

5,000 deaths and 400,000 COVID infections in UK in first week of 2021

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In the first seven days of this year, 4,952 people have died in Britain from COVID-19, with 400,639 newly infected.

At the height of the pandemic in April over 1,000 people were regularly reported dead in daily tallies. This grim milestone was passed again Wednesday, with 1,041 dead. This was the 10th time during the pandemic that more than 1,000 people had died in a single day.

The same day, the UK entered lockdown after new national restrictions were agreed by MPs.

On Thursday, 1,162 deaths were recorded and 52,618 new cases. In England, 661 coronavirus deaths were recorded in hospital—the second time that daily total has passed 600 during this wave of the pandemic, with the 674 deaths recorded Wednesday.

Total deaths in Britain, as measured by the government, stand at 78,508. Scientists advising the government warned this week that the total will reach 100,000 before the end of the month. Professor John Edmunds, an epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, told the *Financial Times* that it was “baked in” that Britain would suffer a COVID-19 death toll exceeding 100,000.

However, it is likely that this tally will be reached even sooner. Data released by the UK’s statistical agencies December 28 revealed that just in England and Wales, there had been 87,000 deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

The spread of the new more infectious mutation is estimated by the Office for National Statistics to be responsible for around 60 percent of new cases. The *R* (Reproduction) value is estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.3 nationally. In London, it is significantly higher at between 1.2-1.5.

Figures released Thursday by the Department of

Health and Social Care on testing and tracing revealed that 311,372 people tested positive at least once in the week to December 30. This was despite a significant drop in the number of people being tested over the Christmas holiday, as 29 percent fewer tests were conducted compared to the week to Christmas Eve.

For the last 10 days, more than 50,000 people daily have tested positive. On Tuesday, the number of new daily confirmed cases topped 60,000 for the first time ever, with the same milestone breached again Wednesday.

The same day, the *Independent* reported, “The UK has more new Covid-19 cases per capita than any other major country in the world, the latest data reveals.” The number of infections in the UK stood at 800 people in every million, “nearly quadruple the per capita rate of Italy, Spain and France, and more than 10-times worse than the new infections reported during the first wave last April.” It added, “Only the US has a per capita infection rate nearly equivalent to the UK of any country that has seen more than 1 million cases.”

“The UK now has a total of more than 2.7 million confirmed coronavirus cases, making it the worst hit country in Europe in terms of cumulative cases.”

Total cases had shot up to 2,889,419 as of Thursday afternoon.

In the first wave of the pandemic, COVID-19 deaths in UK care homes reached almost 20,000, as the Conservative government’s murderous “herd immunity” policy turned them into killing fields. In October, Amnesty International issued a report condemning the government’s actions, and exposing the Tories lies that they had put a “ring of steel” around care homes to protect them.

With only 1.5 million people having received their first vaccine dose in Britain (around one in 50 people)

and many of the most vulnerable still waiting to be inoculated, a terrible loss of life at one care home in south east England reveals the immense danger facing hundreds of thousands of vulnerable elderly people and staff.

The *Guardian* reported Thursday, “Thirteen of 27 residents at Edendale Lodge care home in Crowhurst had died with confirmed or suspected Covid since 13 December,” according to the manager of the home. “More than a third of the staff also tested positive during the outbreak in which residents died on Christmas Eve and Boxing Day. The latest death came on Monday this week.”

The *Guardian* reported, “Across England, Covid outbreaks in care homes are rising again, after months of far lower infection rates than in the spring as a result of control measures.” In the last week of September, 42 people died from COVID-19 in care homes, the article notes. But since the beginning of December, “care homes in England recorded 440 people who died from Covid in a week, rising to 588 by the week before Christmas, according to the Office for National Statistics.” This means care home deaths have increased by a factor of 14 times in three months.

With the new strain of the virus so contagious, there can be no doubt that many more deaths will occur in care homes. The mutation was first detected in Kent in the south east of England in September and it is most prevalent in the greater south east area comprising London, South East and East. Edendale Lodge care home is in this region.

The difference between the original virus and the new mutation was described last week by Professor Axel Gandy of London's Imperial College as “quite extreme”. He told BBC News, “There is a huge difference in how easily the variant virus spreads. This is the most serious change in the virus since the epidemic began.”

Hospitals throughout the UK are being overwhelmed. The BBC reported yesterday that there are “26,500 Covid patients in hospital, meaning nearly a third of all people in hospital have the virus.”

On Monday, Covid admissions reached a record high for the third successive day in England, with 3,587 admitted. This figure did not include hospitalisations in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Oxford University's Professor James Naismith told

the *Metro* newspaper Monday, “Based on trends to date, it is very possible the UK hospital admissions will reach or even exceed 5,000 a day. I don't think that is sustainable for any long period. The worry is that if we don't bring down the cases rapidly, then 5,000 hospitalisations a day will not be the high water mark.”

In London, half of all patients being treated in hospital have COVID-19.

This week, NHS England's London medical director Vin Diwakar warned that hospitals in the capital are less than two weeks from being overwhelmed by the virus even under the “best” case scenario. Under the “worst” case scenario, reported the *Health Service Journal*, Diwakar said that London's hospitals are predicted to have a shortfall of 4,400 beds by January 19.

Speaking yesterday at the Downing Street press briefing alongside Prime Minister Boris Johnson, National Health Service England chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said, “We are seeing over 800 patients a day admitted to London hospitals with coronavirus. That is the equivalent of a new St Thomas' Hospital full of Covid patients, fully staffed, or a new University College Hospital full of coronavirus patients every day.”

As this public health catastrophe unfolds, the government's aim is to end the limited seven-week lockdown it has been forced to impose as soon as possible and fully reopen the economy. According to the Tory-supporting *Spectator*, based on an interview with Health Secretary Matt Hancock, “Covid-19 restrictions will be lifted once vulnerable people are inoculated. The government does not plan to wait until everyone has received the jab to start opening up.”



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