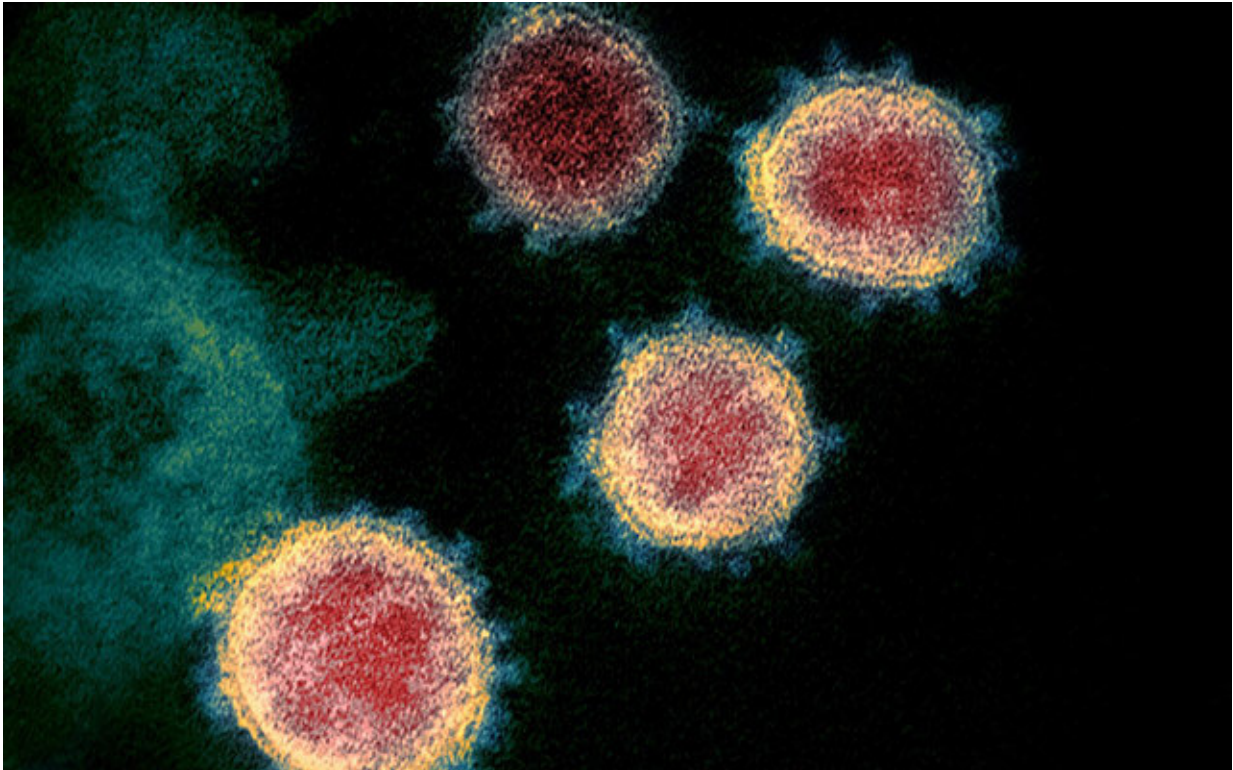


# UK points to lifting of COVID curbs

January 17 2022

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A colorized scanning electron micrograph of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Credit: NIAID

Britain's government said Sunday it hopes to lift its latest COVID restrictions for England later this month with the Omicron surge of infections apparently fading.

Last month, England switched to "Plan B" restrictions, re-imposing

guidance to work from home and a requirement for attendees to show vaccination passports on entry to larger events.

The [government](#) will lift those on January 26, but a mandate to wear [face masks](#) may continue, according to reports.

Government minister Oliver Dowden, co-chairman of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative party, said the "signs were encouraging".

"It has always been my hope that we would have the Plan B restrictions for the shortest period possible," he said on Sky News.

"I'm under no doubt the kind of burdens this puts hospitality, wider business, schools and so on under, and I want us to get rid of those if we possibly can."

After the Omicron variant emerged, Britain's daily caseload for COVID topped a record 200,000 infections in early January, but has now dropped to less than half that.

The upcoming relaxation will reportedly form part of plans by Johnson to relaunch his premiership as he battles a slew of allegations about "partygate" lockdown breaches in Downing Street.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer agreed with the need to lift the restrictions "as soon as possible" if government scientists agree, but noted the backdrop of political scandal.

"I want them to be lifted because the [medical science](#) says they should be lifted, not simply because the prime minister is in a real mess and he's desperately trying to get out of it," he told the BBC.

Many Conservative MPs are up in arms about the reports of rule-

breaking in Downing Street, and had already warned Johnson he cannot count on their support to extend COVID restrictions.

Facing restive Tory backbenchers, the [prime minister](#) rebuffed calls by some scientists to impose a full lockdown in December, and allowed sporting events to continue with capacity crowds in England.

The devolved governments of Scotland and Wales did impose bans on large crowds at sports fixtures last month, but have now lifted that rule in time for the Six Nations rugby tournament starting next month.

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