

New UK COVID variant is not only more infectious – it appears to be more deadly

Public Health England, Imperial College London, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of Exeter have each been trying to assess how deadly the new [UK] variant is.

[Their evidence has been assessed](#) by scientists on the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag).

The group concluded there was a “realistic possibility” that the virus had become more deadly, but this is far from certain.

Sir Patrick Vallance, the government’s chief scientific adviser, described the data so far as “not yet strong”.

He said: “I want to stress that there’s a lot of uncertainty around these numbers and we need more work to get a precise handle on it, but it obviously is a concern that this has an increase in mortality as well as an increase in transmissibility.”

Previous work suggests the new variant spreads between 30% and 70% faster than others, and there are hints it is about 30% more deadly.

For example, with 1,000 60-year-olds infected with the old variant, 10 of them might be expected to die. But this rises to about 13 with the new variant.

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The Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine are both expected to work against the variant that emerged in the UK.

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