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Miranda Bryant

## Coronavirus news live: Bulgaria & Ukraine set new record Covid deaths; NZ to set vaccine mandates for 40% of workforce

*Новини про коронавірус у прямому ефірі: Болгарія та Україна встановили новий рекорд смертності від Covid*

. Міністерство охорони здоров'я України на 26.10 зареєструвало рекордні 734 смертельні випадки від коронавірусу. Попередній щоденний максимум із 614 смертей був 22 жовтня. Цього тижня США додали Україну до свого списку туристичних напрямів «дуже високого» ризику.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2021/oct/26/coronavirus-news-live-african-union-to-buy-110m-moderna-vaccines-nz-to-set-vaccine-mandates-for-40-of-workforce>

**Ireland** is expected to introduce tickets for nightclubs that must be booked at least an hour in advance under new coronavirus rules, according to reports. Sky News reports that PA understands that pub and nighttime industry representatives met with government officials this morning and that the new regulations are expected to be published on Thursday when the new rules are introduced.

**41m ago** 11:50

**Covid cases in Czech Republic soar to highest levels in over half a year amid 'epidemic of the non-vaccinated'** Covid infections in the **Czech Republic** are at their highest levels in more than half a year. The health ministry said the daily case number soared to 4,262 yesterday, a rise of 1,733 on a week ago and the highest daily increase since 13 April. They predict numbers will further increase over coming days to over 300 people infected per 100,000 in a seven-day period (yesterday the figure was 217), reports the Associated Press. The health minister, Adam Vojtěch, blamed a low vaccination rate and urged more people to get the vaccine. "It has become an epidemic of the non-vaccinated, it's a fact," he said today. "A majority of new cases are not vaccinated, and a majority of those who have to be hospitalised and are in serious condition have not been vaccinated." According to figures from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, about 67% of people in the Czech Republic are fully vaccinated. The EU average is 74.5%.

**53m ago** 11:39

### **Death rate for England and Wales 13.9% higher than five-year average**

A total of 11,117 deaths were registered in **England** and **Wales** in the week ending 15 October, reports the Office for National Statistics. This was 370 more than the previous week and 13.9% higher than the five-year average. Also in the **UK**, the University of Northampton has made face masks compulsory in an attempt to "preserve face-to-face contact". The **BBC** reports that the university brought back the measure yesterday amid a national surge in Covid cases, hospital admissions and deaths. The rule will apply to all buildings except for halls of residence and

sport and activity venues. Becky Bradshaw, a university spokeswoman, said the response had been “overwhelmingly positive”.

**1h ago** 11:25

### 'Plan B' Covid restrictions could cost UK economy £18bn, leaked documents show

Five months of “plan B” coronavirus measures could cost the **UK** economy up to £18bn, according to leaked government documents. So far, Boris Johnson has declined to take on the recommendations of health leaders to bring in the restrictions to reduce the spread and ease the pressure on the NHS this autumn and winter. The papers, drawn up by the cabinet office’s coronavirus task force and the treasury and obtained by Politico, calculate the potential cost of introducing compulsory mask-wearing, vaccine passports and guidance to work from home. The analysis suggests that bringing in the measures for the winter until March would cost the economy £11-18bn. A government spokesperson said: *We knew the coming months would be challenging, which is why we set out our autumn and winter plan last month. Plan b ensures we are ready, should we need to act, to avoid an unsustainable rise in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS. The presumptions put forward here do not reflect government policy. The data does not currently show that plan b is necessary – and there is no planned five month timeline.* Hi, I’m looking after the global coronavirus blog for the next few hours. Please get in touch with any tips or suggestions: [miranda.bryant@guardian.co.uk](mailto:miranda.bryant@guardian.co.uk)

### Today so far

Eastern Europe continues to record a surge in Covid cases and deaths. **Russia** on Tuesday reported 1,106 Covid-19 deaths in the past 24 hours, its highest figure since the start of the pandemic. The daily toll has reached new records in six of the past eight days.

**Ukraine**’s health ministry registered a record 734 coronavirus-related deaths over 24 hours. The previous daily high of 614 deaths was on 22 October. The US added Ukraine to its list of “very high” risk travel destinations this week. **Bulgaria** reported record numbers of daily coronavirus deaths and infections as a fourth wave of the disease stretches the health system in the EU’s least-vaccinated member state. Coronavirus indicators are also rising in **Belgium**, pushing the government to consider re-imposing some pandemic measures that it relaxed only a few weeks ago. **Dr David Nabarro**, the WHO’s special envoy for Covid-19, said that “everybody” should be wearing masks in close confinement with other people, “including our leaders”. Asked whether UK MPs should wear masks during the budget in the House of Commons on Wednesday, Dr Nabarro told Sky News: “This virus, it is absolutely unstoppable, it gets everywhere, and so we have to do everything we possibly can to stop it.” By contrast, the UK business minister **Paul Scully** said of the government message on face masks: “I think the message is to make your decisions for yourself. It depends where you want to go to. If you want the government to be dictating to you every minute of the day. It’s a message that you can use your own initiative and make your own decisions.” **Heathrow** airport has warned that air travel may not recover to pre-Covid levels until 2026 despite improving passenger numbers in the past three months, as it reported that losses since the start of the pandemic had reached £3.4bn. Headteachers have described **the “sinister” intimidation tactics** being used by protesters against the vaccination of teenagers in UK schools. **China** reported 35 new domestic cases on Monday, as authorities continue to battle an outbreak of the Delta variant primarily centred around Inner Mongolia but which has spread to at least 11 provinces. China is one of the few countries still pursuing a zero-Covid strategy, and has again responded to the latest

outbreak with travel restrictions, stay-inside orders and other measures. After weeks of sustained calls for **Hong Kong** to relax its quarantine and border restrictions, its leader has instead announced rules are getting tougher. At her regular press conference, **Carrie Lam** announced “most” quarantine exemptions to visitors coming from both overseas and the mainland would soon be cancelled. She said only essential workers, such as truck drivers carrying goods between Hong Kong and China, would be allowed to travel without quarantining. The **African Union** is set to buy 110m doses of the **Moderna** vaccine. The White House will defer delivery of 33m doses intended for the US to facilitate the deal. **New Zealand** is announcing sweeping vaccine mandates for workers in cafes, bars, hairdressers and gyms, as the country aims for some of the world’s highest vaccination rates. Prime minister **Jacinda Ardern** said the government would also require businesses to provide paid time off to allow workers to get vaccinated. That is your lot from me, Martin Belam, today. Andrew Sparrow has [our politics live blog for today](#), which has a focus very much on preparations for the budget. Miranda Bryant will be here shortly to continue bringing you the latest coronavirus developments from the UK and the rest of the world.

**2h ago** 10:14

**Coronavirus indicators are shooting upward in Belgium, pushing the government on Tuesday to consider re-imposing some pandemic measures that it relaxed only a few weeks ago.**

Associated Press report daily infections in the nation of 11 million people increased 75% to reach 5,299 case on a daily basis last week. Hospitalisations have increased by 69% to reach 102 daily cases. Deaths have increased slightly, with an average of 13 a day. To turn around this trend, the government and regional officials are expected to decide later today to boost measures again, although stopping well short of a going into a lockdown. Indications are that authorities are looking at increased mandatory use of face masks and virus passports. The urgency is such that the meeting has been brought forward three days. The health minister, **Frank Vandenbroucke**, however, said that drastic restrictions were still out of the question. “Bars and restaurants will remain open. Kids must go to school – it’s important. But maybe we will be going back to more face masks,” he told VRT network late on Monday. Every month since July, when the legal requirement to wear face masks – along with other restrictions – ended in England, the number of mask-wearers has dropped. In [figures](#) released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) last week, 82% of adults reported they had worn a mask outside their home in the previous seven days – a drop from 86% the previous month. But that seems high to me. In my own highly unscientific survey of people coming out of a shopping centre in a south coast town centre last week, only about one in 25 were wearing a mask and overwhelmingly they tended to be older people – the most vulnerable social group. “When everyone else stopped, I stopped,” says Holly. Her friend Chantelle works in a supermarket and also hasn’t worn a mask since July. Does she mind customers not wearing masks? “Not really,” she says, “because I’m not wearing one. Doing an eight-hour shift in it was horrible.” Would they go back to wearing masks? “If we had to, then yeah, I would,” says Holly, but neither would by choice. [Read more of Emine Saner’s article here: \*\*The psychology of masks – why have so many people stopped covering their faces?\*\*](#) **Russia reports record 1,106 Covid daily death toll – sixth record in eight days** **Russia on Tuesday reported 1,106 Covid-19 deaths in the past 24 hours, the highest figure since the start of the pandemic, amid a surge in new cases that has prompted authorities to reimpose partial lockdown measures.** The daily toll

has reached new records in six of the past eight days. The state Covid-19 taskforce also reported 36,446 new infections, compared with 37,930 a day earlier. Reuters remind us that Russia will go into a nationwide workplace shutdown in the first week of November, and the capital, Moscow, will reimpose a partial lockdown from 28 October, with only essential shops such as pharmacies and supermarkets allowed to remain open. [The Moscow Times reports](#): *That brings the official death toll to 232,775 – Europe’s highest – though authorities are accused of dramatically downplaying that figure. A Moscow Times analysis of excess deaths published by the federal statistics agency Rosstat puts Russia’s total excess fatality count since the start of the pandemic at 660,000. Russia has the world’s fifth-highest total caseload of more than 8.3 million infections since the start of the pandemic, with the more infectious Delta variant and stubbornly low vaccination rates fuelling the virus’s spread since the summer. Only around 36% of Russians have been fully vaccinated despite the availability of four homegrown vaccines and several regions mandating shots for certain categories of workers.*

[3h ago](#) 09:34

This is a post that could probably equally go on this blog or Andrew Sparrow’s, but UK MPs have been urged to wear masks during the chancellor’s budget speech by a Covid-19 expert from the World Health Organization (WHO). **Dr David Nabarro**, the WHO’s special envoy for Covid-19, said that “everybody” should be wearing masks in close confinement with other people, “including our leaders”. Asked whether MPs should wear masks during the budget in the House of Commons on Wednesday, Dr Nabarro told Sky News: “This virus, it is absolutely unstoppable, it gets everywhere, and so we have to do everything we possibly can to stop it.” PA Media quote him saying: *And one of the best ways to stop it is a well-fitting surgical mask properly over your face, pushed in over your nose, covering everything, and that reduces the risk to others and the risk to you. If it works, why on earth don’t people use it? It’s not a party political issue - this virus doesn’t vote. And indeed, there’s no difference in how you deal with the virus when you vote for this party or that party. So everybody, wear masks when you are in close confinement, it’s the right, sensible, proper thing to do, and everybody should be doing it, including our leaders.*

[3h ago](#) 09:31

Andrew Sparrow has launched [our UK politics live blog for the day](#). He’s going to be preoccupied with the run-up to the Budget I’d imagine, so I’ll be keeping on with lead UK Covid lines here. **Heathrow says travel may not return to pre-Covid levels until 2026** Jillian Ambrose **Heathrow airport has warned that air travel may not recover to pre-Covid levels until 2026 despite improving passenger numbers in the past three months, as it reported that losses since the start of the pandemic had reached £3.4bn.** The airport said international travel could be “on the cusp of a recovery” but it faced a “long road ahead”. Heathrow reported its first quarter of passenger growth since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic as the loosening of restrictions begins to unleash pent-up demand. Passenger numbers in the three months to the end of September recovered to 28% of pre-pandemic levels, while cargo climbed to 90% of its levels in the equivalent period in 2019. [Read more of Jillian Ambrose’s report here: Heathrow says travel may not return to pre-Covid levels until 2026](#) **Heathrow says travel may not return to pre-Covid levels until 2026**

[3h ago](#) 09:07

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has added Ukraine to its list of “very high” risk travel destinations this week. It is the only change made this week. Last week Singapore was added to the list. There are 77 locations on the list in total, including the UK.

[4h ago](#) 08:36

**China is demanding faster and more accessible Covid-19 testing services in its latest effort to reinforce a zero-tolerance policy against the virus, even as cities scrambled to test millions in just a few days amid outbreaks.** Frequent testing, and sometimes mass testing, is standard practice in China’s containment of domestically transmitted outbreaks in the past year, but health authorities say testing services remain unsatisfactory in parts of China amid flare-ups, reports Reuters. “Small clusters and sporadic infections have occurred in some areas, exposing problems such as the unreasonable locations of nucleic acid testing agencies, inconvenient services and delays in the returning of results,” state media reported today, citing the National Health Commission (NHC). China is facing a new wave of infections, involving nearly 200 locally transmitted symptomatic cases in 12 provincial areas since 17 October. Many of those infected were from remote parts of north-west China without as much health resources as major cities. NHC said testing agencies should provide 24-hour services to the public and strive to have results within six hours for those who volunteered to be tested, according to state media reports. It previously said in September that cities with more than 5 million people should have the capacity to test everyone within three days. While China is yet to approve self-testing kits for diagnosing Covid-19, swab tests that require professional labs to process samples are widely available.

[4h ago](#) 08:18

We’ve got an interesting little interactive today from my colleagues Anna Leach and Miles Probyn which sets out to ask [why people believe Covid conspiracy theories, and wonders if folklore could hold the answer?](#)

*Researchers have mapped the web of connections underpinning coronavirus conspiracy theories, opening a new way of understanding and challenging them. Using Danish witchcraft folklore as a model, the researchers from UCLA and Berkeley analysed thousands of social media posts with an artificial intelligence tool and extracted the key people, things and relationships. The tool enabled them to piece together the underlying stories in coronavirus conspiracy theories from fragments in online posts. One discovery from the research identifies Bill Gates as the reason why conspiracy theorists connect 5G with the virus. Folklore isn’t just a model for the AI. Tangherlini, whose specialism is Danish folklore, is interested in how conspiratorial witchcraft folklore took hold in the 16th and 17th centuries and what lessons it has for today. **View the interactive here: [Why people believe Covid conspiracy theories: could folklore hold the answer?](#)***