on Monday. "Many shopkeepers could decide to put up the shutters for good to avoid racking up further losses and dragging out an insurmountable economic situation," said William Koeberle, chairman of the trade group.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-28/french-retailers-seek-aid-as-sales-fail-to-recover-from-lockdown>

Belarus first country after Russia to start Sputnik-V vaccination

Belarus has become the first country after Russia to begin vaccination of people with Sputnik-V against Covid-19, Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) said on Tuesday. "Belarus becomes the first country in the world after Russia to start vaccination of its people against COVID-19 with #SputnikV vaccine," a tweet from the official handle of Sputnik-V stated. The Sputnik-V vaccine has been developed and produced by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/belarus-first-country-after-russia-to-start-sputnik-v-vaccination-120122900545_1.html

Staggered school return to go ahead as planned in January despite new Covid strain fears - Michael Gove

The staggered reopening of schools in January is expected to go ahead as planned, Michael Gove said on Monday. The Cabinet Office minister confirmed that secondary school pupils in Years 11 and 13, as well as children of key workers, will return on January 4. All primary school children will also resume classes while other pupils will return a week later. Mr Gove told Sky News: "We always keep things under review but teachers and head teachers have been working incredibly hard over the Christmas period since schools broke up in order to prepare for a new testing regime — community testing — in order to make sure that children and all of us are safer.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/school-january-open-covid-michael-gove-b533421.html>

Frustration over vaccine rollout builds, as new variant reported in U.S. for first time

As frustration over the pace of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout continues to build, health officials in Colorado on Tuesday reported the first known U.S. case of the variant of Covid-19 discovered in the U.K. The U.K. variant appears to be more transmissible than other variants of the virus seen to date, and has been detected in a number of countries worldwide. The Colorado case, who is currently in isolation, is a man in his 20s who has not left the country. The lack of a travel history means he contracted the virus in the U.S., suggesting undetected transmission of the new variant here. The discovery will only add to the urgency of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign currently underway, which some public health experts have criticized as going too slowly.

<https://www.statnews.com/2020/12/29/public-health-experts-grow-frustrated-with-pace-of-covid-19-vaccine-rollout/>

Biden criticizes slow vaccine rollout, Colorado confirms nation's first UK variant case

Pledging a more aggressive effort once he's in office, President-elect Joe Biden today took aim at the slow rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, which reported its first confirmed United Kingdom variant case today. The two developments come as the nation braces for a post-holiday surge, alongside fears that the more transmissible UK variant could make matters worse

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/12/biden-criticizes-slow-vaccine-rollout-colorado-confirms-nations-first-uk>

Partisan Exits

Spain to Create a Register of People Who Refuse Covid-19 Vaccine

European governments are planning to track the number of people getting Covid-19 vaccines to help chart a path out of the crisis. France will have a registry of people who get vaccinated, and Spain will track people who refuse to get inoculated against the disease, which has caused more than 400,000 deaths in Europe. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel's government is considering legislation to ensure unvaccinated people are treated fairly as the economy begins to open up. More than 21,000 people in the country have already received the shot developed by Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-29/spain-to-create-a-register-of-people-who-refuse-covid-19-vaccine?srd=premium>

China Covid-19: How state media and censorship took on coronavirus

At the start of the year the Chinese government faced two major challenges; an unknown disease which threatened to tear through its population and a wave of voices online telling the world what was happening. By the end of 2020, a glance at Chinese state-controlled media shows that both appear to be under control. The BBC's Kerry Allen and Zhaoyin Feng take a look back at the country's online government censors who worked harder than ever to suppress negative information, the citizens that managed to break through the Great Firewall, and how the propaganda machine re-wrote the narrative.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-asia-china-55355401>

China sentences citizen journalist to four years in prison for Wuhan lockdown reports

A citizen journalist who documented the desperation of residents in Wuhan at the height of China's coronavirus outbreak was sentenced to four years in prison Monday in a case that underlined Beijing's extreme sensitivity to criticism of its pandemic response. In a closed-door trial that lasted less than three hours, authorities in Shanghai handed down the sentence to Zhang Zhan, 37, for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a charge often used against dissidents.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-wuhan-journalist-trial-coronavirus/2020/12/28/01fac40c-48b7-11eb-97b6-4eb9f72ff46b_story.html

How conspiracy theories led a 'fringe scientist' to escape quarantine

Trapped under quarantine and ravaged by allergies in a Perth hotel room, Jenny D'Ubios slid into an internet vortex of conspiracy theories in the week before her Boxing Day escape. The self-described "fringe scientist" shared with her Facebook followers articles about the dangers of 5G, a post by an anti-fluoride group that suggested coronavirus was a hoax, a video about the COVID-19 test (which was blocked by Facebook) and support for Reignite Democracy Australia, an activist group that sprang up in protest against the Melbourne lockdown.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-conspiracy-theories-led-a-fringe-scientist-to-escape-quarantine-20201228-p56qhj.html>

Russian riot police arrest renegade priest in raid on convent

Riot police in Russia arrested a renegade priest in the early hours of Tuesday in a raid on a convent he had seized control of and accused him of driving children to suicide, according to his lawyer. Father Sergiy, whose real name is Nikolai Romanov, gained prominence earlier this year after denying the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic, railing against church closures due to the lockdown, and criticising the Russian Orthodox Church. He seized control of the Sredneuralsky women's monastery near Yekaterinburg in the Urals in June and refused to leave.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-russia-priest/russian-riot-police-arrest-renegade-priest-in-raid-on-convent-idUKKBN2930QK>

Continued Lockdown

Denmark to extend lockdown measures until Jan. 17 - TV2

Denmark's government will extend a hard lockdown for two weeks until Jan. 17 to limit the spread of COVID-19, broadcaster TV2 reported on Tuesday citing unnamed sources. The extension will keep schools,

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/denmark-to-extend-lockdown-measures-until-jan-17-tv2/ar-BB1ck2Nr>

Scientific Viewpoint

Exclusive: Chile could greenlight AstraZeneca vaccine 'within days of US/UK approval, government says

AstraZeneca has filed data with Chilean regulators for the emergency roll-out of its COVID-19 vaccine in the country and could get a green light "weeks or even days" after approval by European

or American regulators, the government's point person for vaccine procurement told Reuters. The UK-based company has been conducting late-stage trials of its vaccine, developed with Oxford University, in Chile as well as in Brazil, the UK, the United States and South Africa. Chile has signed a deal to buy 14.4 million doses of the drug, an amount that would vaccinate half that number of people, or nearly 40% of the country's population. Chile is already among the best-placed in the region for vaccine deals, with an agreement for 10 million doses from Pfizer BioNtech, 60 million doses over three years from China's Sinovac and 7.6 million vaccine doses through the global vaccine distribution scheme COVAX.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-chile-astrazeneca/exclusive-chile-could-greenlight-astrazeneca-vaccine-within-days-of-us-uk-approval-government-says-idUKKBN2931QL?il=0>

New coronavirus variant does not cause illness more severe than others -Public Health England study

A new variant of the novel coronavirus does not appear to cause more severe illness than other variants, according to a matched study bit.ly/2X7cLgP by Public Health England. Scientists say the new variant can spread more rapidly. It was found in England in mid December and led to other countries imposing travel restrictions to the United Kingdom. Several other countries have reported variants. Under the study, researchers compared 1,769 people infected with the new variant with 1,769 who had what they described as "wild-type" virus. The two groups were matched 1:1 on the basis of age, sex, area of residence and time of testing.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-variant/new-coronavirus-variant-does-not-cause-illness-more-severe-than-others-public-health-england-study-idUKKBN29401C?il=0>

COVID-19 vaccine: India may get most of Serum Institute's initial Covishield stockpile

Poonawalla says Covishield shows efficacy level of 95 per cent provided two shots are taken after a gap of 2-3 months; AstraZeneca will make that public with documentation soon, he adds

<https://www.businesstoday.in/coronavirus/serum-institute-vaccine-india-may-get-most-initial-covishield-stockpile/story/426314.html>

Will COVID-19 vaccines work on the new coronavirus variant?

Will COVID-19 vaccines work on the new coronavirus variant? Experts believe so, but they're working to confirm that. A coronavirus variant in the United Kingdom has caused alarm because of the possibility that it might spread more easily. But even if that turns out to be true, experts say the COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out will likely still work on the variant. Dr. Anthony Fauci the top U.S. infectious disease expert, said data coming from Britain indicates the vaccines still will block the virus. But the U.S. also will do tests to be sure. Viruses often undergo small changes as they reproduce and move through a population. In fact, the slight modifications are how scientists track the spread of a virus from one place to another.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/will-covid19-vaccines-work-on-the-new-coronavirus-variant-vaccines-covid19-experts-anthony-fauci-viruses-b1779812.html>

Arcturus Therapeutics shares slide 55% after COVID vaccine data are deemed 'underwhelming'

Shares of biotech company Arcturus Therapeutics Holdings Inc. slid 55% Tuesday, as investors responded to results from a Phase 1/2 trial of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate that one analyst said were disappointing. San Diego-based Arcturus ARCT, -54.17% said late Monday that it has received approval from the Singapore Health Sciences Authority to move ahead with a Phase 2 study of its ARCT-021 vaccine candidate that will enroll up to 600 volunteers. The approval is based on Phase 1/2 trial data that showed the vaccine produced neutralizing antibodies after one dose although at lower levels than rival vaccine candidates. Arcturus is hoping its vaccine will not require a booster shot, making it easier to administer than vaccines that require two doses.

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/arcturus-therapeutics-shares-slide-37-in-premarket-after-covid-vaccine-data-are-deemed-underwhelming-11609250275>

Iran begins human trials of its homegrown Covid vaccine

The daughter of the man leading one of Iran's most infamous religious foundations today became the first person in the country to test its homegrown coronavirus vaccine on Tuesday. Tayebeh Mokbher appeared in good health afterward. "I am happy not just because I'm the first person to receive the vaccine, but also that our country's science has advanced so much," she said in a segment broadcast on state television immediately after she took a jab of Blessed Coviran, the country's still-experimental coronavirus vaccine.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/covid-iran-vaccine-coviran-sanctions-b1779956.html>

Novavax launches late-stage US coronavirus vaccine trial

Novavax has begun a large late-stage study of its experimental COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S., the drug developer said on Monday, after delaying the trial twice due to issues in scaling up the manufacturing process. It will enroll up to 30,000 volunteers across about 115 sites in the United States and Mexico, with two-thirds of them receiving the shot 21 days apart and the rest getting placebo, the company said. Novavax lags behind other drugmakers in the global race for COVID-19 vaccine, with shots from Pfizer and Moderna authorized for emergency use in the United States.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9092849/Novavax-starts-late-stage-trial-COVID-19-vaccine-United-States.html>

Consortium working with medical authorities on approval for Covid-19 rapid test

A consortium that includes medical diagnostics company Omega is working with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to enable approval for its Covid-19 lateral flow antibody test. The Alva-based company is part of the consortium led by AIM-listed Abingdon Health developing the AbC-19 Rapid Test. Abingdon, which is York-based, said that while the UK's Department of Health and Social Care has first refusal of supplies of the test through a contract that runs to 14 February, it is also working on potential international distribution. The UK Rapid Test Consortium liaising with customers and regulatory authorities across a total of 27 international territories, to allow future use of the product outside of the UK.

<https://www.insider.co.uk/news/consortium-working-medical-authorities-approval-23233018>

WHO warns Covid-19 pandemic is 'not necessarily the big one'

World Health Organization experts have warned that even though the coronavirus pandemic has been very severe, it is "not necessarily the big one", and that the world will have to learn to live with Covid-19. The "destiny" of the virus is to become endemic, even as vaccines begin to be rolled out in the US and UK, says Professor David Heymann, the chair of the WHO's strategic and technical advisory group for infectious hazards. "The world has hoped for herd immunity, that somehow transmission would be decreased if enough persons were immune," he told the WHO's final media briefing for 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/29/who-warns-covid-19-pandemic-is-not-necessarily-the-big-one>

Pressure grows on Government to keep schools closed despite plans for military to help coronavirus testing of pupils

Military personnel will be drafted in to support coronavirus testing of school and college students in England if the Government withstands the growing pressure to delay the reopening of secondaries.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/newslondon/pressure-grows-on-government-to-keep-schools-closed-despite-plans-for-military-to-help-coronavirus-testing-of-pupils/ar-BB1cjwqq>

Covid: UK faces 'catastrophe' without tougher action, warns scientist

A surge in coronavirus cases in the UK is of "extreme concern", a health boss says, as a record

number of cases was reported for the second day running. On Tuesday, 53,135 new Covid cases were recorded as well as 414 more deaths within 28 days of a positive test. Not all data was reported in full over the Christmas period, leading to a lag in some data, but Public Health England said there had been a "real increase". The health secretary said the NHS was facing "unprecedented pressures". Ahead of an announcement on any changes to England's tier restrictions on Wednesday, Matt Hancock added in a tweet: "We must suppress this virus to protect our NHS & save lives until the vaccine can keep us safe."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55475240>

Study: Britain Must Vaccinate 2 Million a Week to Prevent Third COVID-19 Wave

Britain must vaccinate 2 million people a week to avoid a third wave of the coronavirus outbreak, a study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has concluded. Britain has had more than 71,000 deaths from the coronavirus and has recorded more than 2.3 million cases of COVID-19 infections as of late Monday, according to Johns Hopkins University data. "The most stringent intervention scenario, with tier 4 [restrictions] England-wide and schools closed during January and 2 million individuals vaccinated per week, is the only scenario we considered which reduces peak ICU burden below the levels seen during the first wave," the study said.

<https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/study-britain-must-vaccinate-2-million-week-prevent-third-covid-19-wave>

UK needs tighter COVID rules to avert new 'catastrophe', epidemiologist warns

Britain reported 41,385 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, the highest number since testing became widely available in the middle of 2020, and hospitals have more COVID-19 patients than during the first wave of the pandemic in April. "We are entering a very dangerous new phase of the pandemic, and we're going to need decisive early national action to prevent a catastrophe in January and February," Andrew Hayward, professor of infectious disease epidemiology at University College London, told the BBC.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain/uk-needs-tighter-covid-rules-to-avert-new-catastrophe-epidemiologist-warns-idUKKBN2930R0?il=0>

Regeneron's COVID-19 antibody therapy shows promise in hospitalized patients

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc said on Tuesday initial data from an ongoing study of its experimental antibody cocktail for use in hospitalized COVID-19 patients requiring low-flow oxygen show the therapy was sufficiently effective to warrant continuing the trial. The drugmaker said in September the cocktail, a combination of two antibodies casirivimab and imdevimab, reduced viral levels and improved symptoms in non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-regeneron-pharms/regenerons-covid-19-antibody-therapy-shows-promise-in-hospitalized-patients-idUKKBN29323N?il=0>

AstraZeneca now has a 'winning formula' for its COVID-19 vaccine, CEO says

AstraZeneca's early COVID-19 trial data not only fell short of Pfizer and Moderna's expectation-beating stats, they raised a host of questions thanks to a dosing error in one group of trial patients. But with the U.K. suffering under a new viral strain and a quick vaccine approval expected, CEO Pascal Soriot says AZ has a new "winning formula." In the company's original phase 3 trial, patients given a half dose followed by a full dose a month later were better protected than those who received two full doses. Soriot has said the company will need to conduct a new trial for U.S. authorization, but across the pond, Sky News reports a U.K. nod could come this week.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-has-a-winning-formula-for-its-covid-19-vaccine-ceo-says>

Study: COVID antibodies may fend off reinfection for 6 months

Few healthcare workers in the UK who recovered from COVID-19 and had immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibodies against the virus were reinfected over the next 6 months, according to a study published

in the New England Journal of Medicine. The prospective, longitudinal cohort study involved measuring levels of IgG antibodies against the coronavirus's spike protein and nucleocapsid in symptomatic and asymptomatic healthcare workers at Oxford University Hospitals undergoing COVID-19 testing. Testing began Mar 27, and follow-up ended on Nov 30.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/12/study-covid-antibodies-may-fend-reinfection-6-months>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 in Scotland: Nicola Sturgeon tells Hogmanay revellers to stay at home and halt coronavirus spread

Nicola Sturgeon has warned revellers to stay at home on Hogmanay as Scotland recorded the highest daily number of cases since the pandemic began. The number of people testing positive for Covid-19 has doubled in 24 hours from 967 reported yesterday to 1,895 today. There has also been a 12 per cent rise in hospital cases from 973 on Christmas Day to 1,092 today — the highest figure since November 27 when there were signs that the second wave was abating. Epidemiologists fear household mixing at Christmas coupled with a new and more infectious strain is fuelling the second wave.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-in-scotland-nicola-sturgeon-tells-hogmanay-revellers-to-stay-at-home-and-halt-coronavirus-spread-vv38d5fh5>

Covid-19: Health workers 'back in eye of storm', says NHS chief

Health workers are "back in the eye of the storm" as coronavirus cases continue to rise, NHS England's chief executive Simon Stevens has said. It has been the "toughest year" for the NHS, which has treated 200,000 severely ill Covid-19 patients, he added. Hospitals in England are currently treating more Covid patients than at the peak of the first wave in April. A government scientific adviser has warned national restrictions are needed to prevent a "catastrophe". On Monday, a record 41,385 new Covid cases were reported in the UK, though it is thought the infection rate was higher during spring when testing was much more limited.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55470496>

Covid patient numbers exceed April peak as Nightingale hospitals stand empty

There are now more coronavirus patients in England's hospitals than there were during the peak of the first wave of the pandemic, new figures show. As of 8am on Monday, there were 20,426 patients in the country's NHS hospitals compared to the 18,974 patients recorded on April 12, NHS England revealed. The sobering update comes after the UK recorded its highest daily number of Covid-19 cases to date, with 41,385 infections confirmed as of 9am on Monday, according to the Department of Health. Meanwhile, London's Nightingale hospital has been stripped of its beds as medics warn there are not enough staff to run the facility, the Telegraph reported.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-patients-england-nightingale-hospitals-b538294.html>

Renewed COVID lockdowns likely in Southern California as ICUs stay filled

The United States topped 19 million COVID cases on Monday as hospital intensive care units were full to overflowing across much of California, a major U.S. virus hot spot, portending an extension of strict stay-at-home orders imposed this month. California Governor Gavin Newsom said mandatory constraints on social gatherings and business activities would almost certainly be renewed for at least three more weeks in Southern California - encompassing the state's biggest metropolitan areas - and its agricultural heartland, the San Joaquin Valley. Newsom said a formal decision on continuing the stay-at-home orders, among the most stringent in the United States, would be announced on Tuesday, based on trends projected by health authorities for the coming weeks.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa/new-covid-lockdowns-likely-in-southern-california-as-ic-us-tay-filled-idUSKBN29302Y>

UK coronavirus cases rise by record 53,000 amid calls for tougher lockdown

The UK has recorded 53,135 coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours in the biggest daily rise since the pandemic began. It is the first time daily cases have surpassed 50,000 and is over 10,000 more than yesterday's record high of 41,385. The figures from the Department of Health show another 414 people have died within 28 days of testing positive, compared to 357 on Monday. It brings the total death toll to 71,567 – one of the highest in the world.

<https://metro.co.uk/2020/12/29/uk-records-over-50000-new-covid-cases-and-another-414-deaths-13821763/>

Dr Fauci says 'worst is yet to come' from coronavirus as December becomes deadliest month of pandemic

Dr Anthony Fauci has warned that he believes the worst of the coronavirus pandemic "is yet to come" as December becomes America's most deadly month for Covid-19. Speaking to anchor Dana Bash on CNN's State of the Union on Sunday morning, Dr Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert and part of the White House coronavirus task force, warned US residents to brace for a surge of cases in the new year. "We very well might see a post-seasonal – in the sense of Christmas, New Years – surge or as I've described it, a surge upon a surge," Dr Fauci said on Sunday.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/dr-anthony-fauci-coronavirus-pandemic-b1779336.html>

Spain's Virus Deaths Surpass 50,000 Amid Holiday Restrictions

Spain became the fourth European country to record more than 50,000 coronavirus deaths as nations across the region start to roll out a vaccine. Fatalities from the disease rose to 50,122 on Monday, according to Health Ministry figures. Some 408 people have died from the virus in the past week. Cases diagnosed over the last 24 hours amounted to 2,822, bringing the total to 1.88 million. Spain is one of the countries in Europe to be hit hardest by the pandemic, forcing the government to impose a state of emergency in March. When it emerged from a strict national lockdown three months later, management of the pandemic was placed in the hands of regional governments.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-28/spain-s-virus-deaths-surpass-50-000-amid-holiday-restrictions?srnd=prognosis>

Covid: UK surge in cases an 'extreme concern'

A surge in coronavirus cases in the UK is of "extreme concern", a health boss says, as a record number of cases was reported for the second day running. On Tuesday, 53,135 new Covid cases were recorded as well as 414 more deaths within 28 days of a positive test. Not all data was reported in full over the Christmas period, leading to a lag in some data, but Public Health England said there had been a "real increase". The health secretary said the NHS was facing "unprecedented pressures". Ahead of an announcement on any changes to England's tier restrictions on Wednesday, Matt Hancock added in a tweet: "We must suppress this virus to protect our NHS & save lives until the vaccine can keep us safe."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55475240>

New Year lockdown fears grow as health task force decide fate of France's Covid-hit regions

Despite the positive news of the roll-out of a Covid-19 vaccination campaign, the French are ending 2020 with the threat of a possible 3rd lockdown, which could be implemented on a regional or local basis. Covid-19 infection rates coming out of France's Grand Est region have been troubling Macron administration, triggering an emergency meeting of a health defense council this Tuesday. It is not yet known whether new lockdown measures will be decided at today's gathering, but regional politicians already have their own idea of what the outcome may be.

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20201229-new-year-lockdown-fears-grow-as-health-task-force-decide-fate-of-france-s-covid-hit-regions>

France considers third national lockdown as Covid-19 cases rise

President Emmanuel Macron meets with France's health council on Tuesday to consider whether to reimpose lockdown restrictions for a third time amid concern over a rise in Covid-19 cases. France eased restrictions imposed during a second lockdown on December 15 but the average number of daily coronavirus cases has not fallen below a key 5,000 threshold set by the government. Although the number of new infections appeared to have fallen over the Christmas holidays - only 2,960 new coronavirus infections were reported on Monday, down from 8,822 on Sunday and 3,093 on Saturday - officials fear the figures are misleading. Many of the country's testing facilities closed over the holidays and the drop could simply be due to fewer people getting tested.

<https://www.france24.com/en/france/20201228-france-may-impose-third-national-lockdown-if-covid-cases-continue-to-rise>

U.K. Virus Surge Surpasses Spring Peak as Lockdown Choices Loom

Facing record case and hospital numbers and a threatening variant strain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure to shut schools and reimpose national restrictions, measures he once decried.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/world/europe/uk-coronavirus.html>

South Africa Imposes New Virus Measures As Vaccines Roll Out

South Africa banned alcohol sales and made masks mandatory in public from Tuesday, tightening restrictions after a surge in coronavirus cases as more countries joined in mass vaccination campaigns to beat the pandemic.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/south-africa-imposes-new-virus-measures-vaccines-roll-out-3111329>

Coronavirus: South Korea reports highest daily deaths amid third wave

Filipino workers returning from the countries, which include the UK, China and Singapore, are exempted from the ban, the Philippine labour chief says. Meanwhile, Indonesia is finalising deals to secure 50 million doses of coronavirus vaccines from drugmakers Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3115630/coronavirus-south-korea-reports-highest-daily-deaths-amid-third>

Russia's Covid-19 death toll could be 3 times higher than reported

Russia's death toll from Covid-19 could be three times higher than previously thought, according to one of the country's leading politicians. New data released by Russian statistics agency Rosstat Monday showed that the number of deaths from all causes between January and November had risen by 229,700 compared to the same period last year. After the figures were released, Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova was quoted by Russia's Interfax agency as saying that more than 81 percent of this increase in mortality over this period is due to Covid-19 and consequences of the disease.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-s-covid-19-death-toll-could-be-3-times-n1252461>

New lockdowns likely in Southern California as COVID cases top 19 mil in U.S.

The United States topped 19 million COVID cases on Monday as hospital intensive care units remained filled to overflowing across much of California, a major U.S. coronavirus hot spot, portending an extension of strict stay-at-home orders imposed this month. California Gov Gavin Newsom said mandatory constraints on gatherings and business activities would almost certainly be renewed for at least three more weeks in Southern California - encompassing the state's biggest metropolitan areas - and its agricultural heartland, the San Joaquin Valley. Newsom said a formal decision on continuing stay-at-home orders, among the most stringent in the United States, would be announced on Tuesday, based on trends projected by health authorities for the coming weeks.

<https://japantoday.com/category/world/new-covid-lockdowns-likely-in-southern-california-as-ic-us-stay-filled>

Coronavirus variant from South Africa found in Japan

Japan on Monday detected a coronavirus variant found in South Africa, the government said, the first such discovery in a nation that has already identified more than a dozen cases of another variant that is spreading rapidly in Britain

<https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/coronavirus-variant-from-south-africa-found-in-japan-20201229>

Australia could deport hundreds of Brits after 'super-spreader' party

Hundreds of backpackers risk being stripped of their visas and deported from Australia after a huge party was thrown on a beach on Christmas Day. Shocking footage from Sydney shows around 300 people, many believed to be British travellers, chanting next to Bronte Beach wearing Santa hats and what appear to be England football shirts. Australian immigration minister Alex Hawke said he was 'shocked' and would be 'very happy' to deport those caught disobeying public health orders in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. 'Absolutely, under the migration act, if someone is threatening public safety or health, their visa can be cancelled and revoked,' Mr Hawke said on 2GB this morning.

<https://metro.co.uk/2020/12/29/australia-could-deport-hundreds-of-brits-after-super-spreader-party-13820893/>

Coronavirus death toll triples in Russia after government admits to downplaying COVID-19 outbreak

The new figures show more than 186,000 Russians have died from COVID-19 This is up from the 55,265 the country had officially reported. The country's health authorities previously only counted COVID-19 deaths confirmed by autopsy

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-29/russia-admits-to-worlds-third-worst-coronavirus-death-toll/13018842>

Moscow extends school holiday amid rise in coronavirus infections in Russia

Moscow will extend the school holiday by one week until Jan. 17 in hopes of stabilising the situation regarding new coronavirus infections and avoid new COVID-19-related restrictions, the Russian capital's mayor said on Tuesday. Russia, which launched a voluntary vaccination programme with the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine earlier this month, has resisted imposing a strict lockdown as it did early this year, relying on targeted measures instead.

<https://in.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-russia-cases/update-1-moscow-extends-school-holiday-amid-rise-in-coronavirus-infections-in-russia-idINL1N2J90U3>

COVID-19 hospitalisations continue to rise in France

Hospitalisations for COVID-19 continued to rise on Monday in France as President Emmanuel Macron and some senior cabinet ministers are to review the health situation on Tuesday amid another surge in cases that has spurred fears of a third lockdown in the country. The French Health Ministry reported that the number of people admitted to hospital for COVID-19 rose by 25 on Monday to 24,678 while patients in intensive care - the most important measure of a health system's ability to deal with the pandemic - went up by 44 to 2,703.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france/covid-19-hospitalisations-continue-to-rise-in-france-idUKKB N2921PU>

Variant virus gains bigger foothold in UK as cases surge

Developments with variant SARS-CoV-2 continued to dominate global COVID-19 news today, with the United Kingdom reporting more record-high case numbers and new reports revealing more about the prevalence and risk. Meanwhile, a new risk assessment from European health officials said the UK variant may have emerged in September and is expected to push hospitalizations and deaths higher, and more countries reported the detection of the South African variant virus.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/12/variant-virus-gains-bigger-foothold-uk-cases-surge>

New Lockdown

Ireland is in 'dark place' on Covid-19 and full Level 5 lockdown may be imminent, Harris

says

A Government Minister has said an exponential rise in hospital admissions with Covid-19, the presence of a new coronavirus variant in Ireland, and a tripling in the number of referrals for Covid-testing strongly suggest a return to a full Level 5 lockdown is imminent. Minister for Higher Education Simon Harris said that the State – like many other countries – found itself in a “dark and worrying place” in relation to Covid-19 right now. He was speaking shortly after Ministers were notified a Cabinet meeting has been hastily arranged for Wednesday afternoon, to discuss the deteriorating situation as regards the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/ireland-is-in-dark-place-on-covid-19-and-full-level-5-lockdown-may-be-imminent-harris-says-1.4447070>

Punjab govt imposes smart lockdown in Lahore's coronavirus hotspot areas

The Punjab government has imposed a smart lockdown in district Lahore, controlling the entry and exit of people in certain areas of the city identified as "coronavirus hotspots" on Tuesday. "There has been a constant increase in positivity percentage and prevalence of COVID-19 in the Province of Punjab during last two weeks which poses a serious and imminent threat to public health," read a notification from the Primary and Secondary Health Department issued today.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/327098-punjab-govt-imposes-smart-lockdown-in-lahores-coronavirus-hotspot-areas>

China's capital locks down part of district in coronavirus fight

Beijing has reported 16 infections and three asymptomatic cases since Dec. 18, when the first cases were found. Most of the cases were in Shunyi, which has banned couriers from entering residential compounds. Six villages, three buildings and one industrial zone were among the areas locked down, a Beijing municipal official told a news conference. While Beijing's new cases are modest in number compared with June and July, municipal authorities have beefed up steps to rein in the coronavirus, which has surfaced in three districts, where hundreds of thousands of residents have been tested.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-beijing-idUSKBN2930TL>

No new lockdown in France for now despite spike in virus cases

France will not enforce a new lockdown for the time being to curb the spread of the coronavirus but it could soon impose an earlier curfew in eastern areas of the country, the worst-hit by infections, the health minister said on Tuesday. “We’re ruling out the idea of a lockdown for now, whether it be nationally or locally”, Olivier Veran said on France 2 public TV channel. “But we will propose an extension of the curfew that could start at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. in all the areas where it will be deemed necessary”, Veran said.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-france-infections/no-new-lockdown-in-france-for-now-despite-spike-in-virus-cases-idUKKBN2931U8?il=0>