

SOLACE GLOBAL

# COVID-19 Weekly Update

## 23 September

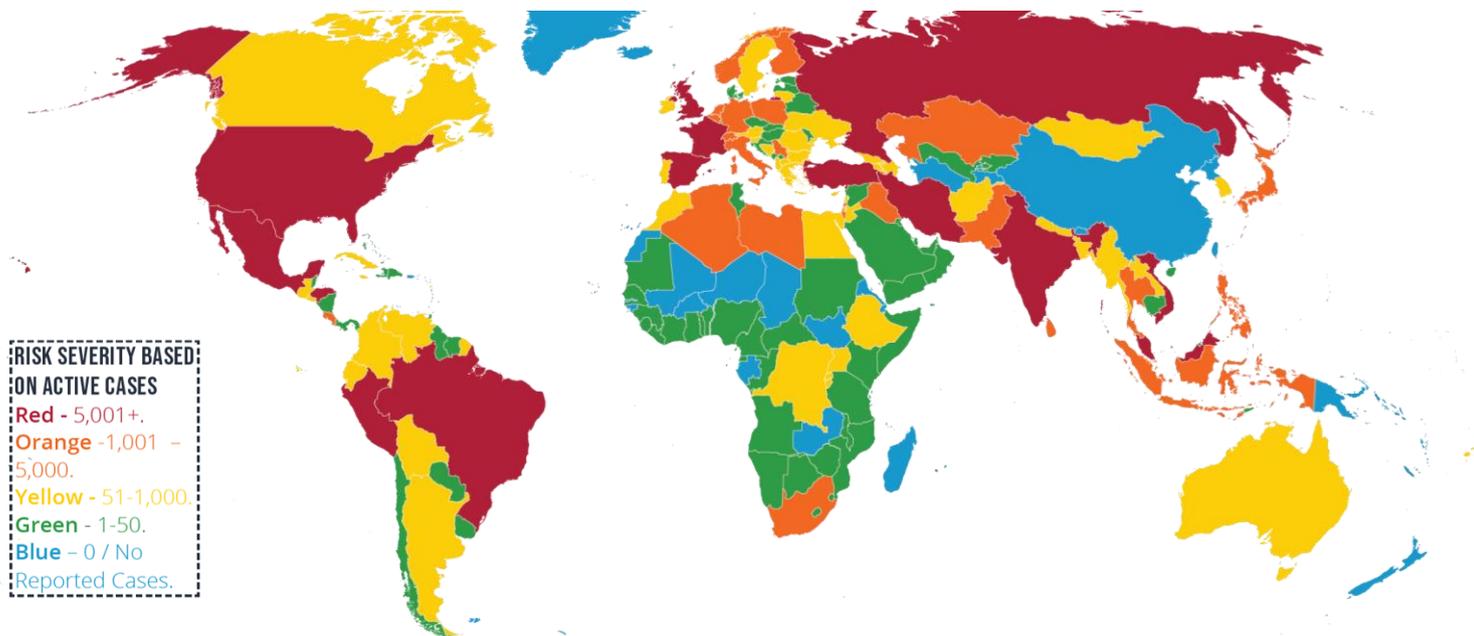


## Executive Summary

We are continuing to see a global decline in cases, with a decline of 8 percent in the number of new infections being reported. Alongside this, globally the number of weekly deaths has also recorded a 9 percent decline when compared to last week. In the past seven days, there were 3.5 million new confirmed cases and 56,039 deaths.

North America and Africa are seeing the strongest declines, with 15 and 17 percent respectively. Asia has also seen a 10 percent drop in new case numbers. Despite this, South America is continuing to see a resurgence in case numbers, with Brazil seeing an almost 50 percent jump in new confirmed positive COVID-19 cases.

In Africa, Botswana has seen a heavy increase in case numbers, with a 138 percent rise in new case numbers when compared to last week. In Europe, Romania and Ukraine are seeing the worst increases in cases numbers, with Romania's new confirmed cases up nearly 90 percent on the past week. In a more positive turn, Japan is seeing a sharp decrease, with a drop of nearly 50 percent.



## Notable Updates

The COVID-19 pandemic is now the deadliest outbreak of a disease in US history. Data indicates that COVID-19 fatalities have exceeded the estimated deaths from the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. In the United States, the death toll due to coronavirus has now reached 676,000 whilst approximately 675,000 people were estimated to have died due to the 1918 flu.

Concerns continue to mount as many countries begin to see negative economic growth. China's economy weakened in August due to sudden lockdowns and stringent COVID-19 measures. As the country's economic recovery continues to be challenged by the spread of delta variants of the virus, the third quarter growth rate is expected to be flat. The so-called "ping-demic" in the UK and a number of supply chain issues saw the country's economic growth over the summer period at 0.1 percent. In the US the ongoing surge in delta variant infections are likely to lead to a slashing in their third quarter growth rates.

A number of countries are trying to bolster flagging vaccination campaigns with varying levels of restrictions for the unvaccinated. Bookings for COVID-19 vaccines recently spiked in Italy after the government agreed to extend the Green Pass to all public and private workplaces from 15 October. However, related restrictions have also resulted in a notable uptick in the market for fraudulent vaccine cards or passports. The fraudulent versions are "near perfect copies" of the originals and can cost hundreds of dollars. According to data from the US Customs and Border Protection agency, most are believed to be made in Shenzhen, China, where "thousands of packages" of the fraudulent documents were reportedly seized. As Green Pass restrictions continue to be imposed globally, the market for fraudulent passports and cards is only likely to continue to increase.

## Vaccination Updates

Africa continues to be the continent with the lowest vaccination rate. The Director of Africa's Centre for Disease Control, John Nkengasong, has announced that less than 3.5 percent of Africans have received the COVID-19 vaccine, which is at odds with the Centre's goal of 60 percent vaccination rate by the end of 2021. Following this news, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) once again issued a statement urging countries with high vaccination rates to share stock with Africa before implementing booster jabs.

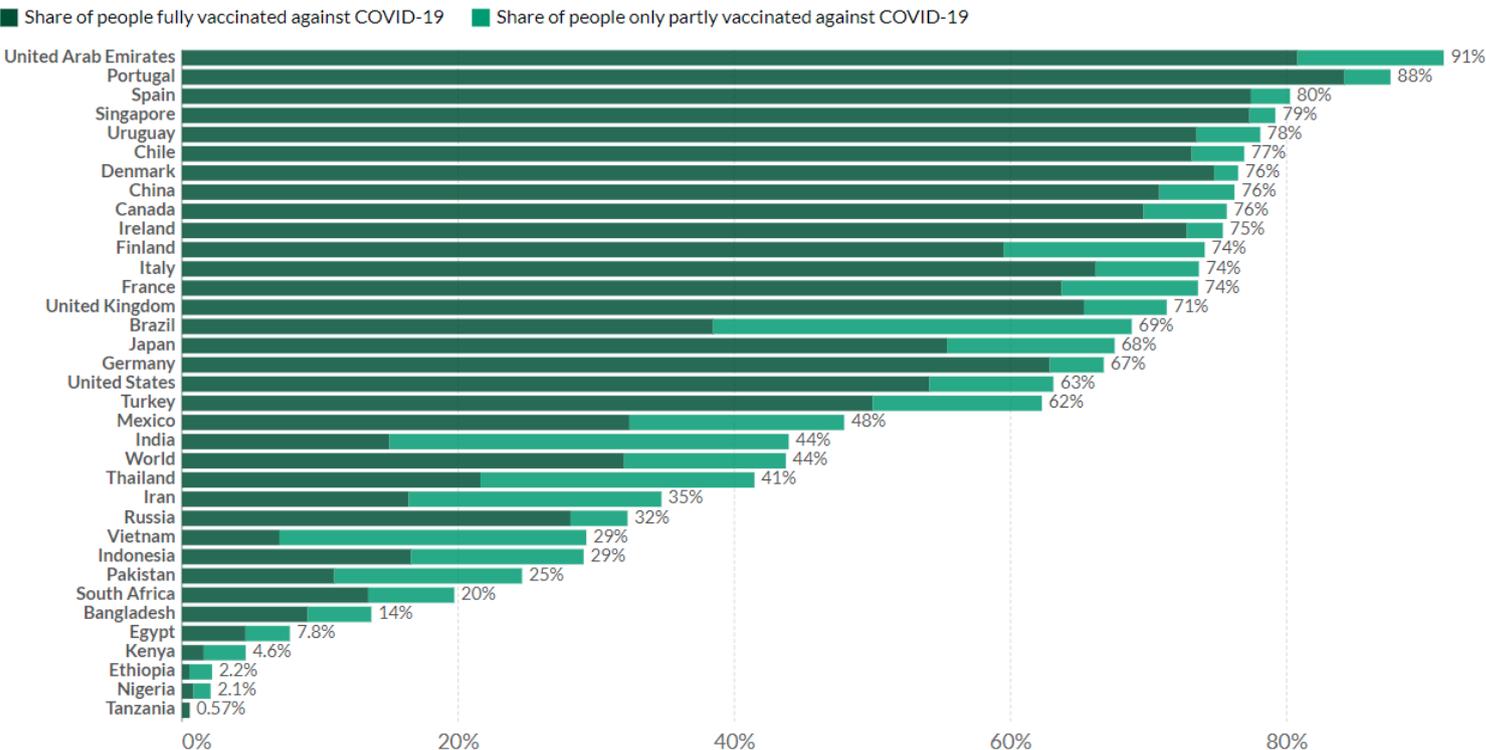
Africa's vaccination progress remains slow, it is now expected that only 17 percent of the continent's population will be vaccinated by the end of the year. This is far below the 40 percent goal set by the WHO. This lack of vaccination

across the African continent is causing concern that more contagious variants may mutate.

Elsewhere, scientific advisors to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have unanimously voted that people older than 65 and those at high risk of COVID-19 should be offered a third shot of the Pfizer vaccine. They have, however, not recommended that most Americans be given a third dose at this time. This vote comes as there continues to be scientific debate about the merits of a third dose and a shortage of valid scientific safety studies on its effects.

The FDA have, at the time of writing, not accepted Moderna’s application to provide booster shots, it also remains uncertain whether the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be offered as a booster. Many other countries, including Israel and the UK, have already begun their third vaccination campaigns.

**Percentage of People Vaccinated in Select Countries**



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

**Select Country Updates**

**United States**

The past week has seen over 13,000 Americans die due to COVID-19. The US death toll has now surpassed that of the 1918-19 Spanish flu outbreak. Despite this, new case numbers in the past seven days are beginning to drop in the country.

Eight states set new highs for daily infections or deaths. These include Kentucky, Florida and Mississippi. California, which in the past had been the US’s epicentre for the pandemic is now recording the lowest transmissions of any other state. This is a testament to the state’s progress in vaccinations and other control measures such as mask-wearing.

Despite some states witnessing an increase in cases, on a national basis, infections have begun to drop from their summer peak. Indeed, case rates are down by 6 percent compared to two weeks ago. It is now believed that 76 percent of all Americans have had at least one dose of a vaccine.

In some states, including Mississippi, West Virginia, and Idaho, the vaccination rates remain lower than the nation’s average. As a result, these states are also

recording high levels of transmissions and deaths.

**Brazil**

The country which has the world’s second highest death toll from the pandemic has steadily seen its vaccine programme bring down infection rates and deaths, despite a recent resurgence.

Before the pandemic, the country was renowned for a globally praised vaccination delivery system reaching all citizens. The COVID-19 vaccination campaign, however, started late and was stalled by the actions and words of the country’s President, a well-known pandemic sceptic. The country also faced a number of supply issues with imported vaccines.

The last three months have seen a number of these issues resolved. The country now produces, AstraZeneca and Sinovac jabs under license and the nations high death toll has acted as a catalyst for people to become vaccinated, with 90 percent of the country wanted to be vaccinated. As a result, the number of Brazilians with at least one jab has almost tripled to cover 67.6 per cent of the population. The country now ranks fourth in the total number of vaccines administered

globally.

As a result of this progress on the vaccination front, combined with widespread immunity due to the large spread of the disease through Brazil, the country's death rate has fallen rapidly. In June the country was seeing more than 2,000 daily deaths, there are now fewer than 600 per day.

### Italy

The Italian government has announced that from 15 October, all workers will have to have a valid Green Pass. Failing to provide a Green Pass can result in suspension from work without pay and a fine. Green certifications are already compulsory to access restaurants and public transports such as trains and airplanes.

This measure is the first in Europe and among the strictest globally. Additionally, following this announcement, bookings for COVID-19 vaccines soared. At the time of writing, nearly 65 percent of Italians have had two doses of the vaccine.

### Thailand

Health authorities in Thailand have confirmed that doctors will be able to inject COVID-19 booster shots under the skin. According to a study conducted in the nation, intradermal injections are just as effective as the muscular injection, but it uses less of the dose. As such, it is believed that this method can help extend vaccine doses.

In recent weeks, Thailand has reported record number of deaths related to COVID-19.

### Tunisia

Tunisia, which in July was seeing more than 55,000 new infections a week, has recorded a sharp fall in its infection rate. Weekly infections rates are now seven times less than during their peak. Death rates have also dropped to a fifth of what they were in the summer. These high infection and death rates led to outrage and large-scale protests. As a result of the spike, the country implemented harsh restrictions which subsequently have eased.

The country's vaccination campaign is believed to be behind the sharp fall in numbers. At the time of writing, the country has been vaccinating its population quicker than any other African country, at a rate of 0.81 percent

of the population a day. The Director of the country's Pasteur Institute has announced that if this rate is sustained, 60 percent of the population will be fully vaccinated by the end of October.

### Turkmenistan

Authorities in Turkmenistan continue to deny the presence of COVID-19 and, so far, have not officially reported a single infection. Despite this, the nation is allegedly in the middle of its third, and most deadly, wave of the disease.

Exiled media outlets are reporting that the country is suffering a deadly third delta driven wave and patients in hospitals are dying due to a lack of ventilators and oxygen. Health workers refuse to even name the disease in case it lands them in trouble with the country's authorities. When questioned about the number of deaths, and high number of people with COVID-19 symptoms, the government insists it is due to dust and pollution in the air.

### New Zealand

Authorities in New Zealand announced that the reopening of the trans-Tasman travel bubble will be delayed for an additional 8 weeks. The pause on quarantine-free travel had been due to expire next week but as cases in Australia continue to rise, it will now be extended.

On the other hand, infections in New Zealand continue to fall. As such, on 20 September, authorities announced that Auckland can now move to level 3 restrictions following five weeks of strict lockdown. Additionally, the nation is making good progress on the vaccine rollout. More than 3 million people have had their first dose.

### Portugal

Portugal continues to register few new daily cases. Additionally, authorities confirmed that 80 percent of the population has received both doses of the vaccine making the country one of the most vaccinated nations globally. Portugal has also gradually dropped most of its COVID-19 restrictions. Additionally, most recently on 21 September, the Portuguese government announced that vaccination and recovery certificates issued by third nations will be recognised, provided that some requirements are met.

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