CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
Travel restrictions

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- Travellers say their Christmas plans are "up in the air", as the UK brings in extra pre-departure tests for arrivals from Tuesday
- Nigeria criticises the UK's decision to add it to the red list - describing the restrictions on African countries are "travel apartheid"

There has been some criticism that the travel
South African anger over ‘rushed’ Covid travel restrictions

Scientists say they are being punished for transparency over their discovery of new variant
As of 6 December 2021:

45 countries from all 6 WHO Regions have reported the first detection of Omicron case(s)

While most countries report cases with recent travel-history, several countries are starting to see secondary transmission.
Most countries in the world have imposed partial or complete border closures to foreign nationals due to coronavirus outbreak

Countries with borders closed to the movement of noncitizens and nonresidents as of March 31, 2020

- Complete closure
- Partial closure

Note: Partial closure is a border closed to people arriving from other countries who are neither citizens nor residents of the destination country, including tourists and other noncitizen visitors. Partial closure also includes country situations where not all types of borders are closed (land, sea, air). Complete closure refers to a ban on anyone arriving who is not a citizen or resident of the destination country, with some possible exceptions such as scientists, diplomats, airline crews and humanitarian personnel.


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**A**

1. Estimate prevalence in departure countries → Estimate number of imported cases → Calculate risk rating: the ratio of imported cases to local incidence
2. Estimate incidence in arrival countries → Average over 1 month, according to scenario

**B**

1. Risk rating greater than 1%? → No → $R_t$ estimates below 0.95? → No → $R_t$ greater than 1.05? → No → Travel restrictions could have a substantial impact on controlling epidemics
2. Risk rating greater than 1%? → Yes → Travel restrictions could have a substantial impact on controlling epidemics
3. $R_t$ estimates below 0.95? → Yes → Effect of travel restrictions could be minimal because of low onward transmission
4. $R_t$ greater than 1.05? → Yes → Effect of travel restrictions could be minimal because imported cases add little to local transmission
The six strategies are explored (Fig. 2) as follows:

1. No screening—entry is allowed for all incoming travellers from the source country,

2. Screening of all incoming travellers on arrival and 7-day isolation for test-positive travellers, with release into the community only with a negative test thereafter,

3. Screening with 14-day isolation of test-positives followed by a negative test,

4. No screening of travellers but a 7-day mandatory quarantine for all,

5. No screening but 14 days of quarantine and

6. Screening of all passengers and entry prohibited for those testing positive.

(1) counterfactual=reference point

(2) 90.1% reduction

(3) 91.7% reduction

(4) 55.4% reduction

(5) 91.2% reduction

(6) 77.2% reduction
What does WHO say about travel bans and travel restrictions?

6. EXTENDED: Continue a risk-based approach to facilitate international travel and share information with WHO on use of travel measures and their public health rationale. In accordance with the IHR, measures (e.g., masking, testing, isolation/quarantine, and vaccination) should be based on risk assessments, consider local circumstances, and avoid placing the financial burden on international travellers in accordance with Article 40 of the IHR. Link to WHO guidance

7. EXTENDED: Do NOT require proof of vaccination against COVID-19 for international travel as the only pathway or condition permitting international travel given limited global access and inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. State Parties should consider a risk-based approach to the facilitation of international travel by lifting or modifying measures, such as testing and/or quarantine requirements, when appropriate, in accordance with the WHO guidance. Link to WHO interim position paper and Link to WHO guidance
What does Omicron mean for international travel?

Pre-departure testing and possibly even arrival testing (at day 2-3) for all travellers including vaccinated travellers, until we have more evidence on the impact on vaccines and the epidemic

No quarantine

No travel bans
Why is it essential to coordinate COVID-19 measures?

Ensure freedom of movement

Increase transparency for citizens and businesses

Avoid fragmentation and disruption of services

Limited to public health protection

Proportionate

Non-discriminatory (e.g. on nationality)

Respect specificities of cross-border regions and geographically isolated areas

Lifted as soon as the epidemiological situation allows it
Introduction
17:00-17.10
Prof. Dr. Carmen Faso, MCID Co-Chair
Prof. Dr. med. Nicola Low (Moderator)

Speaker presentation
17:15- Dr. Emma Hodcroft, Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, UniBern
“What is Omicron and how do we identify it?”

17:30- Prof. Dr. Volker Thiel, Institute for Virology and Immunology, Vetsuisse, UniBern
“How is Omicron different from other variants?”

17:45- PD Dr. Christian Althaus, Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, UniBern
“How well does Omicron spread compared to other variants?”

18:00- Prof. Dr. med. Annelies Wilder-Smith, Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, UniBern
“What does Omicron mean for international travel?”

18:15- Prof. Dr. Joseph Francois, World Trade Institute, UniBern
“Why and how does Omicron cause an international economic shock?”

Panel discussion
Including the speakers above, together with:

Prof. Dr. Dr. Claus Beisbart
Institute of Philosophy, UniBern

PD Dr. med. Manuela Funke-Chambour
Department for Biomedical Research, Inselspital