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mundane - if a little extravagant - lifestyle became the talking point of China. Authorities also noted that she had been [triple vaccinated with Sinovac](#).

In a country striving to “eliminate” coronavirus, this meant that more than 13,000 people, and all the places visited by the young woman in Beijing - including the ski resort - have been swiftly tested. Her block of flats and workplace were also sealed off. In press conferences, officials urged caution to residents in the city of more than 20 million as they reassured them of the efforts they were taking to keep them safe.

[Omicron](#) is unlike previous variants. Chinese public health officials, like western scientists, admit it is highly transmissible and difficult to detect. At least nine cities across six provinces in mainland China have reported Omicron cases. Since 15 January, Beijing has reported fewer than 10 local infections of the Delta and Omicron variants. They are a tiny case count compared with the rest of the world but enough to raise alarm in the Chinese capital.

The reporting of cases in Beijing has come less than three weeks before the opening ceremony of the [Winter Olympics](#) on 4 February. On Monday, China's president, Xi

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“Of course I miss [my family], but my job requires me to stay here, I don’t have any solutions,” he said.

“My home is close to Xi’an, and Xi’an has a serious situation. If we pass by Xi’an, our health code might become yellow and we might have to be quarantined. There is a lot of inconvenience, but (the policy) is necessary.”

The outbreak was scary, he said, but he thought it was being well controlled in Beijing.

Authorities are showing little tolerance, suspending flights and rail routes, and **cancelling Olympic ticket sales** for the general public. Some cities and provinces have also banned some entrants coming from virus hotspots, while others have enacted mandatory testing, entry applications, or other measures.

“There have been no epidemics in the places I’ve stayed or the street I live on, and I’ve done a nucleic acid test more than 10 times,” said one netizen hoping to travel home from Shaanxi province. “Why can’t I go back yet, still?”

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Jin said that because the winter Games would be conducted in a “bubble” - meaning athletes will not be allowed to leave venues and tickets will only be distributed to a selected few - Omicron “might not affect the Winter Olympics significantly”.

In the long run, however, the zero tolerance policy is “not sustainable and unnecessary, and the arrival of Omicron might make it even more challenging”, he said. “But China is too big a ship to change direction. It does not have the wisdom or capability to do it as neatly as Hong Kong or Taiwan. It is challenging and costly either to maintain it or to give it up.”

Find a country

The rate is the number of confirmed cases per million inhabitants

Country	Cases: all time	Cases: last two weeks	Rate: all time	Rate: last two weeks
US	72,910,136	8,699,468	220,270	26,282
India	40,371,500	4,053,573	29,255	2,937

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In the last few weeks, Chinese experts have been urging citizens to receive their booster jabs. In a **widely publicised speech** early this month, **Zhang Wenhong**, one of China's best-known infectious diseases experts, explained why vaccines helped reduce hospitalisation and death.

“We should allow arguments over inoculation, but we should also realise that the role of the vaccines should not be underestimated,” he told an audience in Shanghai. “If we do not actively get vaccinated and build a strong immunity barrier, we'd return to the pandemic that occurred in 1918.”

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