

UK announces 88,000 COVID cases in 24 hours as daily record broken twice

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The Omicron variant of COVID is ripping through Britain's population with extraordinary rapidity. In the last 48 hours the record number of daily COVID cases has been smashed *twice*.

On Thursday, a new record was established as infections shot up by almost another 10,000 to 88,376, a 31.4 percent rise on the week. Wednesday's 78,610 cases were already more than 10,000 up on the previous record high (68,192) set on January 8 at the pandemic reached a peak last winter.

Wednesday also saw the UK pass 11 million cases of COVID—only the fourth to country in the world to reach the tally. Omicron was detected in the UK on November 27. Two days earlier Britain had recorded its 10 millionth COVID infection. It has taken just three weeks for another million people to be infected.

Health Minister Sajid Javid revealed Monday that modellers estimate the real number of Omicron infections were as high as 200,000 that day. Other predictions forecast that the UK could soon see up to 1 million infections daily. The surge this week points to such horrific scenarios being a reality within days.

More than 16 percent of Britain's population have been infected with COVID, with only three other countries having more cases—the US, India and Brazil. The UK has a significantly smaller population, just 68.4 million. Its 160,959 cases per million of population is a higher rate than those three *and* the 18 other countries who have recorded the most cases around the globe.

Omicron achieved dominance over Delta to become the most dominant strain of COVID in London, with a population of around 10 million, earlier this week. On Wednesday, it became dominant in Manchester, at the centre of a conurbation of 3 million people.

The rapid spread of Omicron exceeds by far every

other strain. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has confirmed 11,708 cases of the mutation so far, up 1,691 on Wednesday and from just 437 cases a week ago. Asked on Thursday by MPs what the *R* (reproduction) rate of Omicron was for Britain, Dr, Susan Hopkins, UKHSA chief medical adviser replied, “very broad brush estimates of between 3 and 5 at the moment”, meaning every person infected is passing it on to between three and five others.

The UK is still reporting well over a 100 COVID deaths daily. According to the Office for National Statistics, 172,695 have died where the disease is mentioned on a death certificate. This is significantly higher than the government's tally of 146,937, which only includes deaths occurring 28 days after a positive test. Among the deaths have been those of 17 pregnant women, a 50 percent increase in maternal mortality. On Thursday, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation announced that pregnant women would be moved into a priority group to receive a vaccination.

This week the first confirmed death in the world due to Omicron was reported in Britain. While the severity of Omicron in terms of fatalities is yet to be fully determined, the science is clear that Omicron's transmissibility means the sheer number of hospitalisations must inevitably translate into an increase in COVID deaths.

Reuters reported Thursday that according to research by scientists in Hong Kong, “Compared to the earlier Delta variant, Omicron multiplies itself 70 times more quickly in tissues that line airway passages, which may facilitate person-to-person spread...”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government is doing essentially nothing to combat Omicron in continuance of its herd immunity agenda. The sole aim of the government is to protect the profits of big business.

Proposing only to “slow down Omicron’s spread” and “reduce the harm Omicron can do to us”, Johnson called on Wednesday for “building up our vaccine defences” telling everyone to “get boosted now.” A few ineffective “Plan B” measures were introduced this week, including guidance to work from home from Monday, with masks mandatory for all indoor venues except pubs and restaurants. Like these measures, the booster campaign, under conditions in which Omicron is proven to have resistance to vaccines, will do little or nothing to stop the spread of the virus, as the economy remains fully open, along with public transport networks, and schools where not a single mitigation is in place.

On Thursday, speaking at a vaccine centre in Kent, Johnson declared that a lockdown—the only measure that can stop the spread of the virus along with other required mitigation measures and a functioning track, trace and test system, which the UK doesn’t have—was not on the table. “If you want to go to an event or a party, then the sensible thing to do, if that’s a priority... is to get a test and to make sure that you’re being cautious. But we’re not saying that we want to cancel stuff, we’re not locking stuff down, and the fastest route back to normality is to get boosted.”

Despite the government doing everything to ensure mass spectator events continue, the mounting number of infections of players and staff have already forced the cancellation of 50 percent of games in soccer’s Premier League this weekend.

At the Wednesday press conference, Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said of Omicron, “This is a really serious threat at the moment. How big a threat—there are several things we don’t know, but all the things that we do know, are bad.”

No statement better sums up the government’s criminality. Only last week Whitty told everyone that the first “reality” with Omicron is “a good one”—as it was infecting the young more than anyone else!

How chilling that statement was is confirmed by Whitty’s remarks to a parliamentary committee Thursday, “I’m afraid we have to be realistic that records will be broken a lot over the next few weeks as the rates continue to go up.”

Whitty says this fully aware that 5 percent of children infected with the Omicron variant have been hospitalised in South Africa. In recent days, the results

of Johnson’s sadistic policy of keeping schools open has become clear, as absences due to COVID and hospitalisations among schoolchildren surge.

COVID has killed 119 children in Britain. According to official figures published Tuesday, 65 children were hospitalised due to COVID in England in the previous 24 hours—the worst tally since the beginning of the pandemic.

Figures collated and circulated on Twitter by Safe Ed for All (Safe Education for All) campaign group member, @TigressEllie, indicate the terrible situation in schools. On Wednesday, Tigress tweeted, “There have now been 100,068 cases since September the 1st [when the new term began in England] in Children. More than 2/3rds of Total child cases have occurred this term. Schools are not safe.” The same day she posted figures regarding school attendance on December 14: 12,000 teachers were “absent due to Covid; 10,500 other ed[ucation] staff absent due to Covid; 236,000 pupils absent due to Covid.”

None of the crimes being carried out by the Tories would have been possible without the political life-support of “constructive opposition” provided by the Labour Party and the trade unions, who have suppressed all opposition to Johnson from the working class. This week, Labour backed Johnson’s pathetic COVID measures with party leader Sir Keir Starmer declaring he did so in the “national interest”. Labour was a “patriotic party and it is our patriotic duty to vote for these measures to ensure that they go through. In doing so, we are supporting the NHS [National Health Service] and supporting our country,” i.e., the interests of the capitalist state, major corporations and the super-rich.



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