

1. You will hear Guardian's podcast Today in Focus on how the UK is coping with the Omicron surge. Listen only to the first 5 minutes so you can complete the gaps in the text below with an appropriate word or phrase.

TODAY IN FOCUS  
CORONAVIRUS

**Can the UK cope with the Omicron surge**

With evidence that the Omicron variant is less severe, the government is under pressure to go no 1) \_\_\_\_\_ with restrictions, but staffing shortages and a rise in admissions have led to hospitals across England declaring 'critical incidents'.

As covid-19 cases sky-rocketed in Britain, Boris Johnson alerts people to act and behave in the 2) \_\_\_\_\_, as day after day, the UK is witnessing unprecedented covid case numbers. Just to illustrate the number scenario, the PM speaks of a record of 3) \_\_\_\_\_ infected people.

**The Guardian reporter, Nosheen Iqbal**, emphasizes the number of people sick or in isolation causing 4) \_\_\_\_\_ across the Health Service and in schools. In a 5) \_\_\_\_\_ to keep the country running, many critical workers are now being promised testing, in areas from food processing, to transport to border forces. Johnson announces that from the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 6) \_\_\_\_\_ will be rolling out for all those workers available on every working day.

Even though Boris Johnson was 7) \_\_\_\_\_ by the number of people taking up the 8) \_\_\_\_\_, he was despairing of those who hadn't. However, this strategy seems to be holding, even when the increase in the number of infected people and despite a Health Service creaking 9) \_\_\_\_\_.

Asked about how Britain can cope with the rapid surge of Omicron infections, Science correspondent **Nicola Davis** argues that it is hard to know exactly the number of infected people, but the number is certainly high due to two main reasons. First, data is not reliable as not everyone with covid will necessarily have a test. Second, data unreliability is also associated with a big 10) \_\_\_\_\_ over Christmas. With these two 11) \_\_\_\_\_ in mind, the UK has seen record numbers of Covid cases, reaching the record number of 12) \_\_\_\_\_ new covid cases.

Another way to look at it, Nicola continues, is to look at data from the Office of National Statistic Infections Survey, as it will also provide information on the 13) \_\_\_\_\_ cases, instead of just looking at 14) \_\_\_\_\_ picked up by testing.

Recent research in the UK has proved that Omicron may cause less severe 15) \_\_\_\_\_ than Delta.