

Up to 60 PER CENT of all Covid ‘patients’ in London’s hospitals are not primarily being treated for the virus – as data shows NHS staffing absences have plunged 40% since Omicron wave began receding

Description

UK: Six in 10 hospitalised Covid ‘patients’ in [London](#) are now primarily being treated for other ailments, according to official statistics.

NHS England’s most up-to-date figures, released today, show almost 3,000 beds were occupied by patients who were infected with the virus on January 18. But just 1,200 were mainly unwell with the coronavirus, with the others treated for separate conditions.

The proportion of patients who are incidentally infected has fallen in line with explosion of Omicron, illustrating how the current wave is milder than previous surges.

And the picture is similar nationally, with just 7,600 of England’s 14,600 Covid ‘patients’ primarily being treated for something else — meaning 47.9 per cent are so-called incidental cases.

Pressure on the NHS is already receding. Daily admissions peaked towards the end of December at around half the level seen during the spike last winter.

The downward trends spurred ministers to lift the remaining curbs, with guidance to WFH ending yesterday, while Covid passes for some large events and requirements to wear masks in public are being dropped next Thursday.

In another promising sign, statistics from health service also reveal NHS staff absences due to Covid have fallen 40 per cent over the past 10 days, mirroring the overall trend in infections. Fewer than 30,000 medics were off sick because of the virus on January 16, compared to nearly 50,000 on January 5 — considered the peak of the health service’s workforce crisis.

However, the NHS warns incidental cases still put a strain on hospital resources because they have to be isolated from non-infected patients. Around 2,000 beds were out of use in recent days because of measures in place to stop the spread of the virus.

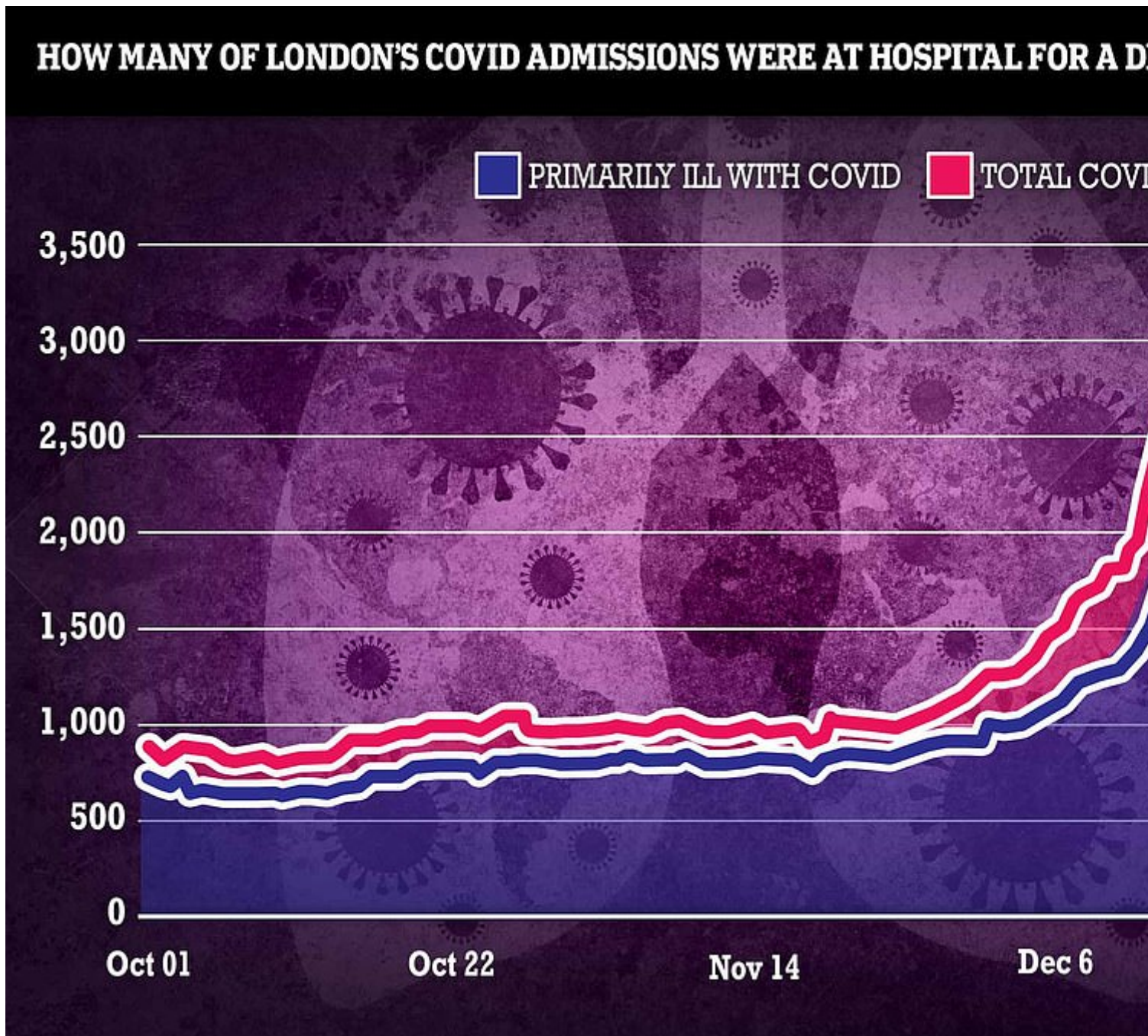
And medics warn that Covid can exacerbate other conditions that people are admitted for, even if it is not the primary illness they are receiving care for.

Professor Stephen Powis, NHS national medical director, warned health service staff have 'many tough months ahead' due to Covid, higher than usual staff absences and the pandemic-fuelled backlog which reached a record 6million in November.

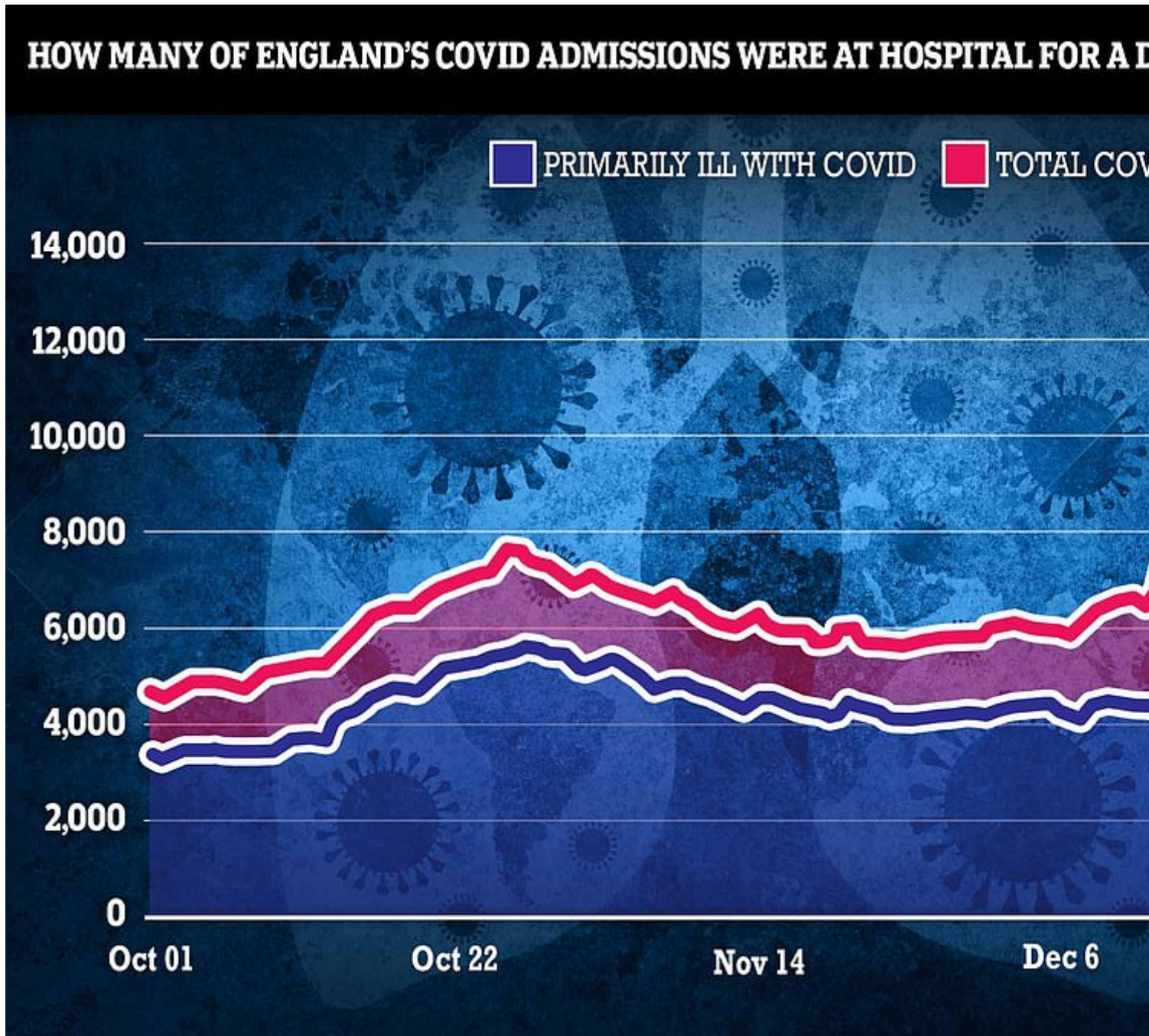
THE PROPORTION OF COVID BEDS OCCUPIED BY PATIENTS PRIMARILY



Just 40.7 per cent of Covid patients in London and 52.1 per cent of those in England were primarily receiving treatment for the virus, while the remaining patients tested positive but were admitted for other reasons. The proportion is the lowest recorded since the NHS began recording the data in October and highlights the increasing number of incidental cases due to the high prevalence of the virus in the community



NHS England data shows 2,962 patients in hospitals across London had tested positive by January 18 (pink line). But just 1,206 — 40.7 per cent — were hospitalised because they were unwell from the virus (blue line)



Of the 14,588 Covid patients in hospitals across England on January 18 (pink line), just 7,605 (blue line) were primarily receiving care because they were unwell with Covid

NHS England data shows 2,962 patients in hospitals across London on January 18 had tested positive for the virus.

But just 40.7 per cent (1,206) were primarily being treated for the virus — the lowest proportion recorded since the health service began publishing the data.

For comparison, before super-mutant Omicron took off in November, 83.8 per cent of patients who tested positive in London — the epicentre of the outbreak — were mainly ill with Covid.

UK Covid cases are down by a fifth in a week and falling in every age group except under-18s, symptom-tracking survey claims

Britain's Covid cases are down by a fifth in a week and falling in every age group except the under-18s, according to a symptom-tracking survey.

King's College London scientists estimated 144,527 people were catching the virus on any given day last week, equivalent to one in 27 now having the virus. This was down from 183,364 in the previous seven-day spell.

Every region was now seeing its outbreak shrink, they suggested, with cases only rising among the under-18s because of the 'back to school' effect.

Professor Tim Spector, who leads the study based on daily reports from 800,000 Britons, heralded today's promising statistics as 'great' but urged the nation to be sensible because cases remained high.

Reams of official statistics point to Britain's Covid outbreak now being in a downward spiral, with daily cases now having dropped week-on-week for 14 days in a row.

There are also signs that hospitals have passed the peak of their pressure, with admissions now beginning to point downwards while the number of Covid patients on wards plateaus. The number of patients in intensive care has barely risen and Covid deaths are still static.

The promising figures have given Boris Johnson the confidence to do away with 'Plan B' restrictions, lifting strenuous curbs on daily life including work from home and vaccine passports.

The Prime Minister has also announced — amid a round of upbeat messages following the partygate scandal — that the legal requirement to self-isolate after catching Covid would be scrapped on March 24.

And as part of No10's 'exit strategy' from the pandemic, free Covid lateral flow tests will be ended from July.

The proportion of true Covid cases began tumbling in the weeks after Omicron was first detected in the UK on November 27.

The figure dropped to 70 per cent on Christmas Eve, 60 per cent by New Year's Eve and 50 per cent in the first week of 2022, with incidental cases taking off as the variant spread rapidly across the country and tens of thousands infections were confirmed every day.

Hospitalisation figures in the capital sparked concern after they increased five-fold in a month. Ministers were said to be watching London's admission rates to measure whether more restrictions were needed in the run up to Christmas.

And modelling from SAGE scientists indicated that hospitalisations in England could reach 3,000 per day if extra measures beyond Plan B — work from home guidance, Covid passes and face masks in shops and on transport — were not brought in.

But UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) data shows daily admissions in England peaked at 2,370 on December 29 and are now falling, with around 1,800 admissions on January 17.

And NHS England data shows incidental cases are also trending upwards nationally as well as in London, with nearly half of Covid patients receiving care for other illnesses.

Of the 14,588 Covid patients in hospitals across England on January 18, just 7,605 (52.1 per cent) were primarily receiving care because they were unwell with Covid, the lowest rate recorded by the NHS, meaning 47.9 per cent of cases were incidental.

Before Omicron emerged, NHS medics confirmed around three-quarters of patients were admitted because they were unwell with the virus.

In another sign the Omicron wave is subsiding, the number of NHS staff off work due to the virus has dropped 40.8 per cent in less than two weeks.

Before Omicron emerged, around 12,000 NHS staff were off work per day due to the virus, accounting for one in five absences within the health service.

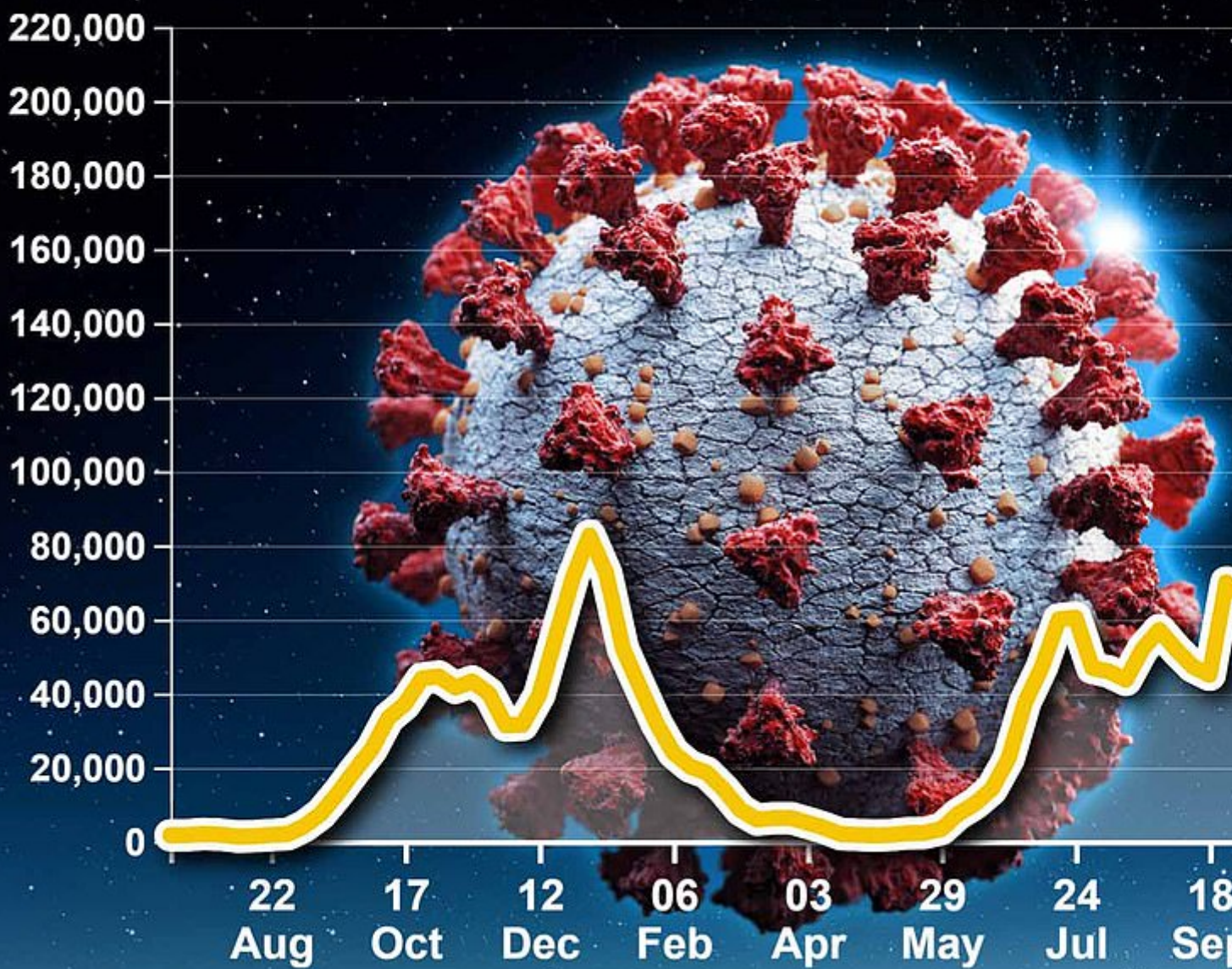
This figure skyrocketed to 49,941 on January 5 at the peak of the Omicron wave, equating to 53.4 per cent of all absences.

But as the Omicron wave has subsided — with daily infections dropping to around 93,000 per day compared to the peak of nearly 220,000 on January 4 — just 29,517 staff are off work due to Covid, accounting for 42.9 per cent of sick days.

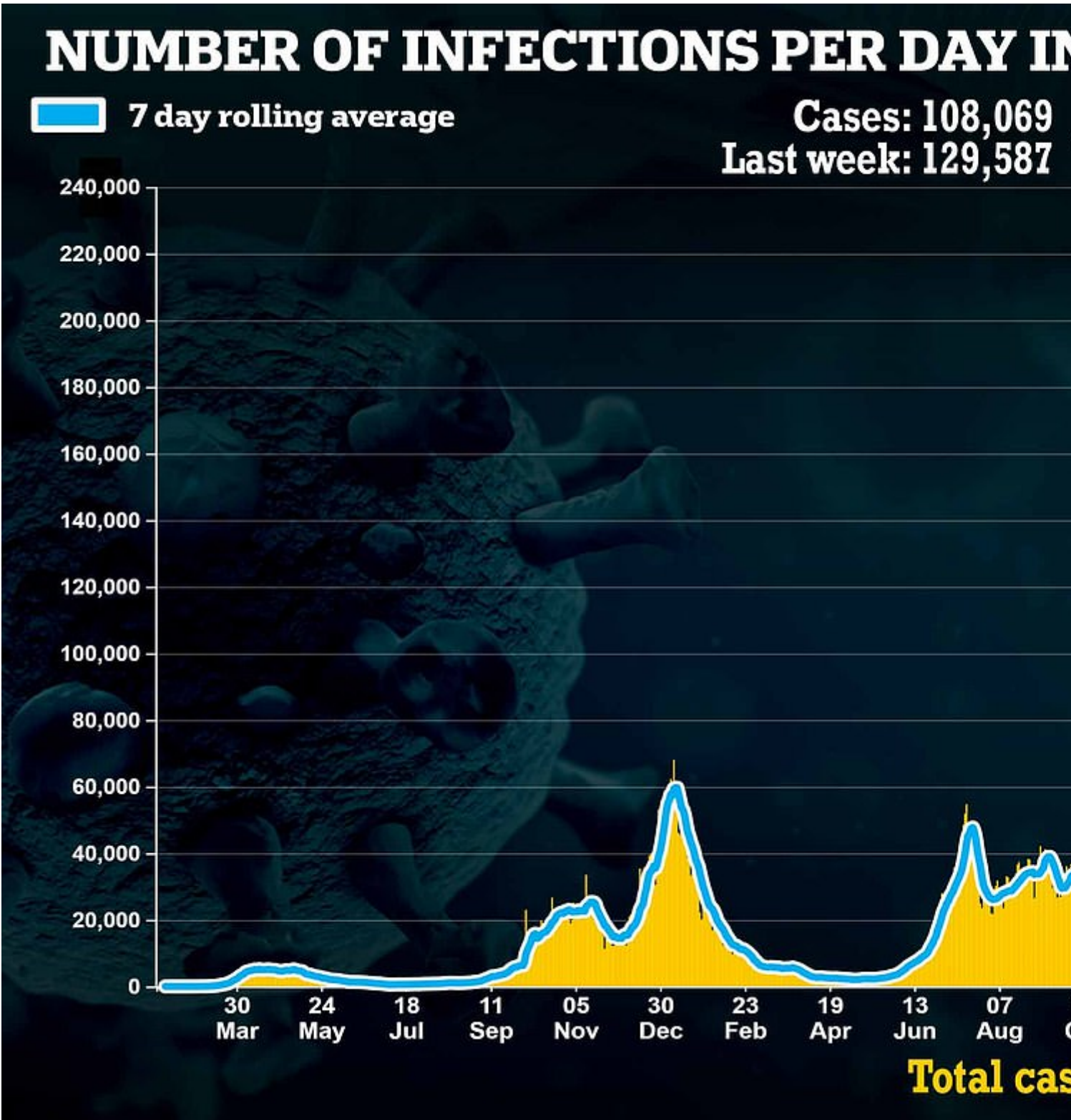
Professor Powis, NHS national medical director, said despite 'numbers are going in the right direction', NHS staff have 'many tough months ahead' due to 'competing demands'.

He said: 'While staff absences remain high and continue to increase in some parts of the country — it is good to see they have been reducing week on week.'

HOW THE UK'S COVID OUTBREAK HAS CHANGED



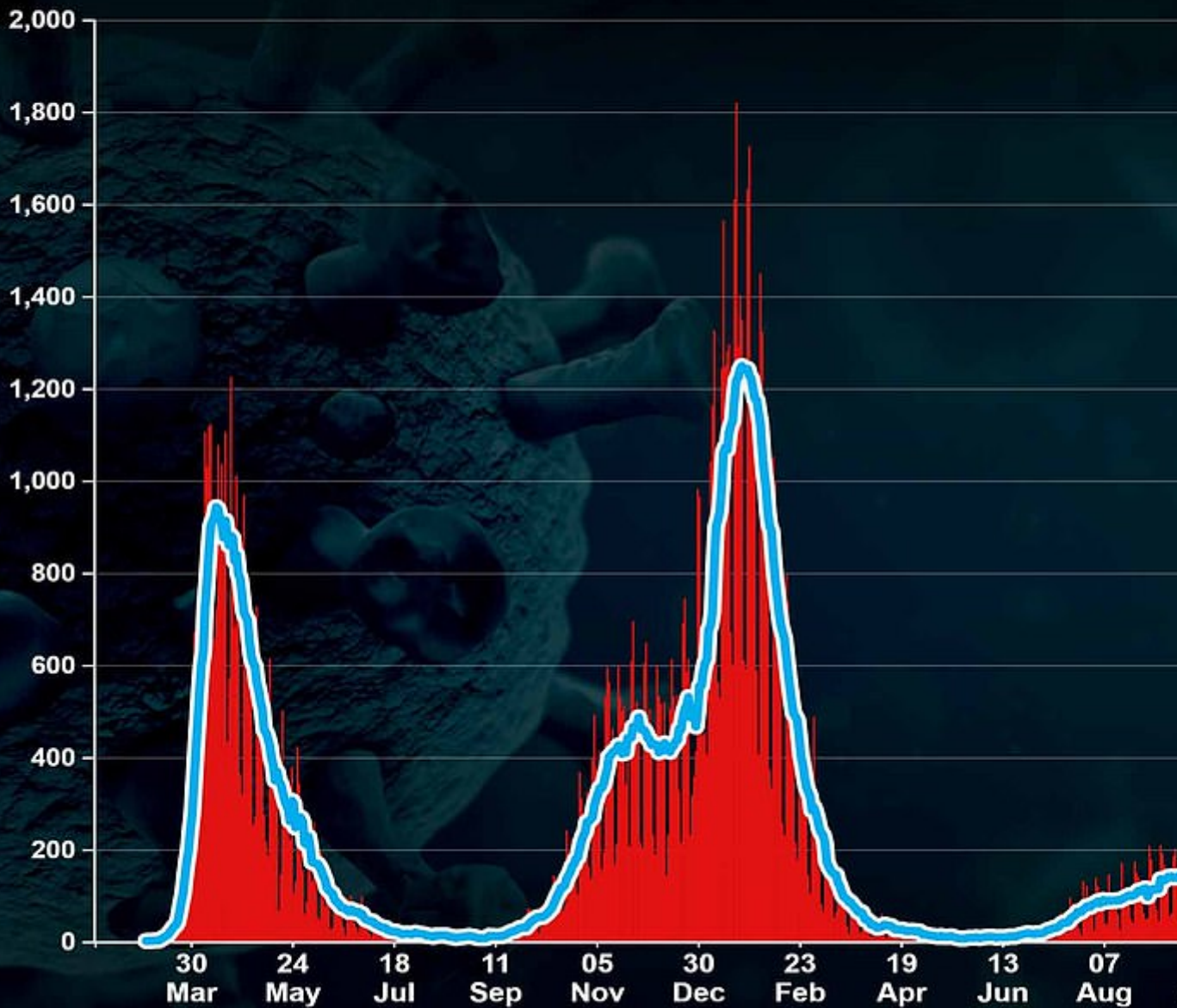
King's College London scientists estimated one in 27 people in the UK were now infected with Covid. This was down to



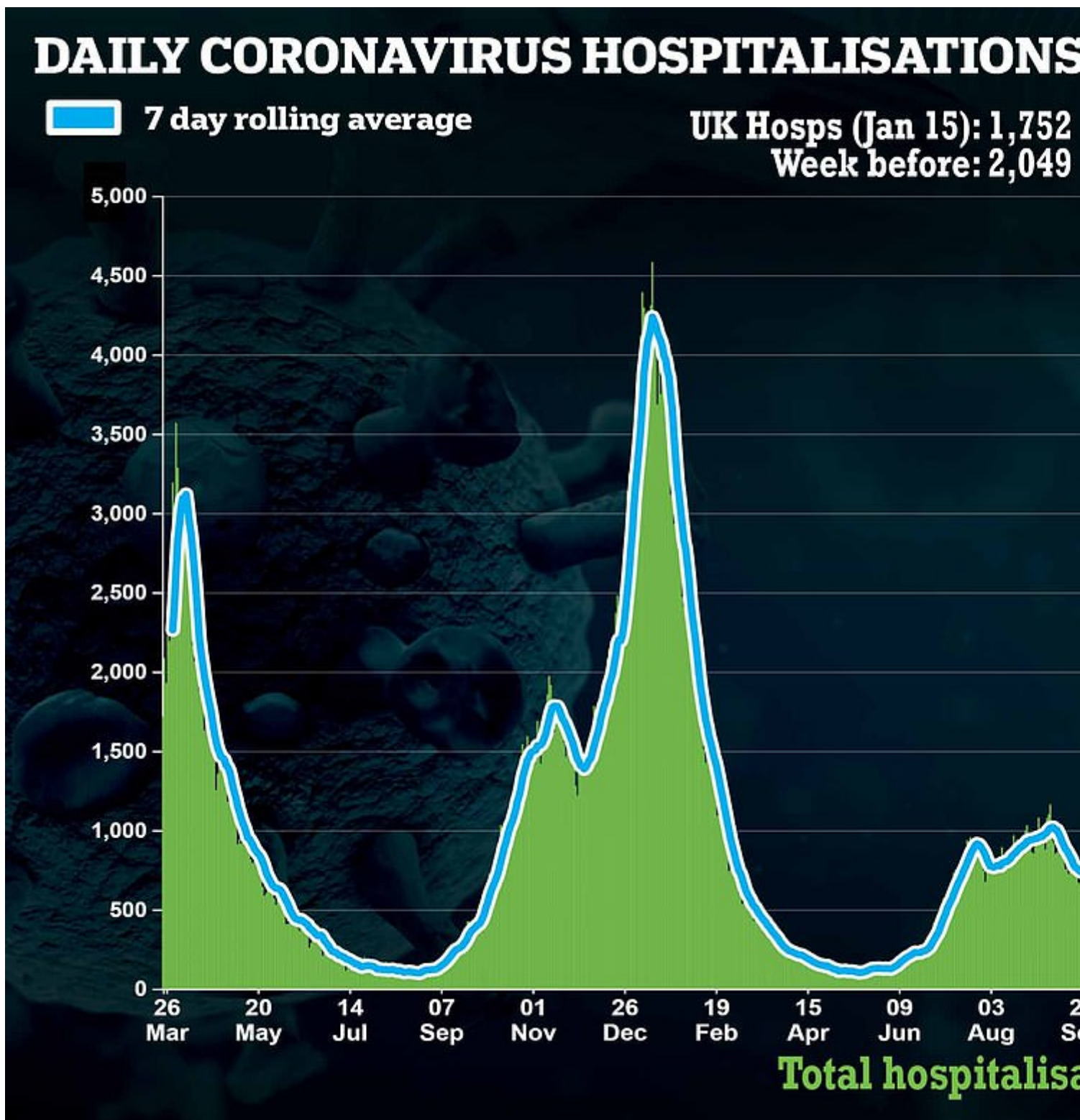
NUMBER OF DEATHS PER DAY IN

 7 day rolling average

Deaths: 359
Last week: 390



Total de



Commuters head to work as WFH is scrapped

Commuters in England headed back into offices today after Boris Johnson dramatically scrapped all

Covid Plan B restrictions – although city centres are unlikely to get back to normal for some time with some companies expected to wait months before bringing staff back in.

Road congestion levels in London were at 72 per cent in the morning rush hour between 8am and 9am today, slightly up from 71 per cent yesterday but a bigger rise on 66 per cent last Thursday, according to TomTom.

But it was more a mixed picture in other cities, with rush hour morning congestion in Birmingham, Leeds and Newcastle down compared to yesterday and last Thursday – while the figure in Manchester and Sheffield was down from yesterday but up on last Thursday.

Transport for London said Underground usage this morning to 10am increased by 8 per cent compared to last Thursday, with 1.09million entries and exits, while buses were up 3 per cent in a week with 1.19million taps.

The Prime Minister has demanded civil servants get back to the office and set an example to the country after lifting working from home restrictions yesterday – but they appear to still be avoiding going into work.

When pressed by MailOnline if staff have returned to the office, a Home Office spokesman confirmed he was still WFH. He refused to say if he has received an email from senior mandarins telling civil servants to come back to Whitehall. He added that guidance throughout the pandemic had explicitly discouraged civil servants from ‘coming into the office under any circumstances’.

The Department of Health and Social Care refused to say if staff have returned to the office. A spokesman from the FDA union representing civil servants did not know if mandarins had been instructed to come back in.

It comes as FDA general secretary Dave Penman tweeted today: ‘It’s insulting because the PM said ‘back to work’ when everyone’s continued to work hard whether from home or the office. And it’s a strange world when Tory ministers feel able to lecture private enterprise on how to run their businesses.’

‘The number of people in hospital for both Covid and non-Covid care remains high, and arrivals at A&E via ambulance increased by more than 2,000, even as the largest and fastest vaccination programme in NHS history is boosting the nation and helping to protect people from the virus.

‘Despite everything they have to manage, hardworking staff continue to provide routine care to patients, including rising numbers of routine checks, and they are determined to do more, so the public can help us by coming forward for care when they need it and getting their life saving Covid jabs.’

And Miriam Deakin, director of policy and strategy at NHS Providers, said the figures highlight ‘how intense pressures are in the health service, despite the fall in Covid cases nationally’.

Some data is ‘moving in the right direction’ but staff absences are ‘still much higher than at the start of December’ and figures for ambulance handover delays and bed occupancy show the NHS is ‘at full stretch’, she said.

‘And while the Government has announced an easing of Covid restrictions, they must continue to keep an eye on the pressures in the NHS, the scale of the challenge ahead to recover from the pandemic, and make calculations based on the future level of risk,’ Ms Deakin added.

It comes as one of the country’s top epidemiologists said infections are falling ‘rapidly’.

Professor Tim Spector, the King’s College London scientist behind the Covid symptom tracking app ZOE, said: ‘It’s great to see cases falling rapidly. In just two weeks, the number of new cases per day has fallen around 31 per cent from its peak of over 211,000 to under 145,000.’

Latest estimates from the study — based on reports from more than 800,000 Britons — show 144,527 people were catching the virus on any given day last week, down on the 183,364 who were thought to be getting infected every day in the previous seven-day spell.

Every region was now seeing its outbreak shrink, they suggested, with cases only rising among the under-18s because of the ‘back to school’ effect.

It comes after Boris Johnson yesterday lifted work from home guidance with immediate effect.

Meanwhile, face masks are no longer needed in schools from today and rules requiring the public to wear them in shops and on transport will be lifted from January 26.

However, Health Secretary Sajid Javid said he would continue to wear one for at least the next week because cases remained high.

He told BBC Breakfast: ‘Will I be wearing a face mask? Yeah, I think I probably would be in a week’s time.

‘Because prevalence is still high and there will be people there, especially if I am going to my local shop which is small and enclosed and can have quite a few people in there at one time in quite a small space, I don’t know most of those people, I think that would be sensible.

‘I think it will be sensible on the tube in London, for example – quite an enclosed space.

‘People will be asked to make their own personal judgment just as we do in fighting flu.’

Category

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