

GOVERNMENT

## Global apprehension grows as Omicron spurs record COVID-19 cases

December 20, 2021



*Omicron is the new and highly mutated COVID-19 variant. Image credit: Shutterstock*

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to maintain international attention as the Omicron variant brings forth record-breaking case numbers and apprehension.

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Concern over growing cases due to the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus is growing rampantly, as [ABC News](#) reports that the United States is now averaging more than 125,000 new cases each day which is nearly double the average from late October. The luxury industry is also preparing for continued ripple effects, reflected in stock impacts, travel restrictions and general closures.

### Omicron effect

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 433 points, 1.23 percent, on Dec. 20, ostensibly due to investor concern that rising Omicron cases would stall economic growth and foster inflation.

Several countries and regions are beginning to reinstate travel restrictions as a response to the spread of Omicron. Israel is banning citizens from traveling to the U.S. or Canada, while the Netherlands has reimposed a lockdown with all restaurants, bars and shops closed until mid-January.



*This month, Boris Johnson, prime minister of the United Kingdom, announced new policies in response to rising Omicron numbers. Image credit: 10 Downing Street*

The United Kingdom recorded 91,743 new COVID-19 cases on Dec. 20, its second-highest count since the beginning of the pandemic.

Cities across the U.S. are responding also to rising numbers, as New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said he expects cases to increase in the next few weeks, imploring President Joe Biden to invoke the Defense Production Act to provide supplies of kits and treatments to those across the country.

As of Dec. 10, New York Governor Kathy Hochul has also implemented a mask mandate, requiring masks to be worn in all indoor public places unless businesses or venues implement a vaccine requirement.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser has declared a state of emergency and reinstated the city-wide mask order that she had previously lifted on Nov. 22. The news comes as the capital has recently been experiencing its highest COVID-19 case count since the beginning of the pandemic.

Aboard the Royal Caribbean's Symphony of Seas cruise ship, at least 48 passengers many of whom were reportedly vaccinated have tested positive for COVID-19, news that may leave luxury travel and hospitality brands in a precarious position in convincing travelers to embark on journeys in the coming months.

Protests against restrictions such as mask mandates and vaccination policies continue worldwide, leaving businesses in a challenging position to both assuage possible consumer fear regarding the safety of in-person shopping while enforcing government-sanctioned procedures to unwilling shoppers.

At the beginning of December, British luxury trade association Walpole stated it believed that new restrictions stemming from the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus would not discourage luxury shoppers this holiday season ([see story](#)).

Stateside, a U.S. Court of Appeals has lifted the stay for the federal government's employer vaccine mandates. The National Retail Federation had joined multiple trade organizations in suing over the requirements, citing burdensome policies ([see story](#)).

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