

SOLACE GLOBAL

COVID-19 Weekly Update

26 August

SOCIAL
DISTANCING



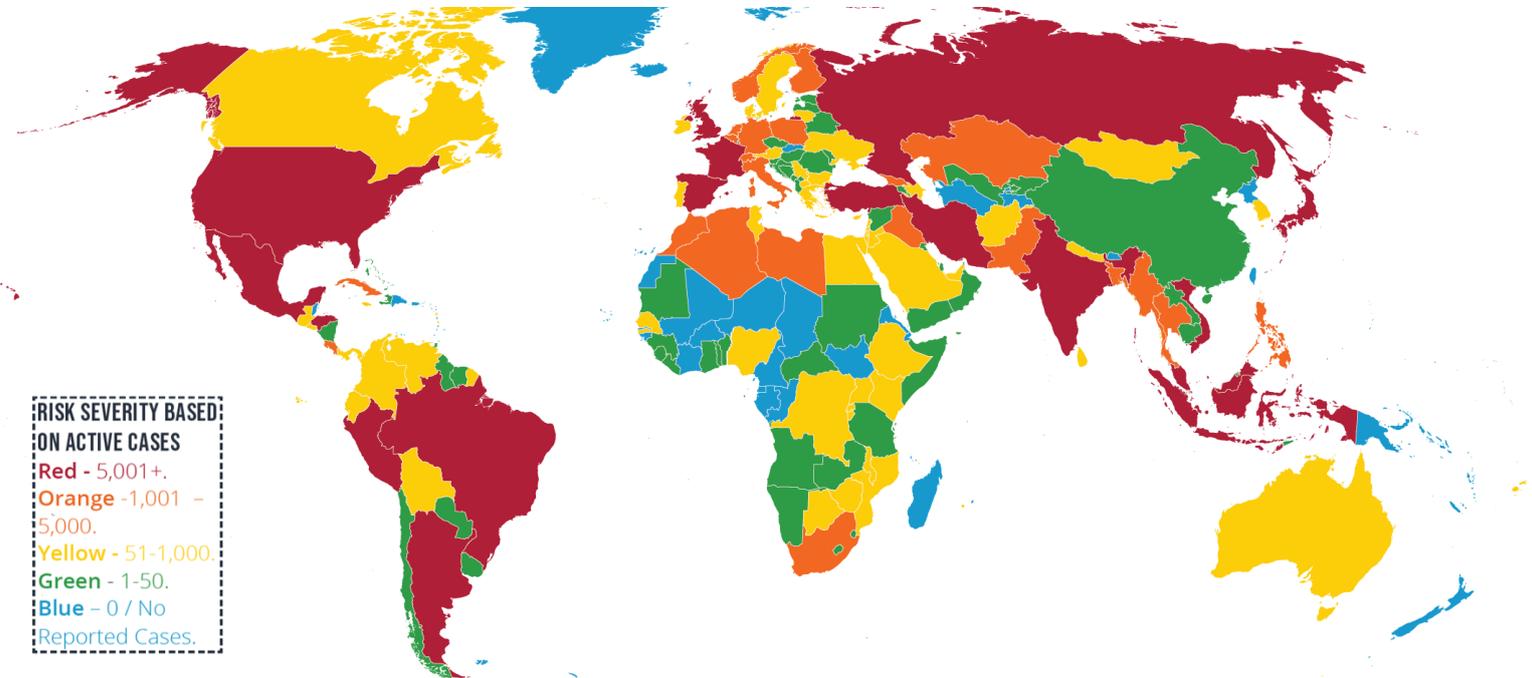
WEAR A
FACE MASK



Executive Summary

The global cumulative caseload is now at nearly 215 million confirmed cases with almost 4.5 million deaths since the start of the pandemic. The United States, Iran, India and the UK have all reported more than 200,000 cases in the past seven days.

Despite this, the total number of new weekly cases globally only rose by 0.1 percent compared to last week's tally. This rate of increase has slowed compared to the preceding week. Additionally, the total number of weekly new COVID-19-related deaths rose by 2 percent compared to the previous week. Europe and North America saw 3 percent and 8 percent increases respectively. Asia, South America, Africa and Oceania have seen a decrease in caseloads.



Notable Updates

After nearly eight weeks of sustained increases in weekly incidences of COVID-19 across the globe, the overall global caseload remains similar to where they were last week. Globally the weekly death toll also remained similar to last week with around 68,000 deaths reported due to COVID-19. The Americas and Europe both saw their death tolls rise, whilst Africa and Southeast Asia both saw falls in their death tolls. Meanwhile, a new study has revealed the prevalence of different variants across the world. The Alpha variant is present in 192 countries, Beta in 141, Gamma in 46, and Delta in 163 countries.

There are fears that the Delta variant is more likely to lead to large numbers of children contracting the disease, due to its ease of transmission and the lack of vaccines in children. Already in the United States, around one-fifth of all new COVID cases recorded are occurring in children.

Whilst studies show that children are at a lower risk of becoming seriously ill with COVID, they are still at risk of catching the virus and on occasion can become seriously ill. A number of countries are thus closely watching the United Kingdom, where data shows that during the country's Delta driven wave in early to mid-2021 infection rates were lower in children attending school than in the greater population. This is believed to be down to measures such as testing and distancing measures in classrooms. This data helps to show that with the right measures in place a return to in-person education does not have to equate to a strong rise in infections in young people.

A report produced by the intelligence services of the United States for President Joe Biden has concluded that it is "inconclusive" as to whether COVID-19 emerged from an animal transmitting it to a human, or whether it had, as rumoured, escaped from a research facility in the city of Wuhan. When it was announced that the report had been commissioned, US intelligence agencies were fairly evenly split on the odds of either scenario, with the report meant to help build a consensus behind one of the theories. The report cites that one of the main reasons for the continuing inconclusiveness is a "lack of detailed information from China". China's unwillingness to share details means that experts are increasingly willing to believe the country could be attempting to hide information regarding their research labs and a possible virus leak, a hypothesis that was originally dismissed as a conspiracy propagated by the US far right.

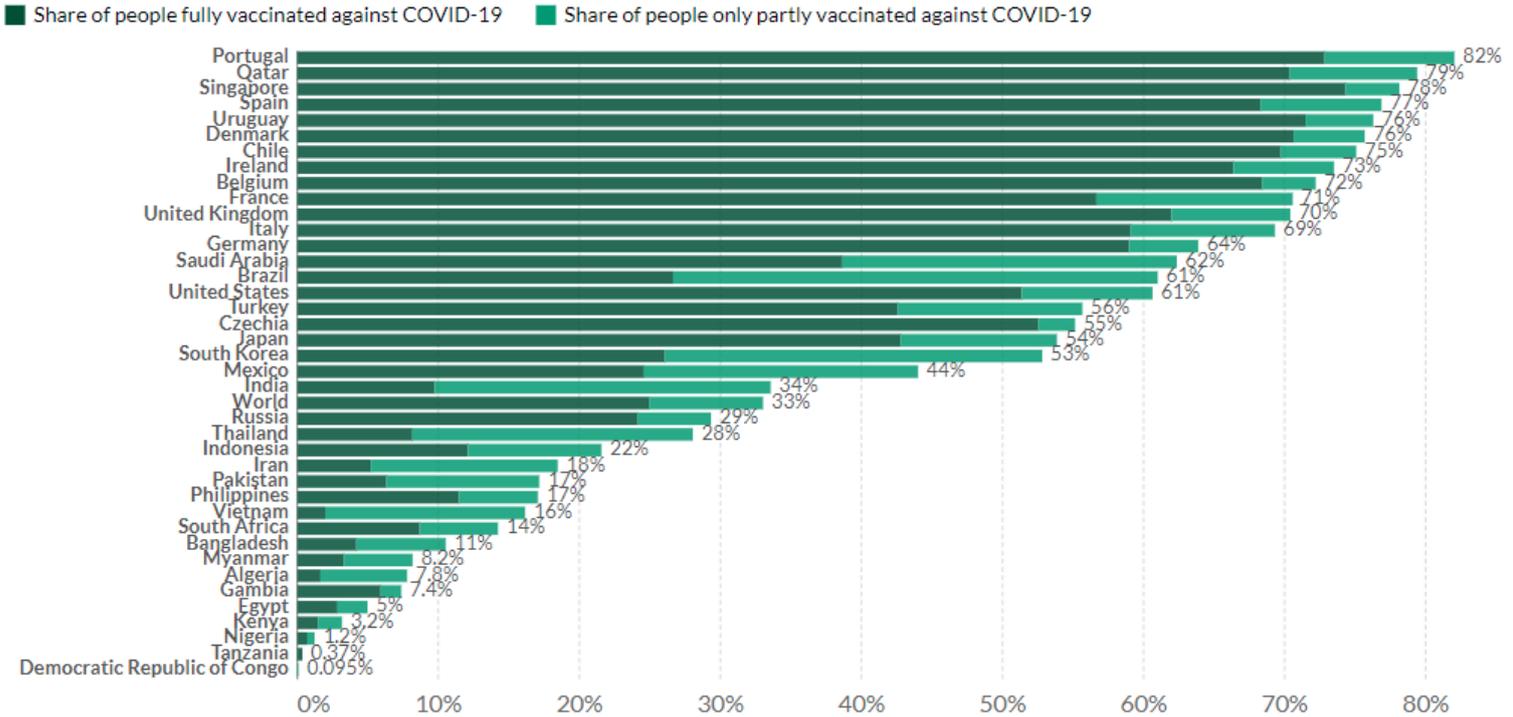
Vaccination Updates

An Israeli study has highlighted that giving "booster" shots to those who are more vulnerable in society is likely to ensure increased protection from COVID-19. The study shows that people who were initially vaccinated in January or February were 50 percent more likely to have a "breakthrough" case of COVID-19 in the summer months, than those who had received their initial vaccination in March or April. Furthermore, Analysis revealed that for infections

with a high viral load, protection a month after the second Pfizer dose was 90 percent greater than an unvaccinated individual, reducing to 85 percent after two months and 78 percent after three. There remains, however, a moral argument as to whether wealthier nations should begin using booster shots, whilst much of the world is still to receive their first COVID-19 vaccinations. Statistics indicated that 45 out of 54 African countries will be unable to reach their September targets of vaccinating 10 percent of their populations. This is due to the fact that wealthier countries have ordered large numbers of doses resulting in African nations being unable to secure enough for themselves. The United States, for instance, still has a further 2 billion vaccines on order despite 60 percent of their population having received at least one dose.

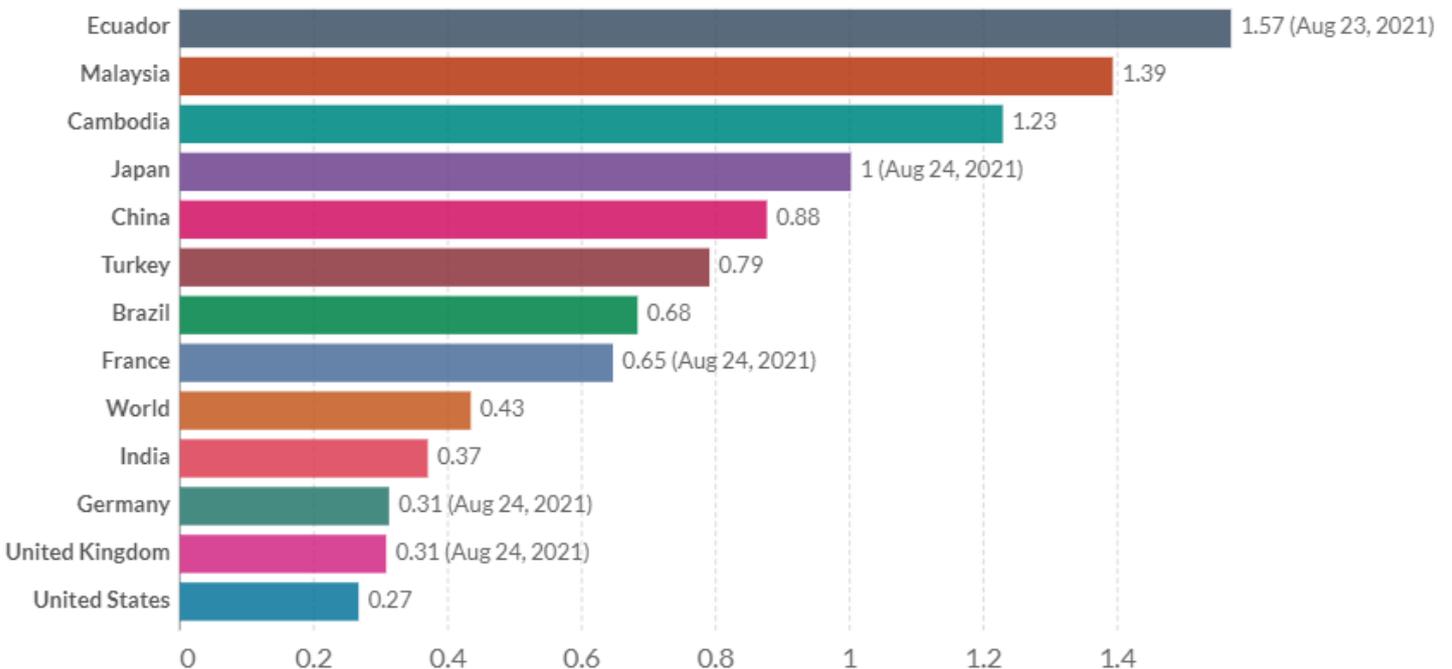
Whilst many in the industrial nations remain hesitant of the AstraZeneca vaccine due to the earlier research around links to blood clotting, data shows that the company had delivered 91 million vaccines to the COVAX scheme. The program is designed to help middle income and developing countries procure COVID-19 vaccine doses. As a result of this popularity, roughly two-thirds of all the vaccines sourced through COVAX are AstraZeneca.

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

Daily COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data - Last updated 26 August 2021, 09:30 (London time)

Select Country Updates**Canada**

Experts in the country had warned that vaccines will not be enough to stop a fourth wave of the pandemic. Despite having partially vaccinated almost 73 percent of the population, there are still around 10 million Canadians who have not yet received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. As such, a further lockdown in the country is a likely possibility.

In addition, Air Canada has announced that all its employees, including any new hires, will have to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The airline added that testing would not be offered as an alternative to mandatory vaccinations. Exceptions will be made, however, for individuals who cannot be vaccinated for approved reasons, such as a medical condition.

Mexico

The country is currently in the middle of a third wave of the pandemic, driven primarily by the Delta variant. Officially the country has now recorded 3.25 million cases of the virus, however, the government has not placed a priority on testing and as such, this is believed to be a small proportion of the actual number of cases.

At the time of writing, the country's epicentres are Mexico City, México state, Nuevo León and Tabasco. Nationally 57 percent of all intensive care beds in the country are occupied by COVID patients, with six Mexican states having more than 70 percent of their intensive care beds occupied by COVID patients.

The country has so far administered 81 million doses of vaccines against the virus, with 44 percent of the population having had at least one dose, and around 25 percent two doses of a vaccine. The country also received 1.75 million Moderna vaccines from the US on 24 August, this forms a portion of the 8.5 million vaccines that the US has pledged to send Mexico.

Meanwhile, the governor of the state of Nuevo Leon is organising bus convoys of Mexicans from the state to cross the US border to receive their vaccines. Thus far, 40 buses full of unvaccinated Mexicans crossed the border to Texas on 19 August. American vaccines are now widely available to non-US citizens – something many residents in countries close to the US are now taking advantage of.

Slovenia

Doctors in Slovenia have begun to use a new antibody treatment on some COVID patients in the country's hospitals. The treatment known as Ronagen/RegenCOV is designed to mimic the reaction of the body's natural antibodies. It has been developed jointly by the companies Regeneron and Roche. The country has recently received 1,000 doses of the treatment which has been granted a temporary permit from the Slovenian Agency for Medicinal Products and Medical Devices.

Spain

The country's health ministry has stated that they would be living through a "massacre" had they not vaccinated

the population ahead of what is now a fifth wave of the pandemic. This comes as the country reports its worst daily death toll since May.

Since June 2021 when the country's infection rates began picking up, a fifth of the country's total infections have occurred. Despite this, the same period represents only 2.2 percent of the country's COVID deaths proving how successful vaccinations can be at preventing COVID-19 deaths.

Despite this, the country now has over 4.7 million doses of vaccines sitting in storages facilities, whilst the number of weekly vaccinations has halved to around 2 million a week. Spanish officials currently attribute this to the fact that August is historically the summer holiday period for much of Europe, and hope that the pace of vaccinations will begin picking up again in September. Vaccine hesitancy overall in Spain continues to be low, with just 3 percent of the population saying they would reject a COVID vaccine.

Russia

Deeply entrenched vaccine scepticism continues to hinder the country's response to the pandemic. The country continues to see around 20,000 new COVID-19 infections recorded daily, though many believe the official numbers to be higher.

The country's deep-seated distrust of vaccines is only hampered by the fact that Russian state media have often used dubious science and misinformation to try and stoke confusion in Western Europe.

At the time of writing, the country has vaccinated just 23 per cent of its total population, and the death toll has exceeded its previous record, by surpassing 800 deaths. Meanwhile, health officials say that 98 per cent of all those hospitalised are unvaccinated. The worsening situation, and the lack of vaccine uptake, has led officials across the country to announce a number of incentives for those who get vaccinated. These include a lottery where winners can win USD 31,000. This is over 5 times the average annual salary in the country.

Philippines

On 23 August, the country's Health Ministry acknowledged that community transmission of the contagious Delta variant was occurring in the Manila capital region. Over one-fourth of the country's total COVID cases have been recorded in the last four weeks, causing concern that the Delta variant is driving a new wave of the virus.

As a result of the surge in cases, the country has approved the emergency use of the single-dose Russian, Sputnik vaccine. The country is the first in the region to do so, and the approval allows it to order up to 10 million doses. Meanwhile, the government hopes that it will see increased vaccine deliveries in September and October. The nation's health ministry has so far approved nine differing vaccines including those produced by Sinovac, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson.

As cases rise in the country it continues to highlight the country's deficit in health workers. Many of the nation's health workers have left for positions overseas with better pay and working conditions. It is reported that 17,000 nurses left in 2019.

Meanwhile, due to the stresses placed on them in the pandemic, it is estimated that 40 per cent of private hospital nurses in the country quit the profession in 2020. Health workers and leaders are warning of a looming catastrophe unless the government acts to improve conditions in the country, as health workers continue to leave the profession and country just as hospital beds are once again rapidly filling up.

Taiwan

The country has recorded its first day with zero COVID-19 cases since the start of its recent outbreak in May – this recent outbreak led to the country recording a further 800 deaths.

The outbreak caught the Taiwanese government off guard after they had been extremely successful in containing previous cases in the country. As a result, the country's vaccination programme increased pace rapidly, and the test and trace surveillance system were bolstered.

As a result, the vaccination programme has now given first doses to at least 40 percent of the island's population, however, full the percentage of those fully immunised remains small, at just three per cent.

Australia

Despite initial successes last year, the Australian government is increasingly being criticised for its zero COVID strategy and botched vaccination campaign. Sydney entered a two-week lockdown in June, and eight weeks later the city is still in lockdown, with cases increasing exponentially.

Meanwhile, among OECD nations the country ranks third last for the proportion of its population vaccinated, whilst the government has repeatedly changed its advice regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine, which it has millions of spare doses of as a consequence, whilst the country is running short of the Pfizer vaccine. As a result, the Australian government has reputedly accessed 500,000 Pfizer vaccines through the COVAX scheme, which is designed for low to middle-income countries – something Australia is not considered. The government has also purchased 1 million Pfizer vaccines from the state of Poland.

The Prime Minister has announced that the country's strategy of lockdowns will stay in place until 70 per cent of the country is vaccinated. The combination of the increasing spread of the disease and numerous lockdowns, this announcement led to large anti-lockdown protests in many state capitals. There are also fears around whether the 70 per cent target will be reached as around one in three Australians have stated they would refuse to be vaccinated for COVID.



Copyright © 2021 Solace Global Risk Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, copied, translated, sold, or distributed, in whole or in part without the consent of Solace Global Risk Limited.

Solace Global remains available to provide our full range of Travel Risk Management services to clients throughout this current pandemic. Whether you require customised reports, training, comprehensive crisis management, in-country journey management, tracking, response, evacuation services or something specific, we are able to tailor our services to your operational needs, wherever or whatever they may be.

For further details, please email risk@solaceglobal.com or give us a call on +44 (0) 1202 308 810.