

UK's Johnson delays lockdown easing for England by 4 weeks

June 14 2021, by Pan Pylas



In this Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020 file photo, a waiter wears a face mask as people eat and drink outside restaurants in Soho, in London. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali, File

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed Monday that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed by four weeks, until July 19, as a result of the spread of the delta variant.

In a press briefing, Johnson voiced his confidence that he won't need to delay the plan to lift restrictions on social contact further, as millions more people get fully vaccinated against the virus. He said that by July 19, two-thirds of the British population will have been double-vaccinated.

"I think it is sensible to wait just a little longer," he said. "Now is the time to ease off the accelerator, because by being cautious now we have the chance in the next four weeks to save many thousands of lives by vaccinating millions more people."

Accompanying the decision to delay the easing, Johnson said the government has brought forward the date by which everyone over the age of 18 will be offered a first dose of vaccine, from the end of July to July 19.

"It's unmistakably clear the vaccines are working and the sheer scale of the vaccine roll out has made our position incomparably better than in previous waves," he said.

Under the government's plan for coming out of lockdown, all restrictions on [social contact](#) were set to be lifted next Monday. Many businesses, particularly those in hospitality and entertainment, voiced their disappointment ahead of the official announcement.



In this Monday, April 12, 2021 file photo, people carry shopping bags while others queue to enter a store on Oxford Street in London. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File

The delta variant first found in India is estimated by scientists advising the government to be between 40% and 80% more transmissible than the previous dominant strain. It now accounts for more than 90% of infections in the U.K.

When Johnson first outlined the government's four-stage plan for lifting the lockdown in England in February, he set June 21 as the earliest date

by which restrictions on people gathering would be lifted. However, he stressed at the time that the timetable was not carved in stone and that all the steps would be driven by "data not dates" and would seek to be "irreversible."

The speed at which new coronavirus infections have been rising had piled the pressure on Johnson to delay the reopening so more people can get vaccinated.

On Monday, the British government reported 7,742 new confirmed cases, one of the highest daily numbers since the end of February. Daily infections have increased threefold over the past few weeks but are still way down from the nearly 70,000 daily cases recorded in January.



In this Tuesday, March 3, 2020 file photo, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson reacts during a press conference at Downing Street on the government's coronavirus action plan in London. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Frank Augstein, Pool, File



In this Saturday, Feb. 13, 2021 file photo, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, wearing a face mask to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, visits a PPE manufacturing facility during a visit to the north east of England, in Seaton Delaval, England. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Scott Heppell, Pool, File



In this Monday, April 12, 2021 file photo, a waitress serves drinks at a cafe in the Soho area of London, as restaurants, bars and pubs can open and serve people who can be seated outside. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Alastair Grant, File



In this Monday, April 12, 2021 file photo, a customer holding his dog orders outside a restaurant in Liverpool, England. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo Jon Super, File



In this Tuesday, March 24, 2020 file photo, two people wearing masks stand at the top of a bank of escalators in London's Waterloo Station. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday June 14, 2021, that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Dunham, File



A couple wear face masks as they shelter from the sun under an umbrella, while they walk in Covent Garden, in London, Monday, June 14, 2021. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali



People sit at outside tables in Covent Garden, London, Monday, June 14, 2021. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to confirm Monday that the next planned relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in England will be delayed as a result of the spread of the delta variant first identified in India. Credit: AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali

Many blame the Conservative government for the spike in infections, saying it acted too slowly to impose the strictest quarantine requirements on everyone arriving from India, which has endured a catastrophic resurgence of the virus.

Across Europe, many countries, including France, have tightened restrictions for British travelers to prevent the delta variant from spreading. Others, like Spain, are allowing British tourists to arrive

without being required to take a test if they have been fully vaccinated.

Despite concerns about the delta variant, the U.K.'s vaccine rollout has won plaudits as one of the world's speediest and most coherent. As of Monday, around 62% of the British population had received one shot, while about 45% had got two jabs.

The rapid rollout of vaccines and a strict months-long lockdown helped drive down the number of virus-related deaths in the U.K. in recent months. Despite that, the country has recorded nearly 128,000 virus-related deaths, more than any other nation in Europe.

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