



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on January 4, 2021

Boris Johnson Announces New U.K. Lockdowns Following Scotland and Lebanon

Worldwide, lockdowns of varying levels of severity have been tried, to little or no effect, as a means, it is alleged, of stopping the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Despite the now-obvious failure of lockdowns as a public-health response to the virus, governments around the world are rushing to implement ever-more-restrictive lockdowns.

In the U.K., Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced, on a televised appearance today, a raft of new restrictive measures. Citing a “government source,” [the Guardian reported](#) that “the chief medical officers had recommended a move to alert level 5, meaning there is a ‘material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed’ and necessitating extremely strict social distancing.” Previously, the country had been at alert level 4.



AP Images

According to *Sky News*, “The public are being asked to follow the new rules, which replace the tiers system, from this evening.” During his address announcing the new lockdown, Johnson said, “The government is once again instructing you to stay at home. You may only leave home for limited reasons permitted in law, such as to shop for essentials, to work if you absolutely cannot work from home, to exercise, to seek medical assistance, such as getting a COVID test or to escape domestic abuse.”

The [rules require the public to stay at home](#) at least through the middle of February with only five exceptions:

- To go to work if they are in key industries or cannot work from home
- To shop for food or other necessities
- To exercise once per day in a local location
- To care for vulnerable people
- To get medical care or flee from violence

Previously, [according to Sky News](#), a spokesperson from the prime minister’s office said, “The spread of the new variant of COVID-19 has led to rapidly escalating case numbers across the country.” The spokesperson continued, “The prime minister is clear that further steps must now be taken to arrest this rise and to protect the NHS and save lives.”

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In comments noted by *Sky News*, Prime Minister Johnson [warned](#) that “tough” measures were on the way.



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“If you look at the numbers there’s no question we will have to take tougher measures,” he said before announcing the lockdown details.

Johnson concluded, “I must stress at this critical moment it is so vital that people keep disciplined.”

Additional lockdown measures are also coming to Scotland. [Announced by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon](#), addressing the Scottish Parliament, she said the country was in a race against a new, fast-spreading variant of the virus.

“There have been two significant game changers in our fight against this virus,” she said. “One, the approval of vaccines, is hugely positive and offers us the way out of this pandemic. But the other — the new faster spreading variant of the virus — is a massive blow.”

She continued, “Possibly the most simple way of explaining the challenge we face right now is to compare it to a race. In one lane we have vaccines — our job is to make sure they run as fast as possible. That’s why the government will be doing everything we can to vaccinate people as quickly as possible. But in the other lane is the virus, which — as a result of this new variant — has just learned to run much faster and has most definitely picked up pace in the last couple of weeks. To ensure that the vaccine wins the race, it is essential to speed up vaccination as far as possible. But to give it the time it needs to get ahead, we must also slow the virus down.”

And that means tougher lockdowns. Because the virus is spreading faster, she concluded, “that means even tougher restrictions are necessary.”

The [lockdown restrictions in Scotland](#) include:

- People may only leave home for “essential” purposes, including travel to work, essential shopping, exercise and for care and extended household responsibilities.
- Those outside their homes must avoid crowds and stay as close to home as possible
- Those over the age of 12 may only have outdoor gatherings with a maximum of two people from two households.
- Schools are closed at least through the end of January
- Churches are closed except for broadcast services and holding funerals and weddings
- No more than 5 people may attend a wedding
- Workplaces must separate people by six and one-half feet (2 meters) in lunch areas
- Ski areas, retail showrooms, and cosmetic surgery and procedure clinics must close.

Elsewhere, in Lebanon, new restrictions are also being implemented. [According to Lebanon news portal Naharnet](#), the country’s “anti-coronavirus ministerial committee on Monday announced a general lockdown from Thursday, January 7 until February 1 with a 6pm-5am nighttime curfew.”

Naharnet also reported that Health Minister Hamad Hassan warned “that those who breach the lockdown and safety measures will face legal prosecution.”

Is this prudent? Will it work? While this may satisfy a need for politicians to feel heroic for doing something — anything — as policy these lockdowns will not likely differ in effect from earlier lockdowns. How well did those others work? Scottish Doctor Malcolm Kendrick examined data accumulated by the the European Mortality Monitoring project (EuroMOMO). [After looking at that data, Dr. Kendrick wrote](#), “So, what have I learned from euroMOMO? First that it appears to have made absolutely no difference if a country locked down hard, and early, or did not.”

As for government action against COVID overall, he writes, “I learned that all Governments are



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floundering about, all claiming to have exerted some sort of control over this disease and ignoring all evidence to the contrary. In truth, they have achieved nothing. As restrictions and lockdowns have become more severe, in many cases the number of infections has simply risen and risen, completely unaffected by anything that has been done.”

He concludes, “The official solution is, of course, more restrictions. *‘We just haven’t restricted people enough!’* Sigh. When something doesn’t work, the answer is not to keep doing it with even greater fervour. The real answer is to stop doing it and try something else instead.”



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