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## Omicron Disruptions Around the World



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On Monday in the U.S where 62% of the entire population is vaccinated, 1,080,211 new COVID-19 cases were reported, a figure double of that four days prior and a new global record for a single country. On Tuesday, the U.K., France, and Australia also reached record levels, each reaching 200,000, 270,000 and 65,000 daily cases for the first time. In each country, between 71% and 77% of the entire population are fully vaccinated (having received two doses of the two-dose vaccines). Cyprus, a country of about one million with 50% fully vaccinated, reported the world's highest per capita rate for COVID-19 infections at 2,505 per 100,000 inhabitants. In India, where the vaccination rate is 44.5% fully vaccinated, each infection produces 2.69 more infections.

Among these figures, the U.S. is reporting more children being hospitalised. Last week, 672 children sick with COVID-19 were admitted to hospitals daily. About 325,000 paediatric cases of COVID-19 were reported during the week ending on 30 December. Pfizer vaccine booster shots are now approved for ages 12 and up, with a minimum of five months separation from the last dose. Children ages five and up with impaired immune systems may also receive the booster.

The U.S. has updated its quarantine guidance to alleviate short-staffing in response to the surge in infections. Although the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that people may remain infectious for up to 14 days after testing positive, people should wear masks after testing positive and self-isolate for only five days if asymptomatic, instead of the previously recommended ten days. Dr Anthony Fauci, chief medical advisor to President Joe Biden, admits this approach is based on getting 'people back to their jobs' to keep society running smoothly.

China, which has taken a 'zero COVID' approach, has confined residents of Yuzhou, a city of 1.2 million people, to their homes on Tuesday in response to three asymptomatic individuals testing positive. Yuzhou joins the city of Xian in total lockdown, where residents confined to their homes worry about stretching food supplies.

Despite Omicron being seemingly mild compared to previous SARS-CoV-2 strains, the soaring infection rates are cause for concern. Hospitals are overwhelmed, and local governments, short-staffed. In France, where hospitals are 'close to paralysis', 80% of the patients entering intensive care units are unvaccinated, prompting political discussions on mandatory vaccinations. In the U.K., among healthcare staffing gaps, Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised medical volunteers to support worst-hit areas. In contrast, with the population 71% fully vaccinated and 40% boosted, Germany is seeing 36% fewer hospitalisations than last year in January 2021, despite having an 88% higher case count.

**Sources:** [France24](#), [The Conexion](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [CNBC](#), [The Indian Express](#), [Cyprus Mail](#), [The Local](#)

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