

Almost 200,000 dead as new COVID wave rips through UK population

Robert Stevens
3 July 2022

July 19 will be the first anniversary of what Conservative government Prime Minister Boris Johnson dubbed “Freedom Day”, as he tore up almost all COVID safety measures. Speaking for the ruling elite, Johnson declared that a largely vaccinated population meant that it was time to “live with COVID”.

On that date, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) more accurate record of total UK deaths where COVID is mentioned on the death certificate, 155,502 had already died due to the government’s criminal herd immunity policy. By June 17 this year almost 200,000 people (199,422) were reported dead from COVID in Britain.

As the ONS “Daily deaths with COVID-19 on the death certificate by date of death” data gives a lag in reporting of at least 11 days as it is based on death registrations, 200,000 deaths may have already been reached.

With no mitigations in place, COVID spreads without hindrance, while evolving into more dangerous variants. The latest wave of COVID is being spread by the now dominant Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5. BA.4 and BA.5 make up more than half of all new COVID cases in England.

The latest surge is part of a global wave of cases, amid a warning from the World Health Organisation that more than 100 countries have reported an increase.

In what is already the fifth COVID wave to hit Britain, infections shot up by more than a third (34 percent) with the number of people estimated affected reaching 2.3 million in the week ending June 25. This equated to one in 30 people in England, (with 56.4 million of Britain’s almost 67 million population vaccinated)—a sharp increase over the estimated 1.8 million people infected the previous week.

Sarah Crofts, ONS head of analytical outputs for the COVID-19 infection survey, said, “This rise is seen across all ages and regions of England.”

The number of cases has fuelled an increase in the seven-day average of people hospitalised for COVID. It has reached close to 7,400, a 45 percent increase over the level reached in early June. The continuation of the current trend will mean hitting the high hospitalisation levels seen during the devastating Delta wave.

For months no daily data on COVID infections and deaths have been made available by the government. On July 2, Dr. Joe Pajak, a Public Governor at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, published a tweet noting, “Reminder: in the absence of official UK #Covid data: hospital admissions increasing for weeks, hospital numbers rising for weeks, intensive care admissions rising for weeks, deaths now also rising; and today, @Join_ZOE reports infections still rising. Living with #CovidIsNotOver.”

He reported, “England 01 Jul 2022: 1,572 admissions [on 29 June]: highest in 9 weeks. 9,389 in hospital: highest in 9 weeks. 132,638 cases in 7 days: highest in 9 weeks. 219 mechanical ventilation beds: highest in 8 weeks. 473 deaths in 7 days: highest in 5 weeks.”

Every part of the UK has seen a significant increase in COVID cases in the last two weeks. The highest infection rate is presided over by Nicola Sturgeon’s Scottish National Party government. Scotland has a population of just over 5 million, but last week approaching 300,000 people (288,200) were infected with COVID. This equates to one in 18 people, up from the 250,700 infected (or one in 20) the previous week. A sharp rise was recorded in Labour Party-run Wales where 106,500 people, or one in 30, is infected, up from 68,500, or one in 45. In Northern Ireland, infections rose to an estimated 71,000 people, or one in 25, and up from 59,900 (one in 30).

Everything is being done to play down the surge. On June 24, Dr. Helen Salisbury, a BMJ columnist and member of Independent SAGE wrote of the now knighted

former deputy chief medical officer for England, Sir Jonathan Van-Tam, “Disappointed to hear Jonathan Van Tam... equating Covid with flu and saying he doesn't wear a mask.”

In pursuit of their goal of reopening the economy, the ruling elite rejected all scientific advice and lessons of the initial waves. Super-spreader events of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people have been encouraged.

Data shows that the current surge began after mass gatherings took place during the queen's jubilee weekend events last month. Among other super-spreader events are the many music festivals going ahead this summer, including Glastonbury held over five days from June 22 with at least 200,000 in attendance. Many attendees reported contracting COVID.

According to the UK-wide data released last Thursday, the highest numbers of new infections nationally are among under-18s, with 550 infections per 100,000 people. Among the 18-34 and 35-54 age groups, a festivals attending demographic, there was a marked increase in COVID cases in June, with both recording more than 400 cases per 100,000.

This weekend the Pride event went ahead in London with an estimated more than 1 million on the streets. This will be followed by enormous crowds gathering in August for the Notting Hill Carnival and at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland.

However, Professor Tim Spector, lead scientist behind the ZOE Covid Study told the *Independent*, “Events like Glastonbury will drive up cases but the question is how much do they account for. We've relaxed everything, most people don't think there's a Covid problem at the moment, most people don't wear masks, or even worry about cold-like symptoms.

“We're heading towards a quarter of a million cases a day. The question is whether it stops and comes back again, everyone is predicting an autumn wave but I don't think anyone predicted this summer wave—that's the difference. None of the modelling allowed for this, it didn't take into account the effect of BA.5 variant which is dominant now.”

The National Health Service (NHS) is already unable to cope with the backlog of people requiring treatment. In February 2020, the month before the pandemic forced the Johnson government into a first lockdown, there were 4.43 million people on a waiting list for care. Latest figures for April 2022 show 6.48 million are now waiting for treatment.

Spector warned, “Having our NHS, which already on its knees, working like it's in the middle of winter, we're getting up to 1,000 hospitalisations a day now, it's not good news, that figure is going to go up.”

In a further interview with the *Independent* July 1, he said of the BA.5 Omicron sub-variant, “This variant is particularly good at immune escape, causing an increase in reinfections in people in spite of vaccines and natural immunity, particularly over the past few weeks.

“There will definitely be disruption this summer, we know four in 100 people have this [variant] for longer than a month, and many people end up long-term sick.”

Foremost among those involved in the tearing up of every mitigation was Dr. Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency. The outcome of this savage policy cannot be concealed, with Harries telling the BBC's *Sunday Morning* programme, “It doesn't look as though that wave [BA.4 and BA.5.] has finished yet, so we would anticipate that hospital cases will rise. And it's possible, quite likely, that they will actually peak over the previous BA.2 wave.”

She added, without recommending any new safety measures, that people should still “go about their normal lives but in a ‘precautionary way’”. “The *Guardian* noted, “At its peak in April, the BA.2 wave in England hospitalised more than 2,000 people a day, making it more dangerous than the first Omicron wave in January.”

From July 7, the Department of Health and Social Care is axing special sick pay arrangements for NHS staff off work with COVID. During the pandemic the government allowed staff special sick pay if they had to isolate because of COVID, including receiving 12 months' full pay if they were suffering from Long COVID. NHS staff with Long COVID will now only receive six months' full pay and six months' half pay. NHS Employers chief executive Danny Mortimer said, “This is a sensible step given where we are now in relation to the pandemic... as we learn to live with Covid over the long term...”



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