

Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance on the new variant of COVID-19 in the UK

Press release

Government Chief Science Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance comments on the new variant of COVID-19.



Commenting on the new variant of COVID-19 in the UK the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, said:

The new UK variant comprises a significant number of the our cases. It is spreading 30 to 70% more easily than the old variant. It doesn't differ in terms of age distribution to the original variant.

When we look at severity and mortality, data for patients who are in hospital with the virus suggest the outcomes for those with the original variant look the same as the new variant. However, when looking at the data for people who have tested positive, there is an indication that the rate for the new variant is higher. Although these data are currently uncertain, it does appear that this variant has increased mortality compared to the old virus, as well as increased transmission. For context, with the original variant, if you took a group of 1,000 infected men in their 60s roughly 10 would die. But with the new variant, roughly 13 or 14 of that group might be expected to die.

There is increasing evidence from studies that vaccines will still work against the UK variant.

A paper from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) on [the new coronavirus \(COVID-19\) variant B.1.1.7](#) explains this further.

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