

The Omicron XE Variant



Omicron XE is spreading in the U.K. and elsewhere. This variant comes as the U.K. faces a surge of new COVID-19 infections. Currently, 1 in 14 people (6.9% of the population) are estimated to test positive for COVID-19.

This variant is a hybrid of Omicron: BA.1 (the original Omicron strain) and BA.2 (the more infectious and dominant strain in many countries). The resulting variant was originally detected in England on 19 January 2022. It is estimated to be over 10% more transmissible than BA.2, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Omicron XE cases have been described in the U.S., Canada, India, Japan, Thailand, and Israel.

Currently, Omicron XE's ability to cause severe disease or evade immunity beyond that of the previous Omicron strains is unknown. However, based on the strain's lineage, it can be inferred like BA.1 and BA.2, it can evade some of the monoclonal antibody therapies and that current vaccination strategies will continue to protect against severe disease.

Sources: [UK Health Security Agency](#), [UK Office of National Statistics](#), [WHO](#), [TIME](#)

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Published on : Thu, 14 Apr 2022