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**VACCINES
ARE
FREEDOM**

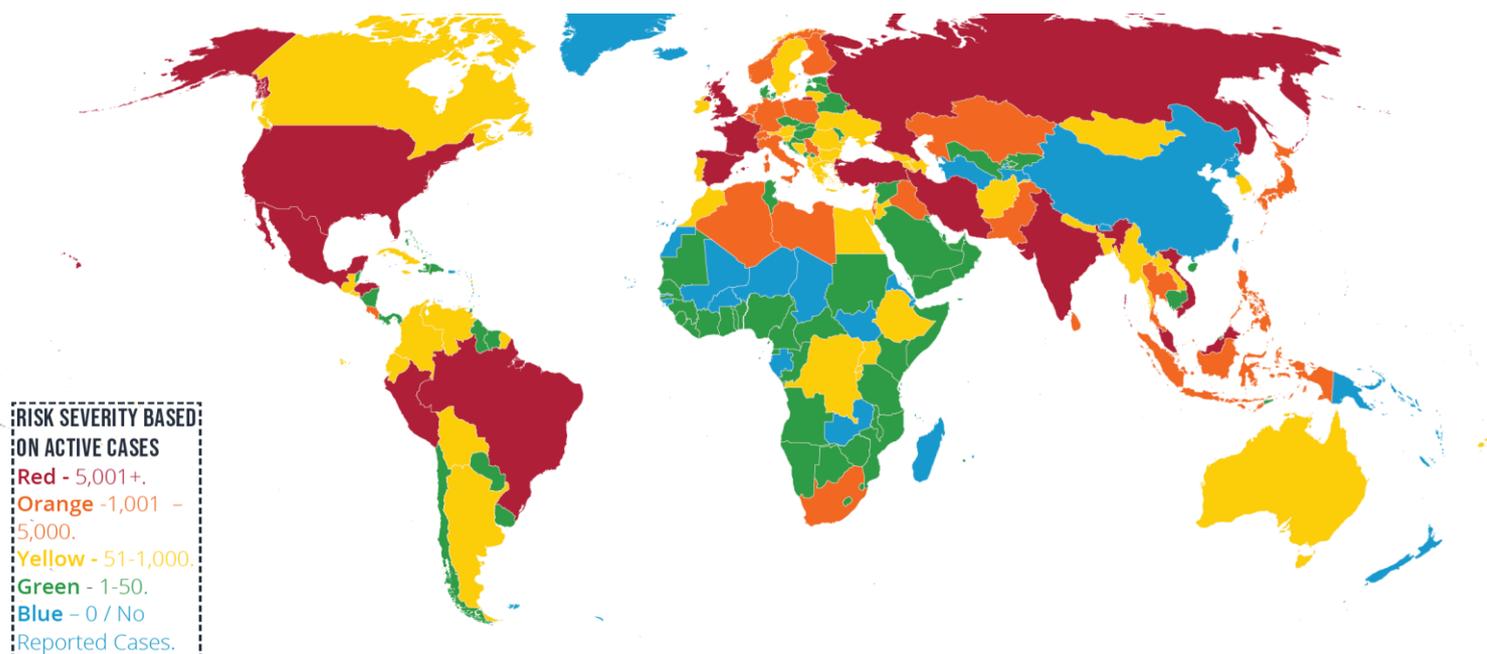
**COVID-19 Weekly Update
16 September**

Executive Summary

This week has seen the first significant global decline in cases for over two months. The new weekly incidence declined by around 400,000 compared to last week, to hover at just under 4 million new cases. Alongside this, globally the number of weekly deaths also recorded a decline when compared to recent weeks.

This week's global death rate hovered at around 62,000, as compared to 68,000 for recent weeks. The decrease in global infections was reported as being sustained across all the global regions. Regional death trends however remain varied; Southeast Asia recorded a 20 percent drop in deaths whilst Africa sustained an increase in deaths of 7 percent. Other regions such as the Americas and the Eastern Mediterranean regions recorded smaller percentage declines in deaths, whilst the remaining regions saw their death rates remaining relatively stable.

Across the world, the proliferation of the currently known variants also continues. One new country has reported its first known cases of the Beta variant, four countries have reported their first cases of the Gamma variant, whilst the Delta variant's presence has been reported in a further six new countries since last week.



Notable Updates

It has now been reported that 1 in 500 Americans in the United States have now died from Coronavirus. As of Tuesday, 14 September, 663,913 people in the US have died of Covid-19, roughly 0.2 percent of the country's population. Cases in the country have jumped up since summer as the more contagious Delta variant has become dominant. Meanwhile, the White House has announced that it is planning a wholesale rethink and reboot of its international travel system, which will allow for swift contact tracing to take place if necessary. Alongside this, it is rumoured the country may require every foreign arrival in the future to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Whilst the Olympic Games went ahead in Tokyo this summer, the 2022 Gay Games, which were scheduled to be held next summer in Hong Kong, have been postponed for a year. Hong Kong was due to host the games next year however due to increasing Beijing suspicion about the event, and the cities ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, organisers announced the delay. The city would otherwise be preparing to welcome, 12,000 participants, 75,000 spectators and 3,000 volunteers from 100 countries for 36 sporting events.

Meanwhile, in China, the forthcoming National Games, which will welcome both athletes and spectators is due to be used as the country's testing ground for whether it can safely host the 2022 Winter Olympics, and what restrictions may be needed for that event. Given China's zero COVID strategy, and the fact that viruses fare better in winter months it is expected that the IOC and Chinese restrictions will be tougher than those seen earlier this year for the postponed Tokyo 2020 games.

Vaccination Updates

On 10 September, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a [report](#) on vaccine effectiveness and safety. As part of the study, more than 600,000 COVID-19 cases from April to mid-July were evaluated and linked to vaccination status. The report concluded that those who were unvaccinated were around four and a half times more likely to be infected, over 10 times more likely to be hospitalised, and 11 times more likely to die from the virus. Such results are further backed up by data from the state of Pennsylvania which shows that 97 percent of those who have died since 1 January 2021 have been unvaccinated.

The UK government has terminated a deal with French pharmaceutical company Valneva over allegations of a breach of its obligations under the supply agreement, which Valneva “strenuously denies”. The UK government had previously ordered 60 million doses of the vaccine in December 2020, before upping its order to 100 million earlier this year. A spokesperson for Prime Minister Boris Johnson stressed that the decision to cancel the contract will not impact vaccine supplies or the rollout in the autumn and winter.

There has been a call for post-vaccine changes to the menstrual cycle in a number of females to be investigated. There have been over 30,000 reports to the UK’s medical regulatory body of post-vaccine menstrual changes. Among both males and females, a fear of sterility or decline in pregnancy chances is a large driver of vaccine hesitancy. Thus, it has been urged that these reports are investigated so that credible and accurate scientific information around this issue can be disseminated, if necessary, which in turn may shrink the space for vaccine misinformation.

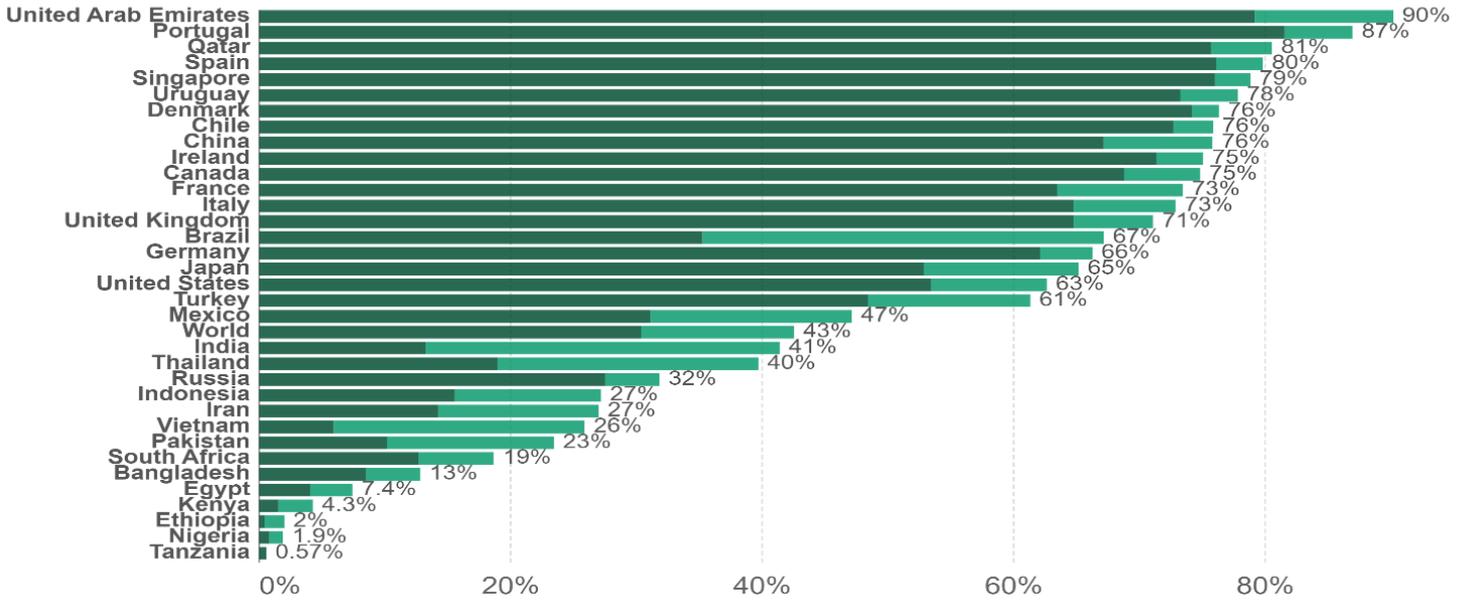
Percentage of People Vaccinated in Select Countries

Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19, Sep 15, 2021



Alternative definitions of a full vaccination, e.g. having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and having 1 dose of a 2-dose protocol, are ignored to maximize comparability between countries.

■ Share of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 ■ Share of people only partly vaccinated against COVID-19



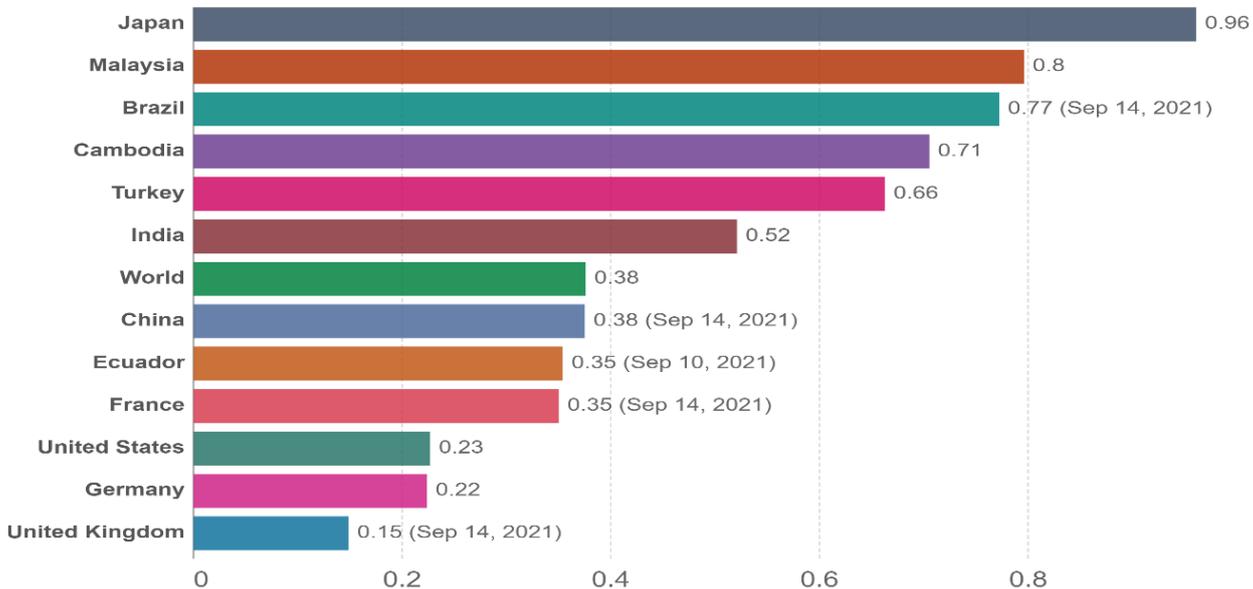
Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data. This data is only available for countries which report the breakdown of doses administered by first and second doses in absolute numbers. CC BY

Daily COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people

Daily COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people



Shown is the rolling 7-day average per 100 people in the total population. For vaccines that require multiple doses, each individual dose is counted.



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data – Last updated 16 September 2021, 08:40 (London time) OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Select Country Updates**United States**

In a press briefing on 10 September, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeffrey Zients announced the expansion of mandatory COVID-19 vaccine requirements.

In July, President Biden announced vaccination requirements for federal workers. However, under the president's revised COVID-19 Action Plan, businesses with 100 or more employees must ensure every worker is either fully vaccinated or gets tested at least once per week. All workers in most healthcare settings that receive Medicaid or Medicare are to be fully vaccinated. All federal executive branch employees and all employees of federal contractors are to be fully vaccinated. Finally, that all Head Start educators and teachers and staff of all federally run schools are to be fully vaccinated.

A debate is ongoing about the legality of any vaccine mandates. Baptist and Catholic groups have filed a federal complaint regarding the requirement in New York for medical professionals. Many have stated that they object to the vaccine on religious grounds.

In Los Angeles, where there is a mandate that all city employees be inoculated against the virus, nearly a quarter of the police force are seeking an exemption.

France

On Friday 10 September, France's former health minister Agnes Buzyn was placed under formal investigation over her response to the COVID-19 crisis. The prosecutor of the Republic's Court of Justice said she would be investigated for "endangering the lives of others", but not for the second offence of "failure to stop a disaster".

The former doctor, who stepped down in February 2020, reportedly said she welcomed "an excellent opportunity for me to explain myself and to establish the truth".

The ruling marks one of the first high-profile cases in which a senior public official will be held legally accountable for their response to the pandemic. The court's decision also has increased pressure on President Emmanuel Macron, whose leadership and handling of the crisis has already drawn criticism from many in France.

Denmark

Denmark became the first European Union country to lift all COVID-19-related restrictions on 10 September, after around 550 days of curbs in place to limit the spread of the virus.

Last Friday, Danish Health Minister Magnus Heunicke said, "COVID-19 is no longer categorised as a socially critical disease". He explained that the reason restrictions were able to be lifted was due to the country's effective vaccination programme, strong epidemic control and because of the populations "enormous effort".

The Danish government had been gradually lifting restrictions over the past few months, which saw the easing of mask requirements of public transport in mid-August, and the expiration of a so-called 'coronapas' requirement on 10 September.

United Kingdom

During a television appearance on 12 September, Health Secretary Sajid Javid said that the government "would not be going ahead with plans for vaccine passports". The decision marks another government U-turn, described by the Labour party as "shambolic". Since the idea was first floated, dozens of Conservative MPs had voiced their opposition to a vaccine passport, meaning that it would have been difficult for the government to push through the necessary legislation.

On 14 September, UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid provided details of [HM Government's Autumn and Winter Plan](#). According to the plan, over the autumn and winter, the government "aims to sustain the progress made and prepare the country for future challenges, while ensuring the NHS does not come under unsustainable pressure".

In order to achieve these objectives, the plan sets out a five-pillar approach, including increasing defences through pharmaceutical interventions; identifying and isolating positive cases; supporting the NHS and social care; providing clear guidance and communications; and pursuing an international approach, i.e. assisting with global vaccination efforts and managing risks at the border.

More specifically, the government plans to roll out a booster vaccination programme for elderly and/or vulnerable individuals, as well as offer jabs to 12 to 15-year-olds. Additionally, the government has pledged an additional £5.4 billion for the NHS over the coming six months.

South Africa

On Sunday, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced an easing of coronavirus restrictions as a result of falling infection rates. Since 13 September, the nationwide curfew has been shortened to 23:00 – 04:00, the size of gatherings has increased to 250 indoors and 500 outdoors, and the hours of alcohol sales extended, amongst other changes. Despite the relaxations, President Ramaphosa warned that the country's third wave was not yet over, and he appealed for more people to be vaccinated.

Bangladesh

In the past week, after 18 months of school closures, children in Bangladesh returned to school. The country's schools and other educational institutions were closed in mid-March 2020 and their reopening marks the end of one of the world's longest shutdowns of an education system.

The resumption of in-person education follows a report by UNICEF last week that warned school closures have

led to alarming inequities in learning opportunities for children in South Asia. Moreover, according to Bangladesh's telecom operators' association, only 41 per cent of the population have smartphones, meaning millions of children were unable to access online classes.

China

Authorities in Fujian Province have imposed new coronavirus restrictions in response to a recent outbreak of the infectious Delta variant. According to the government, the outbreak began on 10 September in a primary school in the county of Xianyou, with most cases involving children. Since then, over 100 locally transmitted cases have been detected, and as a result the cities of Xiamen and Putian have announced they will be mass testing every resident.

In a bid to contain the outbreak, public transport services have been suspended in affected areas, some non-essential/hospitality businesses have been ordered to shut and schools closed. Additionally, movement restrictions were imposed for some residents, requiring people to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test in the previous 48 hours.

Vietnam

On 14 September, authorities in Vietnam's coronavirus epicentre Ho Chi Minh City will remain under restrictions until at least the end of September. The Chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Ming City said the extension of restrictions was necessary to prevent further infections, vaccinate more residents, and to stop hospitals from being overwhelmed with patients.

The restrictions vary between the city's districts. Some areas are subject to strict movement restrictions and business closures, while others have seen a resumption of certain economic and social activities.



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