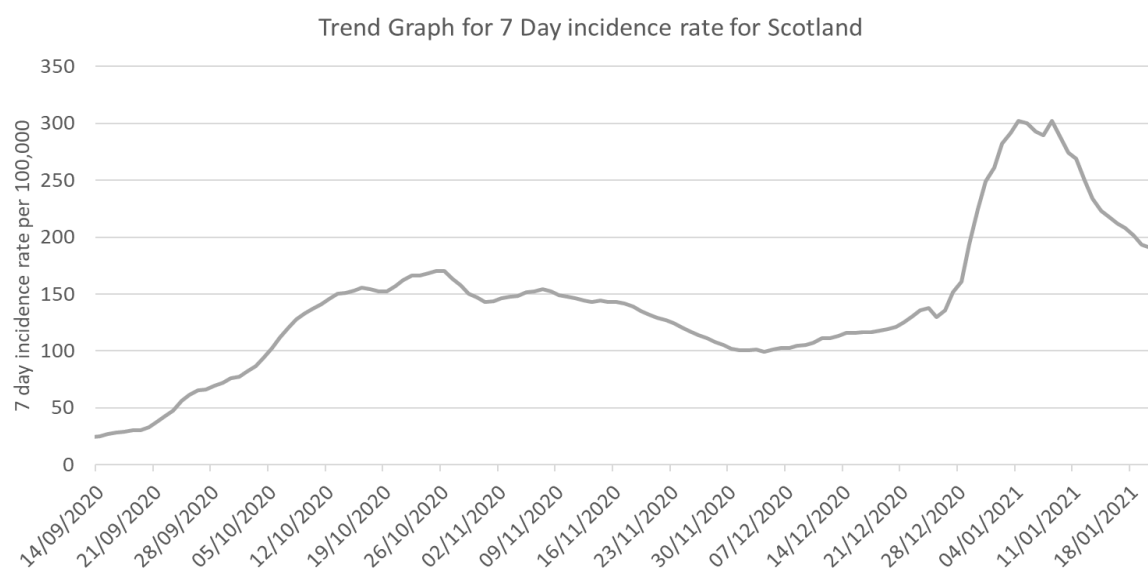


## STATE OF THE EPIDEMIC IN SCOTLAND, 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

This report summarises the data up to and including the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 on COVID-19 in Scotland. There is some positive news this week, in that R, total infections and case numbers have continued to decline. The number of people in hospital with Covid is also levelling off. Not everyone who has the virus will be tested, as many people do not experience symptoms, latest modelled estimates suggest there are currently between 3,400 and 5,700 people infected each day<sup>1</sup>. Of these an average of 1,188 average daily reported cases were reported in the 7 days to 28<sup>th</sup> January<sup>2</sup>. This number has fallen by around a half from the peak of 2,323 average daily cases in the week to 7<sup>th</sup> January. However, our current position is still at a high level with 159 weekly cases per 100,000 in the week to 25<sup>th</sup> January<sup>3</sup>. This compares to 302 weekly cases per 100,000 on 8<sup>th</sup> January and 99 weekly cases per 100,000 on 4<sup>th</sup> December. Test positivity has also declined since new stay at home measures were introduced and is at 7.2% on average over the past week. This remains above the WHO epidemiological criteria published last year which suggests a positive rate of less than 5% is one indicator that the epidemic is under control in a country<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 1: seven day incidence rate for Scotland



In a UK context, the level of infection in Scotland (0.92% people currently testing positive for Covid on 17-23<sup>rd</sup> Jan) is below England (1.87%), Wales (1.43%) and Northern Ireland (both 2.01%)<sup>5</sup>. The rate of confirmed cases is lower in Scotland than other nations, but so is the rate of testing. Weekly deaths in Scotland (1.1 per 100,000 in the week to 27<sup>th</sup> January) are lower than England (2.0 per 100,000) and Wales (1.2), but above Northern Ireland (0.8)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government: Publications – modelling the epidemic (issue no.36)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/?term=modelling&cat=filter&topics=Coronavirus%20in%20Scotland&publicationTypes=research-and-analysis&page=1>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-data-for-scotland/>

<sup>3</sup> Public Health Scotland Covid dashboard: [https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard\\_15960160643010/Overview](https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview)

<sup>4</sup> WHO epidemiological criteria

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionssurveyypilot/previousReleases>

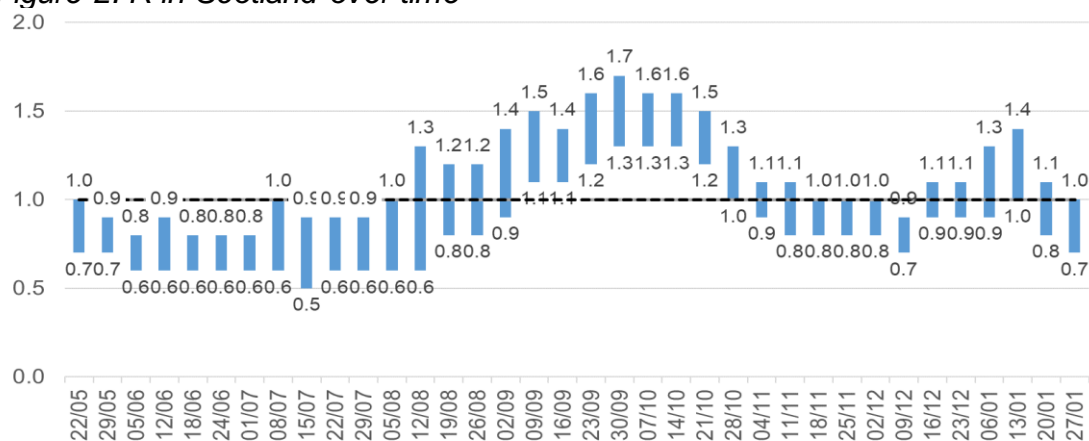
<sup>6</sup> UK Government Coronavirus in the UK dashboard: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths>

After a slight 5% decrease in confirmed cases between 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January, North Lanarkshire currently has the highest case rate, with 279 new cases being reported per 100,000 in the past week. Argyll and Bute has seen case rates increase over this period (+28%). The only other increase in cases this week was in Angus (8%); cases have fallen in all other parts of Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Over the past week the incidence rate per 100,000 has declined to below 50 for the Northern and Western Islands.

The Scottish Contact Survey measures times and settings that people mix where they could potentially spread Covid. The survey asks about situations where people may transmit Covid and how many people they met in those places. Overall, average contacts have remained at a fairly consistent level in during the week of 14 - 20th January compared to two weeks prior (3.1 average contacts) but contacts in the workplace have increased by 71% and in the school they have risen by 35%. Contacts within the home setting have decreased over this same period. The proportion of participants visiting the work place has increased from 7% to 13% whereas those visiting another's home has decreased from 38% to 20% during the week of 14 – 20th January compared to two weeks prior. In general, interactions between age groups have decreased from the level observed before the festive period (17 – 23 December)<sup>1</sup>. The Stay at Home regulations that came into effect on 5 January are having an impact on behaviour, and there is high level of compliance with the regulations. This is supported by evidence on self-reported compliance with the restrictions: on 26-28 Jan, 84% of people reported 'complete' or 'almost complete' compliance, and this number has increased since before Christmas<sup>7</sup>.

The latest R value for Scotland (published on 28<sup>th</sup> January) was between 0.7 and 1.0 with a growth rate between -5% and -1%<sup>1</sup>. This, together with evidence on contacts suggests that we're likely to see total infections and confirmed cases fall further. This lower level of contact may reduce Covid transmission and lead to fewer confirmed cases over the next week. If this rate of decline in the epidemic continues, infections would be at 40% of the current level in a month's time.

Figure 2: R in Scotland over time



<sup>7</sup> Results are taken from questions run on behalf of Scottish Government on the YouGov online omnibus survey. The sample is demographically and geographically representative of adults 18+ across Scotland, with c. 1000 responses each week. Total sample size on 26-28 January was 1022 adults. 'Complete' or 'almost complete' compliance refers to respondents who rated themselves 6 or 7 on a scale of 0-7 for the question: Thinking about ALL of the guidance from the Scottish Government on what to do and what not to do during the Coronavirus pandemic. On a scale of 1-7, where 1 is 'Not at all' and 7 is 'Completely', to what extent do you feel you are following the regulations and guidance?

Variant B.1.1.7 or VOC-202012/01 has been increasing its share of confirmed cases since it was first detected in Scotland in Mid-December, this rate of increase has slowed in recent weeks and there continues to be significant variation across Scotland. On 24/25<sup>th</sup> January 67% of cases tested via the UK Government laboratories had a profile consistent with the new variant of Covid-19, compared with 64% on 17/18<sup>th</sup> January)<sup>8</sup>. This fall in the rate of increase is likely to be because of the lockdown and in particular reduced travel across Scotland. This means that when travel is permitted that there is likely to be a significant increase in new cases as the variant becomes dominant across the rest of Scotland.

The new variant of Covid is more transmissible, this estimated increase is thought to be somewhere between 30-70%, evidence on how much more is still developing. Our modelling suggests this could be 70% more transmissible: On 04<sup>th</sup> January, the previous state of the epidemic report published modelling from three scenarios<sup>9</sup>. Projections for the scenario where new variant 70% more transmissible estimated 2,000 people in hospital for Covid by 18<sup>th</sup> January. On that date there were 1,959 people in hospital with Covid<sup>2</sup>. There is a realistic possibility that infection with VOC 202012/01 is associated with an increased risk of death compared to infection with non-VOC viruses<sup>10</sup>. The age and sex distribution of VOC 202012/01 is similar to other variants<sup>11</sup>.

Other variants of concern are being monitored, up to 25<sup>th</sup> January, there have been 3 cases detected of the Variant VOC-202012/02 (first seen in South Africa) and no cases on Variant VUI-202101/01 or Variant VOC-202101/02 (both first seen in Brazil)<sup>12</sup>. There is some concern based on laboratory analysis that these variants may, to some extent, escape immunity, and we are monitoring the emerging evidence on this.

Numbers in hospital with confirmed Covid are levelling off. 20<sup>th</sup> January was the first day with over 2,000 people in hospital with confirmed Covid and this figure dropped back below 2,000 on 28<sup>th</sup> January. The rate of growth has now slowed: people in hospital with confirmed Covid on 28<sup>th</sup> January was 1% lower than a week before. The rate of growth was 9% the week before that<sup>13</sup>. In addition, there was a fall in hospital admissions for people with Covid from a peak of 234 on 11<sup>th</sup> January to 130 on 22<sup>nd</sup> January<sup>14</sup>. Modelling suggests that the number of people in hospital for Covid is likely to plateau or increase slightly over the next few weeks<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Public Health Scotland: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-statistical-report/9-september-2020/dashboard/>

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2020/12/avirus-covid-19-state-of-the-epidemic-in-scotland-4-january-2021/documents/state-of-the-epidemic-in-scotland-4-january-2021/state-of-the-epidemic-in-scotland-4-january-2021.govscot%3Adocument/State%2Bof%2Bthe%2Bepidemic%2B-%2B4%2BJan%2B2.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> NERVTAG paper on COVID-19 variant of concern B.1.1.7 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

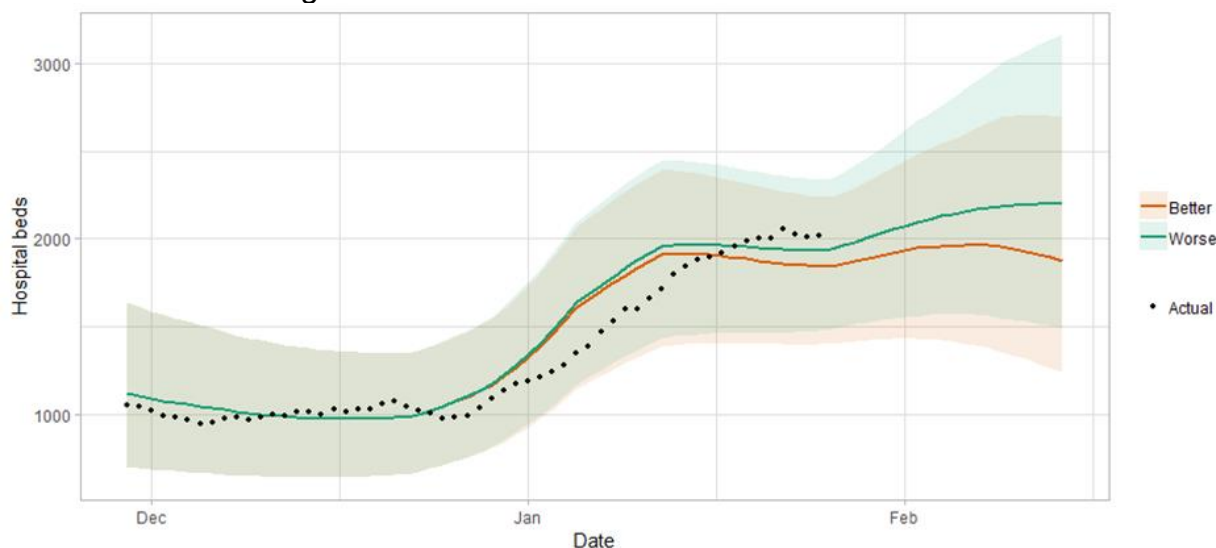
<sup>11</sup> Investigation of novel SARS-CoV-2 variant: Variant of Concern 202012/01 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>12</sup> Variants – distribution of cases data: data up to 25 January 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-trends-in-daily-data/>

<sup>14</sup> Public Health Scotland weekly trends dashboard: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-statistical-report/27-january-2021/dashboard/>

Figure 3 : Medium term projections of modelled hospital bed demand<sup>15</sup>, from Scottish Government modelling<sup>1</sup>.



There were 448 deaths registered where Covid was mentioned on the death certificate in the week to 24<sup>th</sup> January. This is a 20% increase on the week before (373 deaths), and 68% of the peak week back in April (662 deaths)<sup>16</sup>.

The proportion likely to be vaccinated for COVID-19 remains high, with just under four fifths (79%) reporting they are likely to be vaccinated when a vaccine becomes available to them. People aged 65+ are the age group most likely to be vaccinated (93% saying they are likely to be vaccinated compared with 72% among those aged 18-44)<sup>17</sup>. The first vaccines were administered on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of December and 415,269 had received their first dose by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, almost a 25% increase from the 21<sup>st</sup> January. By the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 95% of residents in older adult care homes had received their first vaccination and the initial target of vaccinating 230,000 health and social care staff has been exceeded<sup>13</sup>. It is anticipated that vaccination will reduce infection levels in the most vulnerable in the coming weeks and months.

<sup>15</sup> The logistical model developed by Scottish Government to assess implications for health care demand has been adapted to produce a medium-term prediction of infections. There are two projections which take account of vaccine roll-out (better and worse).

<sup>16</sup> National Records of Scotland: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/weekly-and-monthly-data-on-births-and-deaths/deaths-involving-coronavirus-covid-19-in-scotland>

<sup>17</sup> Total sample size on 26-28 January was 1022 adults. 'Likely' to be vaccinated refers to respondents who rated themselves 8 to 10 on a scale of 0-10 for the question: How likely or unlikely are you to be vaccinated for COVID-19 when a vaccine becomes available to you? (Please select a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means 'extremely unlikely' and 10 means 'extremely likely')