

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

Strategy & Insights and Market Update – Friday, 14 May, 2021

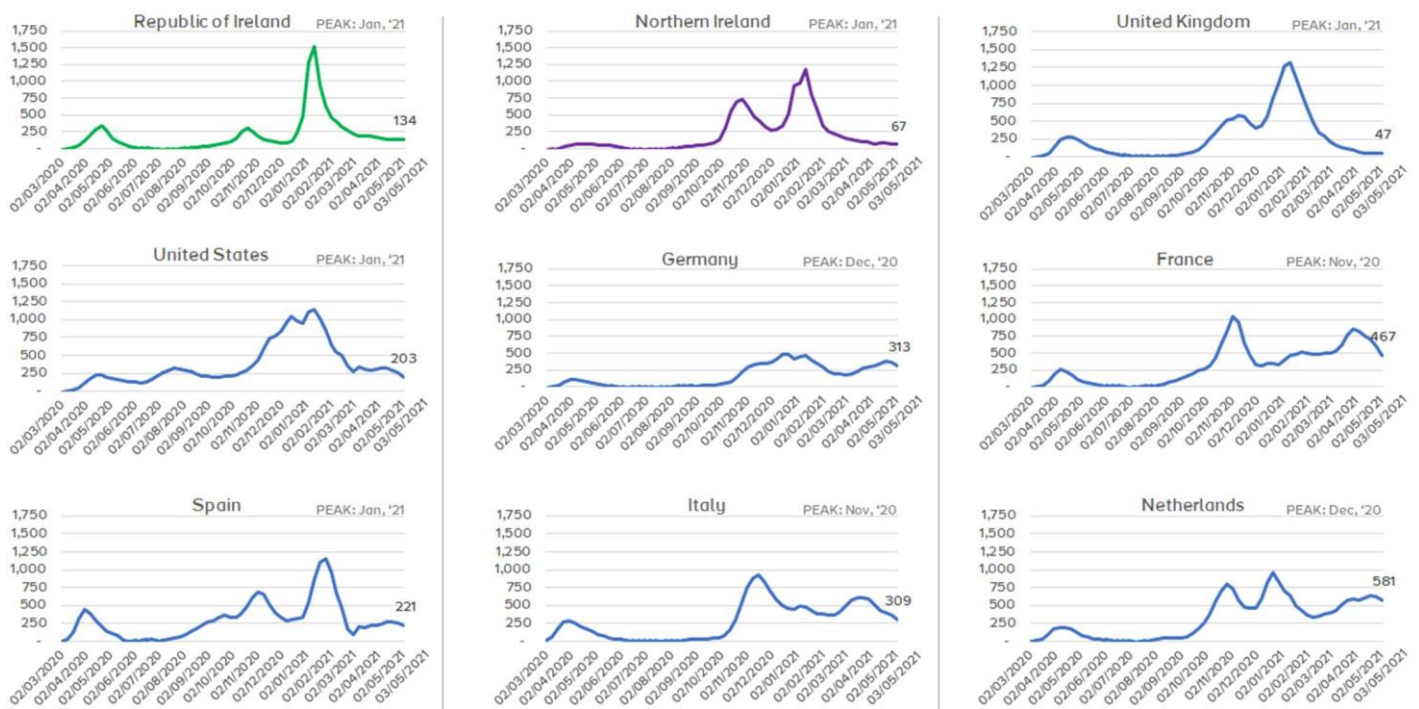
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Tourism Ireland’s Strategy & Insights (S&I) team and market colleagues have compiled Tourism Ireland’s latest market intelligence report on the impact of COVID-19 on global economies and tourism.

## Latest statistics as at 14 May

- The number of COVID-19 infections is currently 161 million worldwide, according to researchers at [Johns Hopkins University](#). Global deaths attributed to COVID-19 are now at over 3.3 million.
- The Red Cross has reported that COVID-19 cases are exploding in Asia and the Pacific, with over 5.9 million new confirmed cases in the past two weeks, more than in all other regions combined.
- Nearly 40% of all global COVID-19 deaths reported last week happened in the Americas; and nearly 80% of the region’s intensive care units are filled with patients, according to the Pan American Health Organization.
- In the UK, cases of the India variant have more than doubled in the past week, with 1,313 cases reported, up from 520 the previous week. Surge testing has begun in affected areas. Northern Ireland has reported at least 12 cases of this variant. The British Government has said this spread may potentially [impact on the lifting of restrictions](#) in England. Britain’s all-party parliamentary group on COVID-19 said the UK Government should now rethink its approach to allowing international travel.

14-day notification rate of newly reported COVID-19 cases per 100k population up to w/c 03/05/2021



Sources: ECDC, NI DOH

## Macro impact

- An independent World Health Organization commissioned [report](#) says the pandemic was preventable and criticises global leaders for a delayed response. The report also called for urgent reform of the WHO, to give it greater powers, so the world may better withstand future pandemic threats.
- Oxford Economics has raised its global economic forecasts again this month and maintains a relatively upbeat outlook on the pace of the economic recovery. It now expects global GDP to grow +6.3% this year and +4.6% in 2022, 0.2 points and 0.4 points higher than it was projecting a month ago.
- The European Commission forecasts that the EU economy will grow by +4.3% this year and by +4.4% in 2022. It has also upgraded its outlook for the Irish economy, expecting a strong, export-led rebound in the second half of 2021, forecasting GDP to grow by +4.6% (up +3.4% from its previous estimate) and by +5% next year.

## Travel and tourism

- Catherine Martin TD, the Irish Minister for Tourism, will present a report from the Recovery Oversight Group to the Government next week. The report makes several recommendations on preparing Ireland for the resumption of inbound tourism, including the removal of restrictions on UK visitors in the coming weeks.
- England will reopen to international travel from May 17, with an initial 12 countries on its green list – including Portugal, Gibraltar, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. Spain, Italy, France and Greece will remain on the amber list. The lists will be reviewed every three weeks.
- The World Travel & Tourism Council has said the UK is being too slow to allow the significant resumption of international travel and risks losing the competitive advantage it achieved by its early vaccine rollout.
- Ryanair has responded to the UK Government's green list announcement by ramping up services to Portugal. It will put on nearly 200,000 extra seats on routes from England and Scotland to Portugal from 17 May.
- Jet2, Thomas Cook and TUI have all reported huge demand for Portugal after it was placed on England's and Scotland's green list. TUI's bookings for Portugal grew by +182% and it will now deploy bigger planes to meet demand.
- Although Portugal is a designated green list country in England and Scotland, it has extended its lockdown measures until the end of May, meaning holidaymakers will need proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours to enter.
- Travel firms in the Netherlands have warned that high demand and limited supply of package holidays will force price increases of more than €200 per person this summer.
- Spain has launched a promotional campaign to entice visitors back this summer and expects foreign tourist arrivals to reach up to 45 million this year, compared to 83.5 million visitors in 2019. The country has announced that it will allow British visitors to enter the country without a negative PCR test from 20 May, as long as the UK's infection rates continue to decline.
- By the end of May, France is to start operating a traffic light system for travellers from outside the EU, based on their COVID-19 epidemiological situation.
- The tourism season has started in Greece, with 40 international incoming flights expected in 14 regional Greek airports on 14 May and another 110 on 15 May. TUI, Europe's largest holiday company, has scheduled 120 flights to Greece until the end of May. Greece will fully vaccinate all residents on its islands by the end of June. This comes as Greece saw a spike in cases, with a doubling of cases this week over last.
- Austria and Italy were removed from Ireland's mandatory hotel quarantine list on 12 May.
- Norway will extend its use of quarantine hotels, due to continuing COVID-19 instability in many countries.
- Concerts and live events could be piloted across Ireland as early as July – similar to test events run across Europe. Events are expected to involve testing and would depend on the vaccine roll-out programme, as well as case numbers and hospitalisation figures.
- Wales will reopen indoor hospitality and entertainment venues on 17 May but has decided to hold back on relaxing other lockdown restrictions, due to concerns about the spread of the Indian variant.
- Global hotel occupancy climbed to 46% in April 2021, up from 13% in April 2020, according to Amadeus' Demand360.
- London's tourist board has launched its biggest ever domestic marketing campaign – [Let's Do London](#). The £6 million project is designed to draw visitors from across the UK into central London and will involve a TV and poster campaign to promote cultural and sporting events taking place over the coming year.

## Overseas media coverage of COVID-19 about the island of Ireland

- GB media reported that travel between the UK and Ireland is likely to resume by summer. The relaxation of travel restrictions in Ireland was also mentioned, as well as the improving situation in Northern Ireland.
- In the US, media coverage is becoming more general, with ongoing focus on the gradual and phased relaxation of restrictions in Ireland, together with coverage of destinations in Europe to which Americans can travel, outlining restrictions in individual countries, including Ireland.
- German media reported on the lifting of restrictions in Ireland and Northern Ireland's reopening for tourism.
- In France, media covered the easing of restrictions, hospitality reopenings and the decline in cases in Ireland. The decision by Brittany Ferries not to accept passenger traffic before 10 June was also covered.

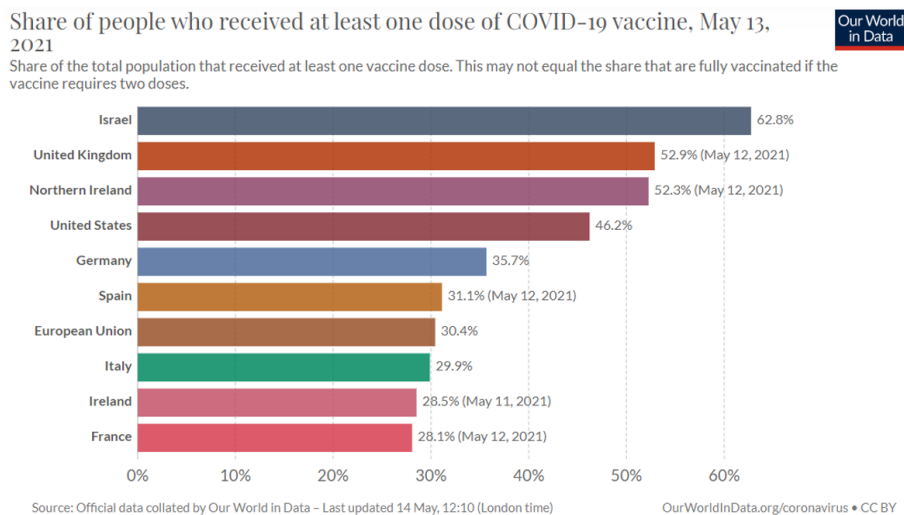
- Spanish media reported on the easing of restrictions in Ireland and highlighted that it is the only EU country that requires MHQ (mandatory hotel quarantine), noting that Spain is not on the banned list but that quarantine is still required.
- Italian media reported on Italy's removal from Ireland's MHQ list and the easing of very strict restrictions in Ireland. The positive COVID-19 situation in Northern Ireland was also mentioned.

### Update on COVID-19 vaccine passports

- All 27 EU members have agreed to the [establishment of a certificate](#) in order to restore the freedom of travel within the bloc. Details include:
  - The certificate will now be called the "EU COVID-19 certificate" instead of the Digital Green Certificate.
  - Roll-out will commence in June and implementation dates will be decided by each member state.
  - Once the countries agree on the implementation scheme, the regulations responsible for establishing the certificate will be legally bound to each EU country.
  - It will not become a de facto precondition for travelling.
  - It will remain in place for a maximum of 12 months.
  - It may be in digital or paper format, will attest that a person has been vaccinated against COVID-19, or that they have a recent negative test result, or have recovered from the infection.
  - It will store proof of any vaccine that has been approved by the EMA (European Medicines Agency). Member states should also accept entry based on certificates of any other vaccines that have been listed for emergency use by the WHO.
  - The certificate will be free of charge and MEPs are recommending that COVID-19 testing should be free and easily accessible in all citizens.
  - Countries should not introduce further restrictions once the certificate is in force.
- The Netherlands tourist board has proposed the creation of a travel bubble with Belgium and Germany, which would facilitate travel if the introduction of EU COVID-19 certificate is delayed.
- Fully vaccinated British holidaymakers will be able to prove their status to other countries using an NHS app from 17 May. The NHS is also issuing confirmation letters to those without a smartphone.

### Vaccine Supply

- [Globally](#), nearly 1.4 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to date.



- The latest data for [Ireland](#) indicates that 2 million vaccines have been administered (with over 36% of the adult population now having received at least one vaccine dose), while in Northern Ireland over 1.5 million vaccines have been administered (with over 52% of the population having received at least one dose).
- Norway has been advised by its health commission to exclude vaccines made by AstraZeneca and J&J in its inoculation programme. Meanwhile, Germany has opened access to both of these vaccines to all adults.
- Development of the Novavax vaccine is delayed and is unlikely to file for regulatory approval until Q3 2021.

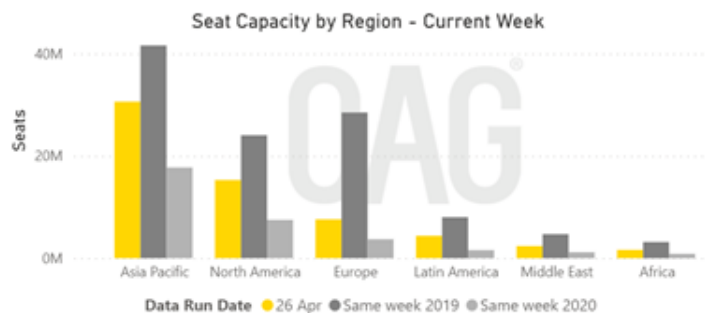
- Research by Our World in Data in France shows that more than 50% of French people are either already vaccinated or willing to be, an improvement on December, when only 20% were willing to get vaccinated.
- A new survey has found that more than a quarter of adults in the EU would be unlikely to take a vaccine, with scepticism higher in eastern Europe than in western and Nordic countries.
- Firms in the US are [exploring ways to encourage employees to get vaccinated](#), including offering incentives. McDonalds is promoting vaccination information on its coffee cups, while Lyft and Uber will offer free trips to anyone going to get vaccinated. The state of Ohio is giving away a \$1 million prize every week for five weeks in a lottery open to residents over the age of 18 who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- A growing number of American universities – including Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Yale and Notre Dame – are requiring students get a COVID-19 vaccine to attend classes during the fall semester.

### Variants and vaccine efficacy

- Latest research from Public Health England shows that two doses of the Pfizer vaccine reduce the risk of death by 97%. A single dose of the AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccine reduces a person's risk of death by 80%.
- The WHO has confirmed that the India variant shows signs of being more transmissible and is now being treated as a variant of concern globally. It has warned countries to prepare for the possibility of vaccine-evading variants and for the need to strengthen public health capacities worldwide.
- The EMA has said that vaccines using mRNA technology, such as Pfizer and Moderna, appear able to "neutralise" the India variant. Pfizer is continuing to run tests on its vaccine, to anticipate any need for adaptations to deal with other variants in the future.
- Scientists warn that the world may have to adjust to [living with COVID-19 in the long-term](#) as variants are spreading too easily and vaccinations happening too slowly for herd immunity to be reached anytime soon.

### Global Access Situation

- OAG data indicates that global capacity for this week is 43.4% below the same week in May 2019, but 98.4% above this week last year. In Europe, there are positive signals in the market, with sizeable increases in capacity in France (+20.8%) and Spain (+9.0%) compared to last week; this amounts to an additional 200,000 seats in absolute terms.
- Dublin Airport passenger traffic was down -95% in April 2021, compared with 2019. Cork and Shannon airports were down -98% and -97% respectively.
- Aer Lingus is to meet with unions to discuss the possible impact on jobs, due to the airline's ongoing losses from continuing travel bans. It lost €103 million in Q1 2021 and has warned staff that cuts could be needed should the airline lose a second summer due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Irish Ferries is accepting bookings for passengers between Dublin and Cherbourg and offering free flexibility on all bookings. Meanwhile, Brittany Ferries announced it will resume passenger sailings from 5 June.
- Heathrow Airport is considering diverting aircraft to other airports due to long border checkpoint queues. Travellers experienced waits of up to six hours in the past few months and with international travel opening next week, Heathrow fears the situation could get worse. The airport saw a -92% reduction in passengers in April, with 536,000 people travelling through, a loss of 6.3 million passengers compared to April 2019.
- British Airways has conducted a trial of an ultra-rapid COVID-19 antigen test that displays results within 25 seconds, the first airline in the world to do so. It is also trialling new technology that will enable passengers to virtually queue at check-in, by pre-booking their time slot in advance of arriving at the airport.
- American, Delta, United, Jet Blue, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic have called on the US and UK governments to reopen transatlantic travel, saying safely reopening borders was essential for economic recovery. They say levels of vaccination in each country mean these routes, flown by 22 million passengers in 2019, could be safely reopened and have asked the nations' leaders to meet before the G7 and take a decision with sufficient time for airlines to plan and restart services.



- Cruise lines are conducting mass vaccinations to get crew members vaccinated in time for a summer restart. Royal Caribbean has said that it has vaccinated 1,300 crew members in a week, following US CDC suggestions that cruise ships may be able to restart operations from the US by mid-July.

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