



Written by [James Murphy](#) on December 21, 2020

Boris Johnson Places Much of England on Strict Lockdown for Christmas

Not since the Grinch committed his burglary of Whoville has someone so utterly destroyed the Christmas season as U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson did on Saturday. Only weeks removed from a strict nationwide lockdown, during which cases of COVID-19 actually [increased](#) rather than decreased, Johnson imposed new, even tighter restrictions on London and southeastern England intended to stop a surge in coronavirus cases. The new measures will surely ruin Christmas for millions of British residents.



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A new variant of the COVID-19 virus, which is said to be up to 77-percent more transmissible, is said to be responsible for the new restrictions. According to Chris Witty, the chief medical officer of England, this new strain of COVID-19 accounted for more than 60 percent of the new cases in London in the past week.

“Given the early evidence we have on this new variant of the virus — the potential risk it poses, it is with a heavy heart that I must tell you we cannot proceed with Christmas as planned,” the Prime Minister told citizens in a televised [address](#) on Saturday.

Great Britain, which had been operating under a three-tiered system of COVID-19 precautions, unveiled a new and very strict fourth tier on Saturday, which required all non-essential shops, hairdressers, and all indoor leisure venues to close up at the end of business hours on Saturday.

Under [Tier 4](#), people who need to travel for education or childcare may still do so. Those who cannot work at home may still go to work, although non-essential businesses are supposed to be shuttered until the restrictions are lifted. Tier 4 residents must not stay overnight away from home and are forbidden from traveling abroad.

Approximately 16-20 million Britons, mostly in London and Southeast England, are affected by the new Tier 4 restrictions.

In London and anywhere else under the new Tier 4 restrictions, citizens have been ordered to stay at home for Christmas and there can be absolutely no mixing of households. Previously, a special Christmas rule had been in place that allowed up to three households to mix for Christmas celebrations from December 23-27. That rule has been rescinded for London and anywhere else under the new Tier 4 rules and reduced to Christmas Day only for the rest of the country.



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“As before there will be no relaxation on the 31st [of December], so people must not break the rules at New Year,” Johnson warned.

And it doesn’t look like the new restrictions will end when the holiday season does. U.K. Health Secretary Matt Hancock is suggesting that the new restrictions may be in place for months until a new vaccine is available for nationwide distribution. According to Hancock, the new strain of coronavirus is “out of control.”

“Cases have absolutely skyrocketed, so we’ve got a long way to go,” Hancock told Sky News. “I think it will be very difficult to keep it under control until the new vaccine has rolled out.” Referring to the new strain, Hancock added that people living in the new Tier 4 areas “should behave as if they have it.”

“I know how much emotion people invest in this time of year and how important it is, for instance, for grandparents to see their grandchildren, for families to be together. So, I know how disappointing this will be,” Johnson said in a conciliatory tone.

“But we have said throughout this pandemic that we must be and we will be guided by the science,” the prime minister said. “When the virus changes its method of attack, we must change our method of defense. And as your prime minister I sincerely believe there is no alternative open to me.”

Despite his Christmastime downer, Johnson attempted to sound upbeat about beating the virus going forward. “There is now real, real hope that we will soon be rid of this virus. And that prospect is growing with every day that passes and every vaccine dose that is administered.”

Johnson urged his citizens to get the vaccine as soon as it becomes available to them. “So please, if the NHS contacts you then get your vaccine and join the 350,000 people across the UK who have already had their first dose.”

Question: If this is a new variant of COVID-19, is it certain that the vaccine already produced will be effective against it?

“Yes, Christmas this year will be different, very different, but we must be realistic,” Johnson explained. “We’re sacrificing the chance to see our loved ones this Christmas so we have a better chance of protecting their lives, so that we can see them for future Christmases.”

As of today, more than 40 countries have banned arrivals from the U.K. over fears of the new variant of COVID-19.



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