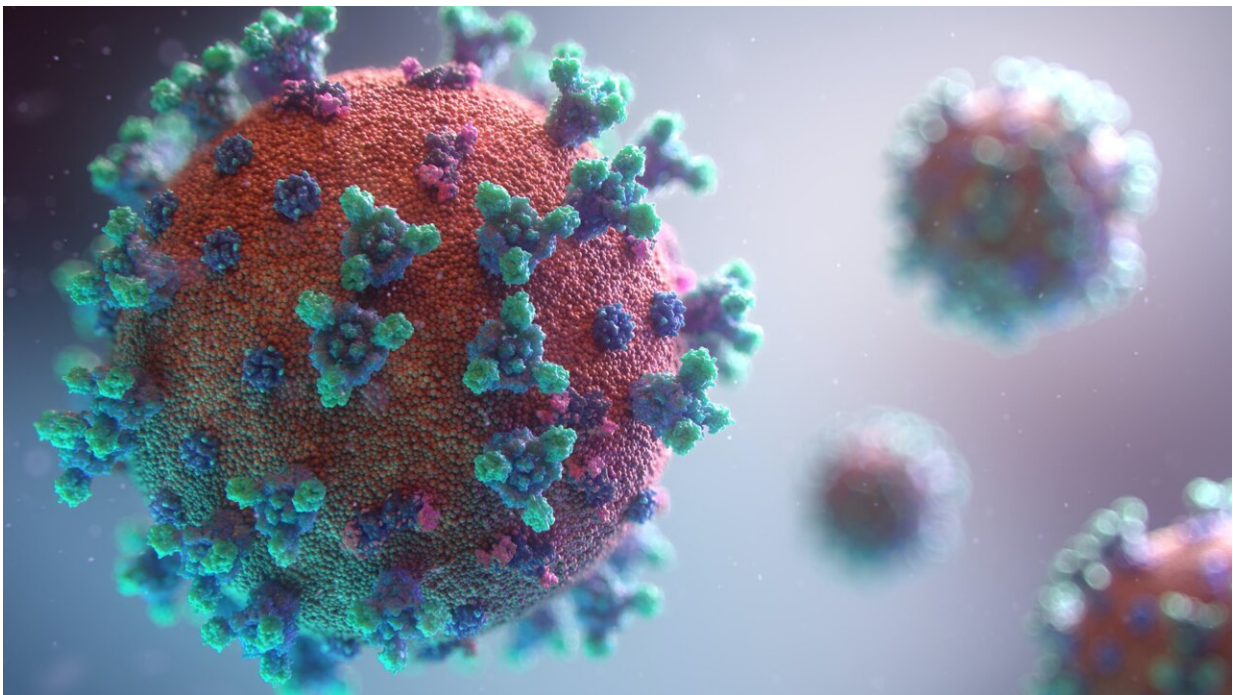


COVID-19: Modeling the shift from elimination to mitigation in Aotearoa New Zealand

February 1 2023



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For the first eighteen months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Aotearoa New Zealand focused on an elimination strategy to stamp out transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). By late 2021, the country was dealing with a major outbreak of the delta variant of COVID-19

following the government's decision to transition away from the elimination strategy and move to a strategy of mitigation under the COVID Protection Framework, or "traffic light system."

To investigate how the [traffic light system](#) might be used to limit the health burden manage the tricky transition to living with the [virus](#), researchers from COVID-19 Modeling Aotearoa developed an [epidemiological model](#) for the delta variant which included the effects of vaccination, case isolation, contact tracing and population-wide control measures.

In research released Wednesday February 1 in *Royal Society Open Science*, scientists found that while a strict combination of community restrictions would reduce the health burden caused by COVID-19, it would also result in long periods of national lockdowns. They also showed that increasing the number of border arrivals had a negligible effect on health burden once community transmission was widespread.

COVID-Modeling Aotearoa's Dr. Giorgia Vattiato said that while this work pre-dates the 2022 omicron outbreak, the results presented show the trade-offs between different levels of restrictions and viral spread in the community. "These are critical aspects to consider while planning for a mitigation strategy, because it is important to find a balance between trying to reduce the COVID health burden and minimizing disruption in people's lives."

More information: Giorgia Vattiato et al, Modelling Aotearoa New Zealand's COVID-19 protection framework and the transition away from the elimination strategy, *Royal Society Open Science* (2023). [DOI: 10.1098/rsos.220766](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.220766)

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