

NIESR

Monthly Covid-19 Tracker

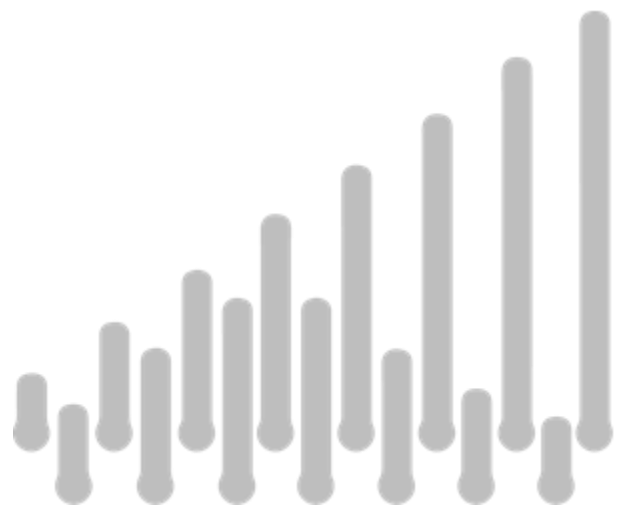
New cases declining
Tracker Number 28

10th February 2022

"The R number remains less than 1. Forecasts of new cases of Covid-19 show decreases across all nations apart from Scotland where it is constant. The pattern of decrease is shared across all English regions and all age groups."

Dr Craig Thamotheram

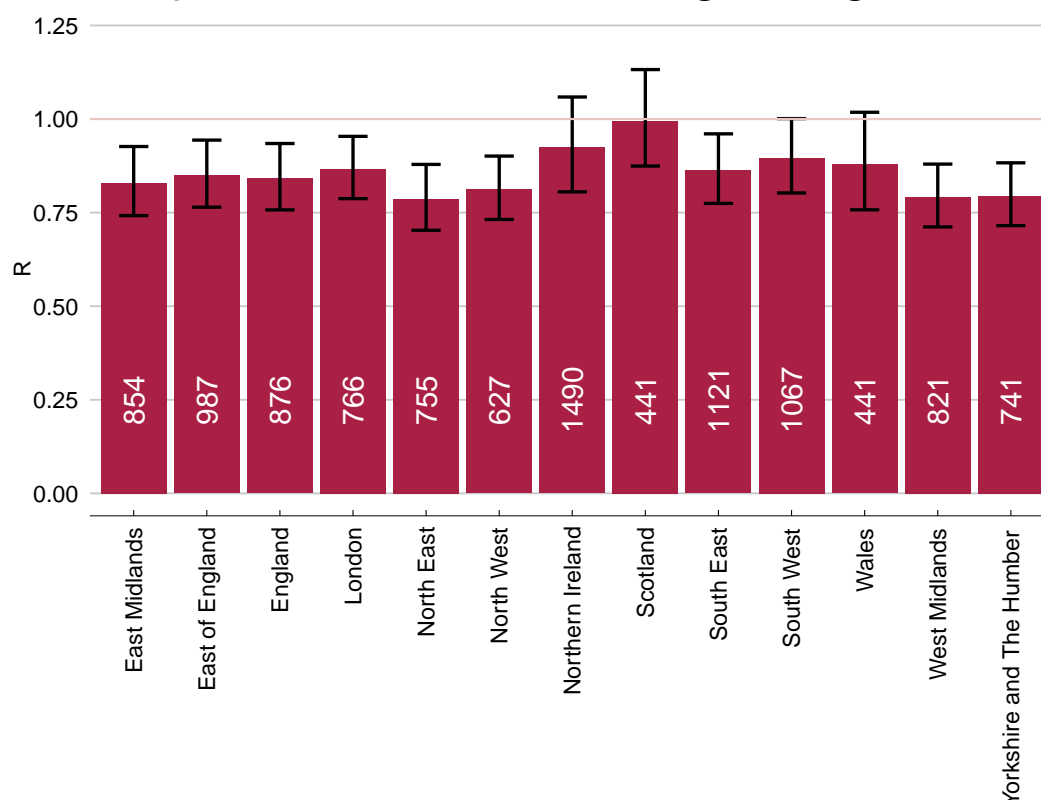
Senior Economist - Macroeconomic Modelling and Forecasting



Main Points

- The R number remains below 1 in all English regions and UK nations (Figure 1). However, it has increased relative to our forecasts made four weeks ago.
- New Covid-19 cases are forecast to decrease in all nations of the UK apart from Scotland where they remain constant (Figure 2) as well as all English regions (Figure 3).
- New cases for all age brackets are forecast to fall (Figure 4). This includes those aged 0-19 for whom they were previously forecast to increase.
- Hospital admissions are forecast to decrease (Figure 5).

Figure 1 – R and Seven-day Case Counts per 100,000
Population: UK nations and England regions

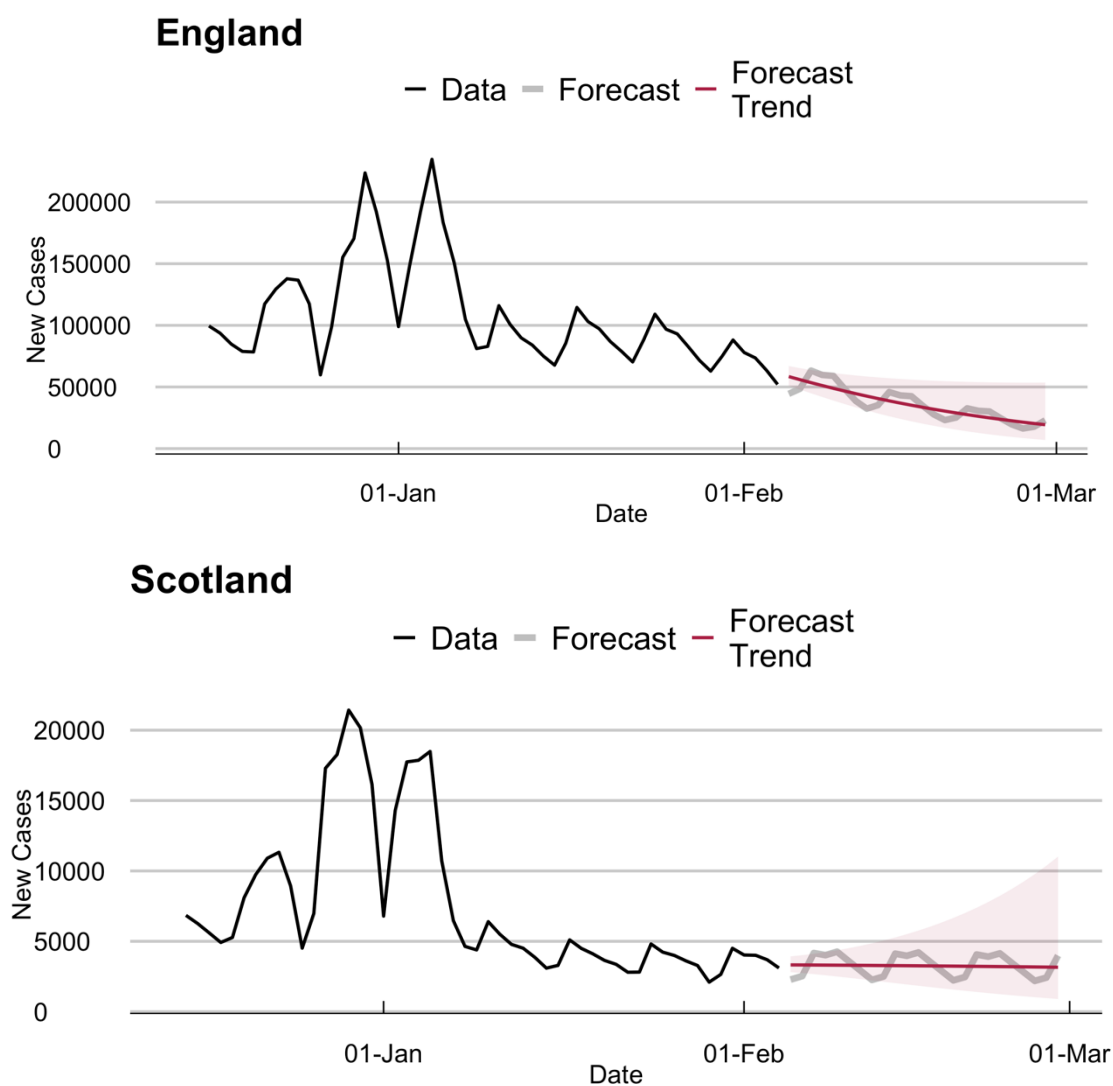


Bar chart shows point estimates of R and the ± 1 standard deviation confidence intervals. The numbers in each bar represent the count of cases in the last seven days of the estimation sample per 100,000 population.

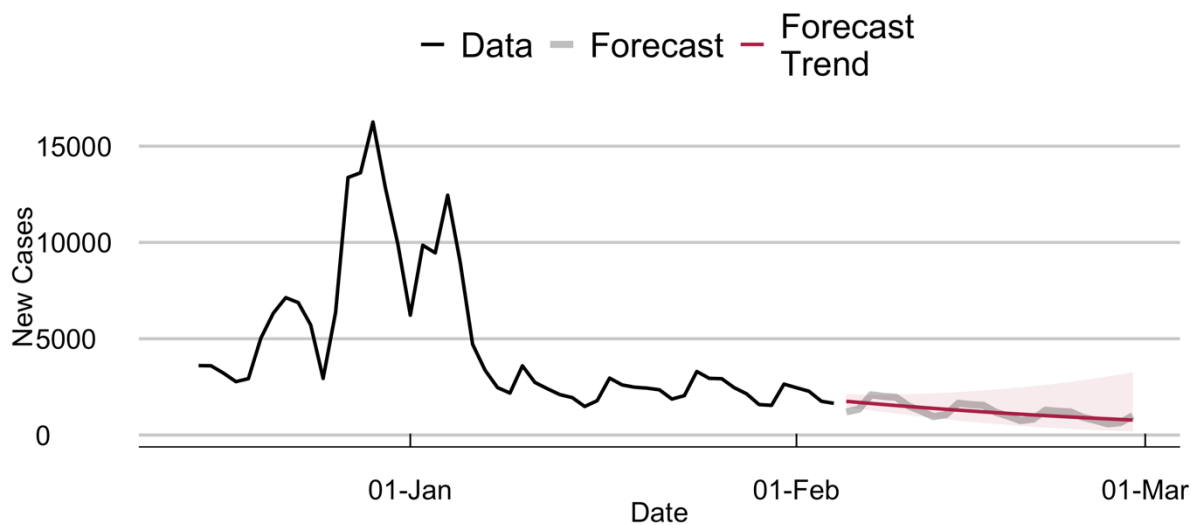
Results

Figure 2 provides forecasts of daily cases of Covid-19 for the period until end of February for the four nations based on data released on the 7th February.

Figure 2 – National Forecasts of New COVID-19 Cases



Wales



Northern Ireland

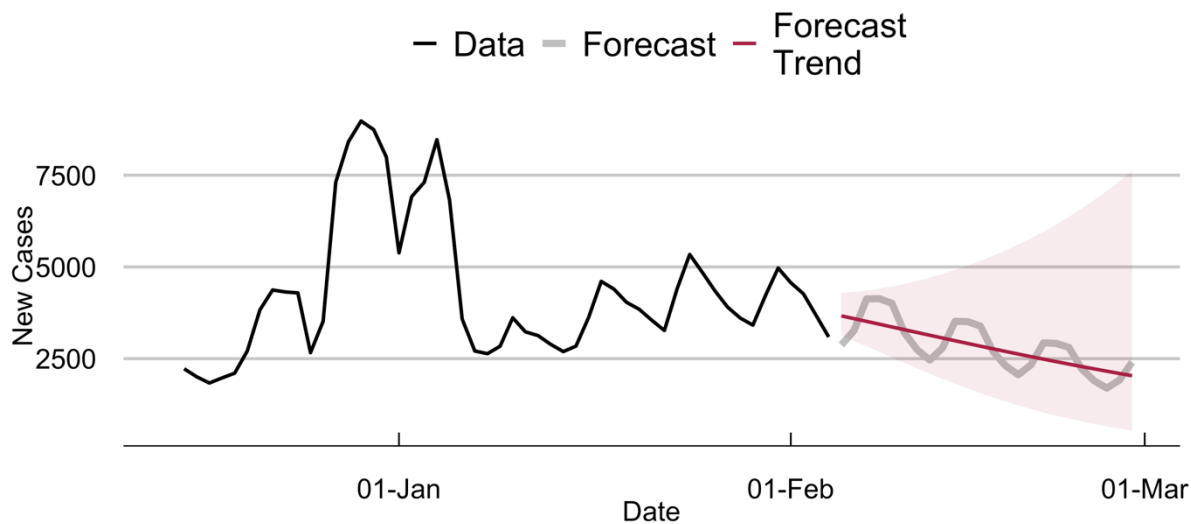


Figure 3 provides forecasts of daily cases of Covid-19 for English regions, for the period until the end of February, based on data released on the 7th February 2022.

Figure 3 –Regional Forecasts of New COVID-19 Cases

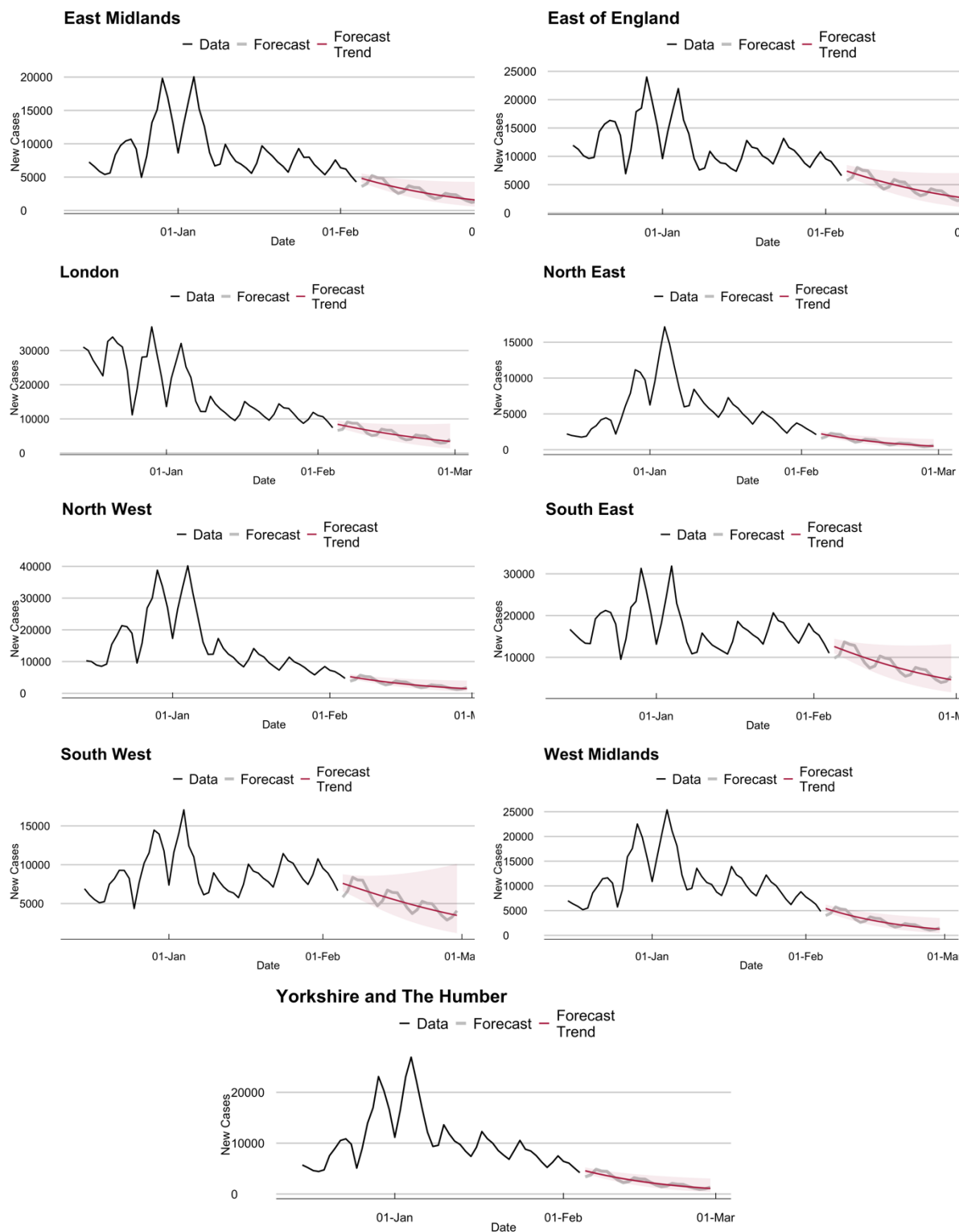


Figure 4: England Forecasts of New COVID-19 Cases by Age Brackets

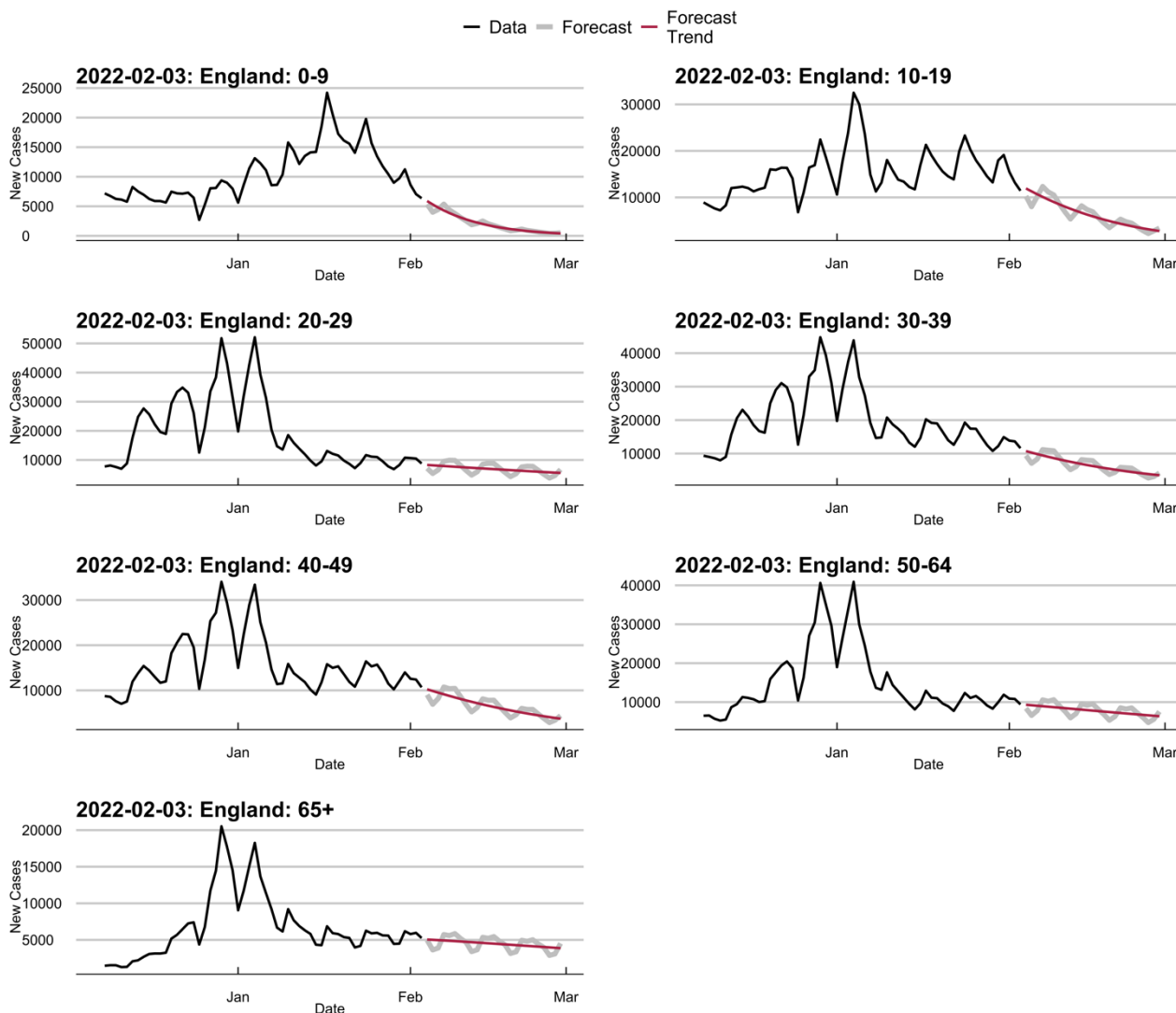
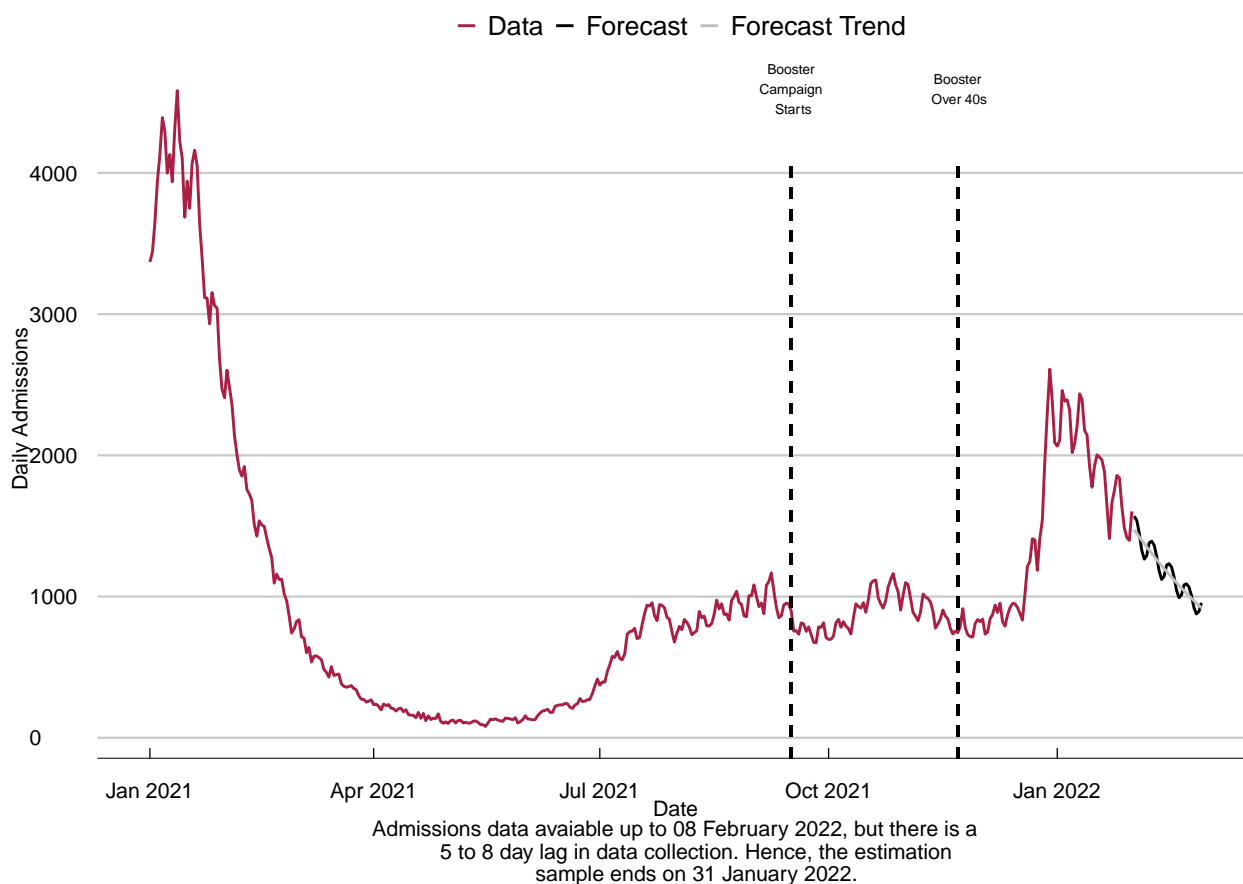


Figure 4 provides forecasts of daily cases of Covid-19 for the period from end-February for England by age brackets. Relative to forecasts made four weeks ago, new cases are now forecast to be decreasing across all age groups, including those aged 0-19 for whom they were increasing previously.

Figure 5 provides forecasts of daily hospital admissions for Covid-19 and highlights the underlying number of new admissions to be expected until the end of February. Hospital admissions are forecast to continue decreasing.

Figure 5 – UK Forecast of Daily Covid-19 Hospital Admissions



Background

NIESR aims to set out projections of the future path of the Covid-19 epidemic in the United Kingdom, its constituent nations and the regions of England, based on current policies.

NIESR has been producing monthly updates, projecting new cases and estimating the R number using a class of time series models developed by Prof. Andrew Harvey and Dr. Paul Kattuman of Cambridge University; see [Harvey and Kattuman \(2020a\)](#).

The models generate forecasts by extracting changing trends from historical data. They are relatively simple and transparent, and their specifications can be assessed by standard statistical test procedures. The advantage of the time series approach is that it can adapt very quickly to the most recent information and hence produce timely estimates. This flexibility enables the effects of changes in policy, virus mutations and human behaviour to be tracked. The models are data driven and so are different from the structural models used by epidemiologists which rely on assumptions about transmission and behaviour; see [Avery et al \(2020\)](#).

A description of the methods used to produce these estimates and an evaluation of their forecasting performance can be found in Harvey, Kattuman, and Thamotheram (2021).

Data

Data: COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths data are sourced from <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk>

Data on Covid-19 cases are reported by the government by 'specimen date' and by 'published date'. Specimen cases relate to the date when the sample was taken from the person being tested, while published cases relate to the first date when they are included in the published numbers. At the present time we regard the specimen date data as a more reliable indicator of the trend in new cases. The model based on specimen dated observations better captured the effect of the sharp increase in testing on the day that schools reopened and also suffers less from data errors or revisions.

On 27 March 2021, 850 historic cases were removed due to a laboratory processing error. This affected specimen date data between 23 and 25 March in local authorities primarily in the North East and Yorkshire. The cumulative total number of people testing positive was revised down on 27 March 2021. Historic published date totals have not been changed. The downward correction on 27th March is mixed with the positive upward revisions of cases as more test results are returned over time making it impossible to date these corrections accurately. Thus, we cannot back out on which day these corrections were made. For published data, we choose to remove 300, 300 and 250 cases on 24, 25 and 26th of March respectively.

Between 2 and 5 April 2021, significant disruption to cases and deaths for Wales and Northern Ireland occurred. This was corrected on 6th April but with a 48-hour reporting period. We left published cases unchanged.

On April 9th rapid LF tests that were confirmed as negative by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test within 3 days were removed. For published cases, we set 9th April as missing as no correction is applied to the historic data by Public Health England

Caveat

The model relies on historical data and does not incorporate future outlined changes in the underlying environment. Thus, it is important to read the forecasts in this context. For example, the current forecasts make no assumptions about the effect of the possible relaxation of all remaining restrictions announced by Boris Johnson in parliament yesterday.

Authors

Professor Andrew Harvey is Emeritus Professor of Econometrics at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College. He has published over 100 articles and is the author of four books: *The Econometric Analysis of Time Series* (1981), *Time Series Models* (1981), *Forecasting. Structural Time Series Models and the Kalman Filter* (1989) and *Dynamic models for Volatility and Heavy Tails* (2013). He is a Fellow of the British Academy and the Econometric Society.

Dr Paul Kattuman is a reader in Economics at Cambridge University. He has been a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge Department of Applied Economics, and a lecturer in economics at Durham. He has held Visiting Professorships at Université Paris 12 and Paris-Est Créteil and was appointed Grupo Santander Visiting Professor at Universidad Complutense de Madrid. He was visiting Faculty Scholar at the Kennedy School of Government, and at the Department of Statistics, both at Harvard University.

Dr Craig Thamotheram is a Senior Economist at NIESR. Prior to joining NIESR, he studied Engineering at Imperial College, London and obtained a PhD in Economics at Warwick. He has work experience as a post-doc in macro and financial econometrics.

Bibliography

Avery, C., W. Bossert, A. Clark, G. Ellison, and S. F. Ellison (2020). An economist's guide to epidemiology models of infectious disease. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34(4), 79–104.

Harvey, A. and P. Kattuman (2020a). Time series models based on growth curves with applications to forecasting coronavirus. *Harvard Data Science Review*, Special issue 1 - COVID-19. <https://hdsr.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/ozgjx0yn>

Harvey, A. and P. Kattuman (forthcoming). A farewell to R: Time series models for tracking and forecasting epidemics. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*

Harvey, A., P. Kattuman, and C. Thamotheram (2021). Tracking the mutant: forecasting and nowcasting COVID-19 in the UK in 2021. *National Institute Economic Review*, 256, 110--126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nie.2021.12>.

Notes for Editors

For further information please contact the NIESR Press Office: press@niesr.ac.uk or Luca Pieri on 020 7654 1954 / l.pieri@niesr.ac.uk

National Institute of Economic and Social Research
2 Dean Trench Street
Smith Square
London, SW1P 3HE
United Kingdom

Switchboard Telephone Number: 020 7222 7665

Website: <http://www.niesr.ac.uk>