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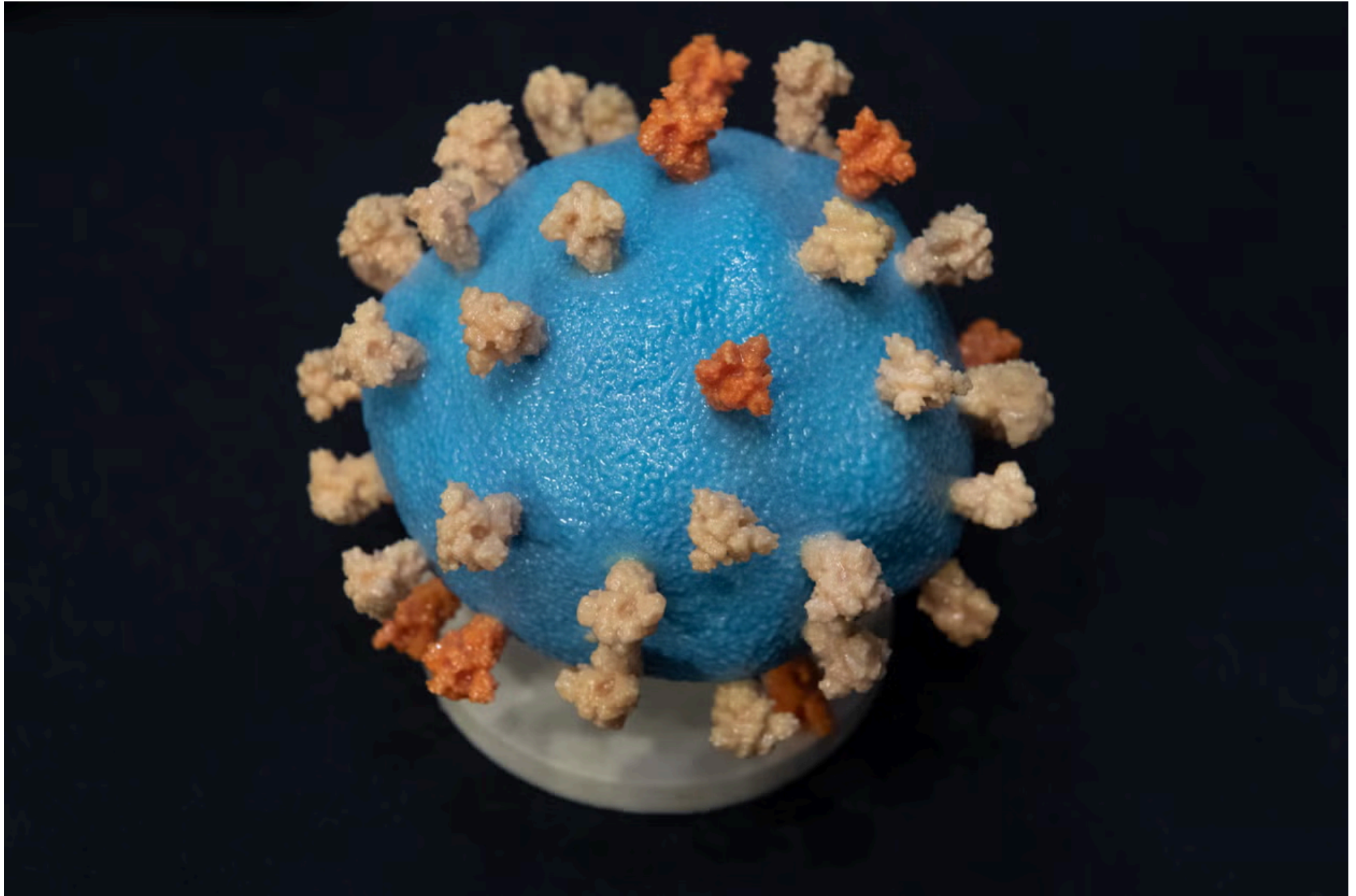
News &gt; Health

# Mapped: Cases of new Covid variant XEC spread across Europe

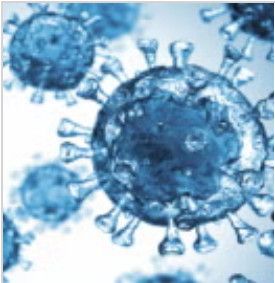
he strain has now been detected in at least 29 countries and 24 US states

Jabed Ahmed, Albert Toth • 1 day ago • Comments





Model of Covid-19 coronavirus (*Getty Images*)



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A new Covid variant has been reported across the globe with fears it will soon be the dominant strain of the illness.

Cases of the XEC variant, first detected in Germany in June, have since been reported in the UK, United States, Denmark and other countries. Experts say the strain is now “taking charge” and will likely continue to spread globally.

Researchers predicted in August this variant could take anywhere from few weeks to a couple months to take off and spread more rapidly.

The strain has now been detected in at least 29 countries and 24 US states.

XEC, a sublineage of the omicron variant, was first reported in Berlin, Germany, in June and is now spreading “quite rapidly” across Europe, North America and Asia, according to Covid data analyst Mike Honey.

The Czech Republic had the highest prevalence of the variant as 16 per cent of Covid case samples from the country contained XEC.

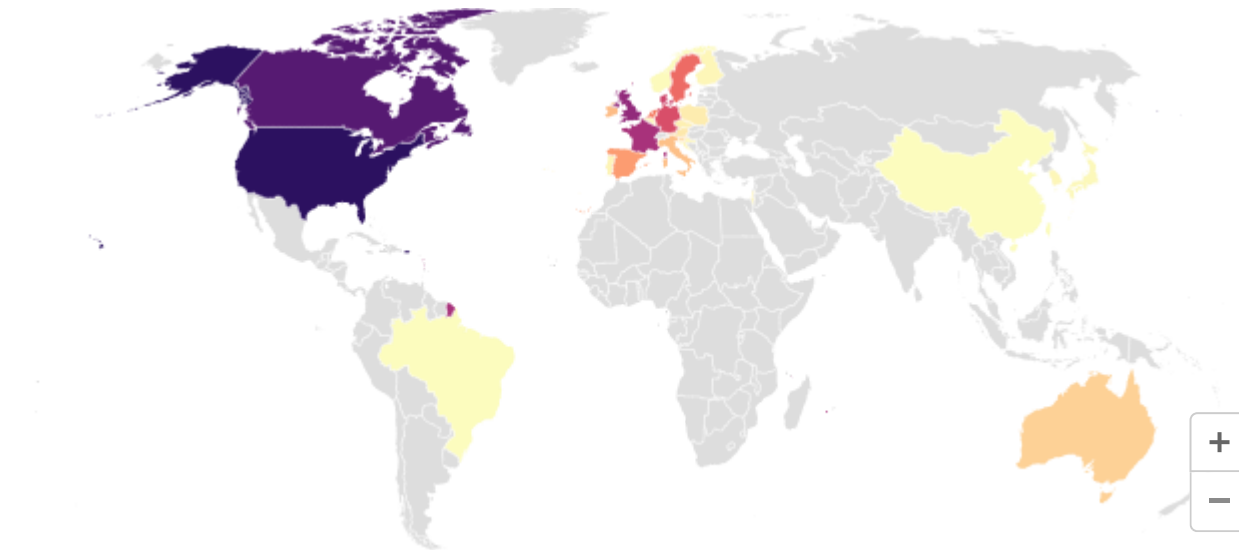
## XEC global prevalence

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There have been 1,115 XEC cases detected worldwide



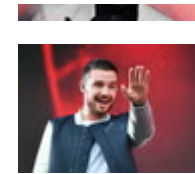
Data up to 28 September

Map: Javed Ahmed • Source: [Outbreak.info genomic reports: scalable and dynamic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 variants and mutations](#)



The strain, a combination of the KS.1.1 and KP.3.3 variants, presents symptoms similar to those of other Covid variants including tiredness, headaches, a sore throat and high temperatures. However, researchers have called for monitoring the XEC variant more closely to better understand its symptoms.

Prof Francois Balloux, Director of the Genetics Institute at University College London told the BBC that the XEC variant is more contagious but that vaccines should still offer good protection as it is from the Omicron



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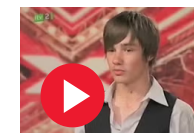


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family. He says it is possible XEC will become the dominant subvariant over the winter though.

KS.1.1 is a type of what's commonly called a FLiRT variant.

It is characterised by mutations in the building block molecules phenylalanine (F) altered to leucine (L), and arginine <sup>®</sup> to threonine (T) on the spike protein that the virus uses to attach to human cells.

The second omicron subvariant KP.3.3 belongs to the category FLuQE where the amino acid glutamine (Q) is mutated to glutamic acid (E) on the spike protein, making its binding to human cells more effective.

As the novel coronavirus continues to evolve, data suggests XEC is growing steadily each day with an advantage over previously known subvariants.

The strain now accounts for 9.35 per cent of all UK cases. Here's the areas that have had the most cases of any strain since September:

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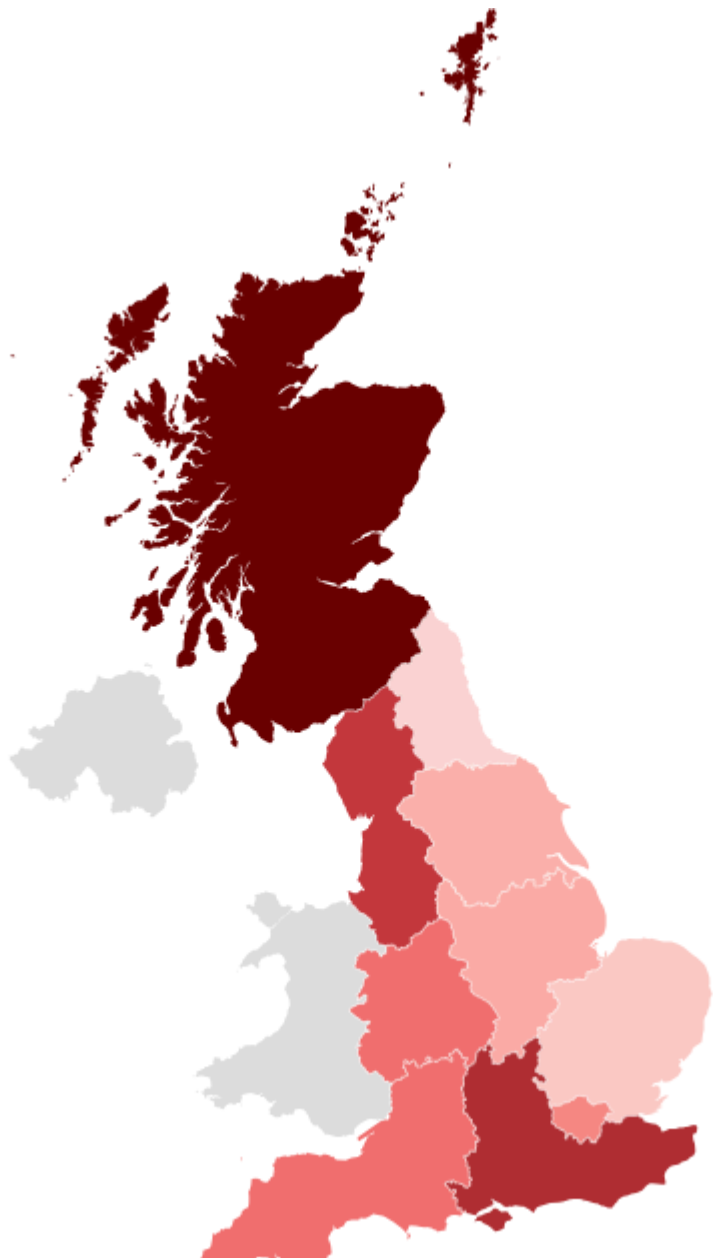
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# Covid cases by UK region since September 2024



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*Note: Accurate up to mid-October*

Map: Albert Toth • Source: NHS/PHS • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Its symptoms are similar to those of previous Covid variants, including fever, sore throat, cough, loss of sense of smell, loss of appetite, and body aches.

But since it is still only a sub-family of the same omicron lineage, experts say keeping up to date with vaccines and booster shots would offer sufficient protection against severe illness and hospitalisation.

The US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention also advises people to practise good hygiene and to take steps for cleaner air.

Researchers have called for monitoring the XEC variant more closely to better understand its symptoms.

**More about:** [Covid](#) [COVID-19](#) [Covid variant](#)



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