

# UK government defends new virus strategy; experts skeptical

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People board a bus outside Waterloo station in London, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2020, after Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a range of new restrictions to combat the rise in coronavirus cases in England, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2020. (Dominic Lipinski/PA via AP)

The British government on Wednesday defended its strategy for combatting a second wave of COVID-19 cases amid criticism that its

new slate of restrictions will not be enough to stop an exponential spread of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled the new rules—including a 10 p.m. curfew on bars and restaurants, increased use of face masks and once again encouraging people to work from home—in a televised address on Tuesday night.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the BBC that the government's approach was proportionate and enough to slow the spread of the virus as long as everyone complies with the rules.

"I think that it's a balanced approach, it's a targeted approach and, actually, one that can make sure that we preserve the [health gains](#) that we've made, prevent the virus expanding exponentially, but also keep businesses, livelihoods and society open," Raab said.

Many health experts said they did not think the government's plan would be sufficient to stop the rapid rise in new COVID-19 infections. The government's top scientific and medical advisers warned earlier this week that new cases were doubling every seven days and could lead to 200 deaths a day by early November if nothing was done to slow transmission of the virus.



Commuters at Waterloo station in London, Wednesday Sept. 23, 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson appealed Tuesday for resolve and a "spirit of togetherness" through the winter as he unveiled new restrictions on everyday life to suppress a dramatic spike in coronavirus cases. (Dominic Lipinski/PA via AP)

The dean of epidemiology and population health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, John Edmunds, compared the new restrictions to the nationwide lockdown imposed in March. The lockdown was actually a series of individual measures that closed most businesses and forced most people to stay home.

In contrast, the measures announced Tuesday are very limited and won't be enough to get the virus back under control, Edmunds said.

“We will have let the epidemic double and double and double again” until we take those broader measures,” Edmunds told the BBC. “And then we’ll have the worst of both worlds because then to slow the epidemic and bring it back down again ... will mean putting the breaks on the epidemic for a very long time, very hard.”

The other nations of the U.K.—Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—also tightened restrictions Tuesday, going further than England in some cases.



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street in London, to attend the weekly Prime Minister's Questions at the Houses of Parliament, in London, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2020. Johnson appealed Tuesday for resolve and a "spirit of togetherness" through the winter as he unveiled new restrictions on everyday life to suppress a dramatic spike in coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Matt

Dunham)

The new curbs were announced as the U.K. recorded 4,926 new confirmed [coronavirus](#) cases in 24 hours, the highest daily total since early May and four times the figure of a month ago.

Many scientists see echoes of the outbreak's path earlier in the year, when the [virus](#) spread swiftly through the country and led to Europe's deadliest outbreak. The U.K. has reported a total of 41,825 people dying within 28 days of testing positive for COVID-19.

"I think we haven't learned from our mistake back then and we're, unfortunately, about to repeat it," Edmunds said.

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