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Europe passes 75 million COVID cases, as Omicron variant found in at least 17 countries across the continent

Europe has passed 75 million cases of COVID-19, as deaths on the continent surge towards 1.5 million.

The 75 million tally was reached last Friday, as a massive 418,190 new cases were recorded. That was the sixth time daily cases in Europe have topped 400,000, according to Our World in Data, since first passing that mark on November 24.



People wearing face masks ride a tram in downtown Lisbon, Monday, Dec. 6, 2021. (AP Photo/Armando Franca)

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In the seven days to Monday, 2,566,508 million cases were recorded across the continent, a 1 percent increase on the previous week. That there is no let-up in infections is seen in the fact that by Monday evening, with a number of high-population countries yet to publish figures, total cases had almost hit 76 million.

According to a Reuters analysis, in 2021 “Europe has reported highest daily average of 359,000 new cases in second half as compared with highest daily cases of about 241,000 a day in the first half of the year.

“It took 136 days for the European region to go from 50 million cases to 75 million, compared with 194 days it took to get from 25 to 50 million while the first 25 million cases were reported in 350 days.”

In France, where total cases stand at almost 8 million, there has been a 45 percent increase over the last seven days with almost 300,000 new infections recorded. Italy saw an increase of almost 25 percent over the same period from 82,128 to 101,267. Norway saw an increase of 36 percent, Finland 20 percent, Switzerland 19 percent, Portugal 18 percent and Ireland 10 percent.

Another 26,913 lives were lost in the week to December 5 in Europe. The weekly number of deaths has not dipped below 25,000 for nearly a month, with the dire forecast by the World Health Organization last month that up to 700,000 more people could die in the European region by next March becoming a reality.

The rise in cases and death could soon be exponential with the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, which is now present in at least 17 European countries.

On Sunday, Denmark announced that 183 known cases of Omicron had been detected, more than tripling the total number of suspected cases of the new variant reported just two days earlier.

In Britain, Boris Johnson’s murderous government has led the way in the spread of COVID throughout Europe. In an island country with a relatively small population of 68 million, over 10.5 million people have been infected (almost 14 percent of all infections in Europe). The 51,459 infections reported Monday was the third time in the last week that more than 50,000 cases have been recorded on a single day in this phase of the pandemic.

Britain's population has suffered more than 167,000 deaths and its 153,744 infections per million of population is a higher rate than the United States, India, Brazil, Russia, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Ukraine and South Africa.



People queue at a vaccination centre on Euston Road in London, Britain on December 3, 2021 (WSWS Media)

The Johnson government ditched all COVID restrictions in July, allowing the virus to spread unhindered, including in schools. On Sunday, a further 86 cases of Omicron were reported, taking the total to 246, an increase of more than 50 percent since Saturday. On Monday, another 90 cases took the official total to 336.

Scientists are warning that it is likely there are already far more cases of Omicron in circulation and that it could become the dominant variant in Britain within weeks.

On Monday, Professor Paul Hunter, from the school of medicine at the University of East Anglia, told *BBC Breakfast* that Omicron “is spreading rather more quickly than the Delta variant”. Hunter estimated that there could be 1,000 Omicron infections, which at the time of the interview was four times the number of officially confirmed cases. He added, “How it’s likely to spread in the UK is still uncertain, but I think the early signs are that it will probably spread quite quickly and probably start outcompeting Delta and become the dominant variant probably within the next weeks or a month or so at least.”

Speaking to the *Daily Mail*, Dr Simon Clarke, a microbiologist at the University of Reading, said that Omicron could be so transmissible that it could cause an increase in

coronavirus hospitalisations on a similar scale to January this year—the previous height of the pandemic in Britain. He told *MailOnline*, “It’s not uncommon for a more transmissible but less disease-causing pathogen to cause a bigger problem than a virus that is less lethal. If it infects a very large number but only hospitalises a small percentage, we could still end up with an awful lot of people in hospital.”

It was only 10 days ago that the first two cases of the Omicron variant were detected in Britain in Chelmsford and Nottingham, on November 27.

Johnson responded then by announcing only that travel restrictions would be imposed to “buy time” and the situation reviewed after three weeks. No decision would be taken on any restrictions coming into effect until December 17, by which time the main profits to be made in the busy pre-Christmas period would have been secured.

Christmas markets, festive events and bookings at restaurants and pubs are estimated to be worth over £11 billion to the UK economy.

Nothing is being done to stop the spread of the virus, despite Health Secretary Sajid Javid telling Parliament on Monday that Omicron was now present in at least 52 countries, “with 11 countries which include Romania, Mexico and Chile, all reporting their first cases this weekend.”

Confirming the rise in Omicron cases in Britain, Javid said, “This includes cases with no links to international travel so we can conclude there is now community transmission across multiple regions of England.”

The inaction of the Johnson government will see many more thousands of deaths. Javid declared that recent analysis from the UK Health Security Agency suggests that “the window between infection and infectiousness may be shorter for the Omicron variant than for the Delta variant”.

The Johnson government has been backed in the downplaying of Omicron by its official yes-men, Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty and Chief Science Officer Sir Patrick Vallance.

The *Mail* reported that “Dr Clarke”, in comments no doubt aimed at Whitty, Vallance and their ilk, “warned that scientists risked ‘whitewashing’ the dangers of Omicron and giving people ‘a false sense of security’ by peddling claims it is just a mild illness.”

How dangerous Omicron could be is evident in the fact that more than half of those infected with the variant in England had received their first two vaccine doses.

Despite the mass of evidence that schools are critical to the transmission of COVID-19, they remain open across Europe.

Data released by the UK’s Office for National Statistics on Friday found that the highest increase of the rate of infection (4.3 percent) among any age group in England was in children aged two to 11. The Johnson government has no mitigations in place to stop the spread in schools and is stepping up its persecution of parents who are keeping their children away from COVID infested classrooms.

The policy is much the same continent-wide. In Belgium, where the first case in Europe was detected, the government is only requiring schools to close a week earlier than normal before Christmas and this minimal measure is a bigger step than most countries will take.

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