

**SOLACE** GLOBAL

# **COVID-19 Weekly Update**

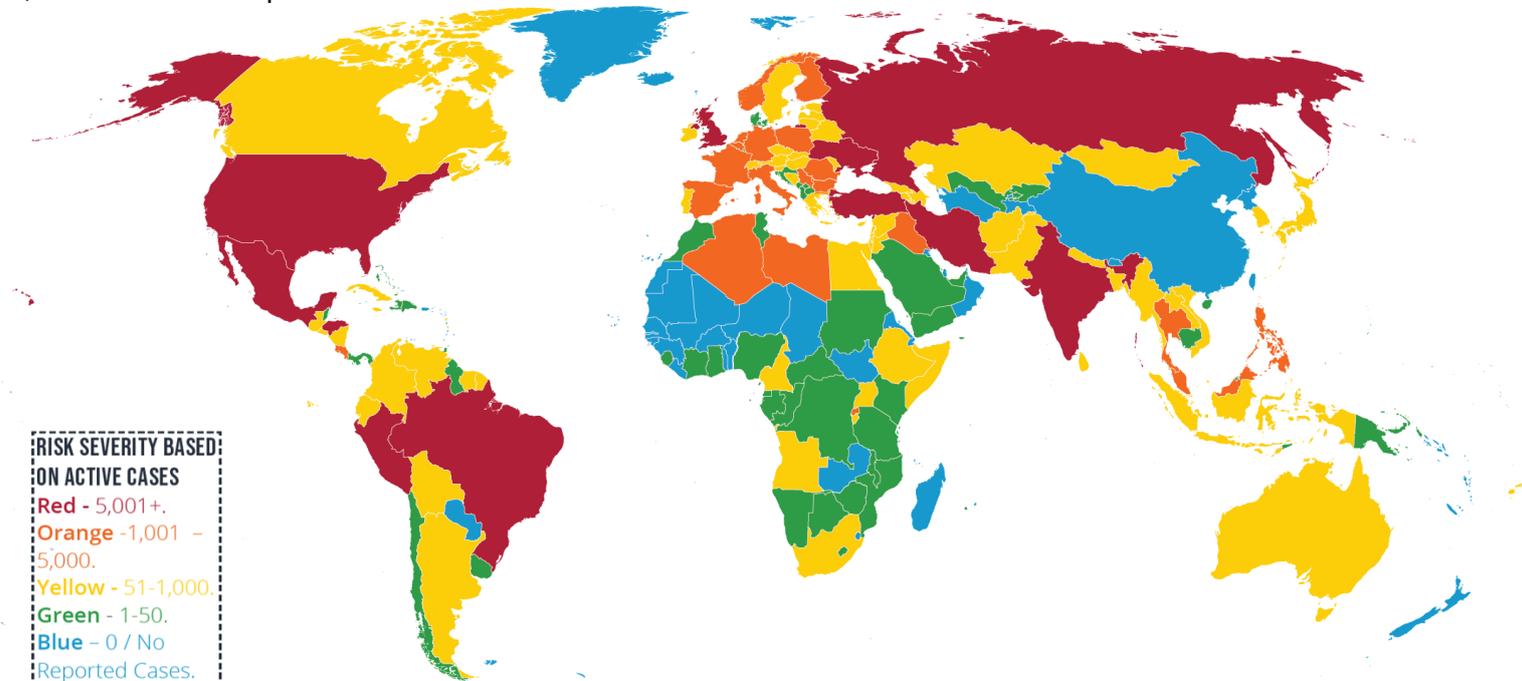
**14 October 2021**



## Executive Summary

Globally, the numbers of weekly COVID-19 cases and related deaths continue to decline. There are now just under 240 million confirmed cases, with 2.64 million new cases in the past seven days. Only Europe and Oceania saw an increase in cases in the past week compared with the preceding week. In Europe, the rise in case numbers was largely driven by a strong increase in Germany, Russia and the UK.

The number of confirmed deaths globally is down with a global 6 percent drop in the past seven days. Only Europe saw an increase in the number of weekly deaths compared to the week before. This was driven by a number of countries, including Belgium Germany, Romania and Ukraine. Only Romania, Russia and Ukraine reported over 1,000 deaths in the past week.



## Notable Updates

The UK's health and security agency has announced that surveillance of the country's COVID-19 landscape has revealed that due to the dominance of Delta, many of the other variants which have been detected are becoming extinct. This pattern is being repeated across the globe wherever the Delta has appeared. The dominance of Delta is currently preventing variants from other regions, such as Mu or Lambda from South America, or Kappa from India, from spreading more widely. Scientists are increasingly concerned that as Delta continues to circulate amongst unvaccinated people and regions it is likely that it could further mutate into a "sub-variant" of Delta. Such a variant or sub-variant of Delta has the potential to hamper vaccination efforts and result in a further resurgence of cases and deaths.

A new study from France shows that the risk of dying or being hospitalised from contracting COVID-19 falls by 90 percent in the over fifties if they have been fully vaccinated. The study compared 11.3 million vaccinated over fifties with the same number of unvaccinated over fifties. This study only provides further proof of the effectiveness of the current generation of COVID-19 vaccines at reducing the risks of illness or death if COVID-19 is contracted. As a result of this study, the French authors behind it stated that an epidemic that "no longer has serious or deadly infections is no longer an epidemic".

Elsewhere, it has been alleged in the media that the British security services now have evidence that Russian agents successfully stole the blueprints for the AstraZeneca vaccine and that these blueprints then went on to form the basis of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine. These allegations come after it was revealed at the end of the 2021 that Russian hackers had targeted British, American and Canadian pharmaceutical companies in an attempt to try and steal information relating to various vaccines then under development.

## Vaccination Updates

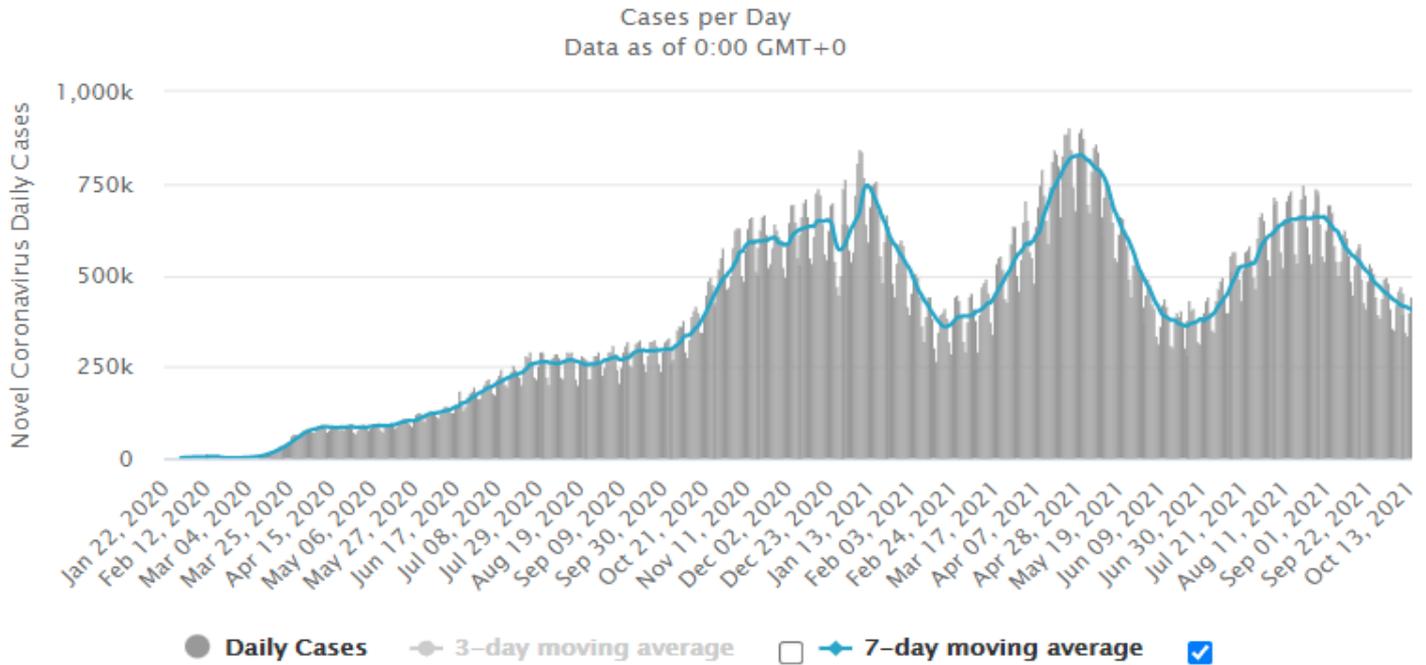
One of the first pill based COVID-19 treatments has been submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency authorisation of use. The drug is designed to treat moderate to mild instances of the disease. If it is authorised, it would be the first drug available to treat COVID-19 that can be taken in a non-hospital setting. If the authorisation is given, Merck & Co Inc, the drug's maker, has a contract to supply 1.7 million courses to the American government, and it would expect to produce 10 million courses of the treatment by the end of 2021.

AstraZeneca, meanwhile, has announced that a new antibody treatment that it has developed against COVID-19 has the ability to both prevent and treat the disease. The company has submitted a request to the US FDA for emergency use authorisation of its treatment. The treatment is a combination of two different antibodies that are injected into the

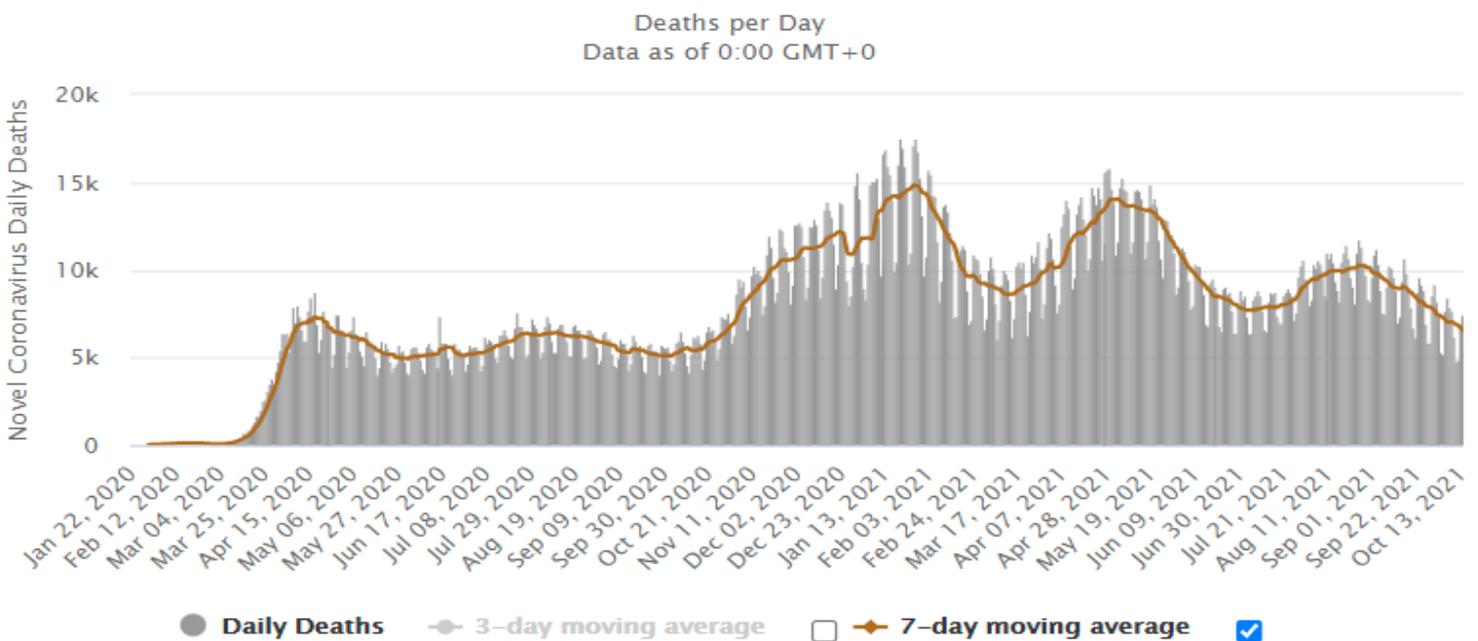
patient’s muscle. Trials of the treatment by the pharmaceutical company show that for those who received the treatment within five days of their first COVID-19 symptoms appearing, the treatment reduced the risk of developing severe Covid or death by 67 percent compared with a placebo. A different trial showed the treatment significantly reduced the risk of developing or catching COVID-19 amongst those who had health issues meaning they were unable to take a standard COVID-19 vaccine.

New data shows that by the end of November, 50 percent of the world’s population will have received at least one dose of a vaccine to protect them against COVID-19. Whilst at the current global rates, around 20-30 million more doses are being distributed every day. Despite this, the global vaccine divide remains. More than 95 percent of the those in low-income countries have yet to receive their first vaccination dose.

One of the developers behind the AstraZeneca vaccine has stated that the pandemic has highlighted the lack of proper structured funding in the wider vaccine creation space. Despite the newfound awareness of how powerful vaccines can be at saving lives, many researchers are still struggling to get funding to create vaccines for well known infectious diseases such as the Nipah virus, which has a 50 percent mortality rate.



Source: **Worldometer** - [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info)



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**Select Country Updates****Estonia**

In Estonia, the country's case rate per 100,000 has now climbed to 859.31. The country has vaccinated around 63 percent of its population whilst 65 percent of the country has received at least one of the vaccinations. This level of vaccination coverage is higher than that found in fellow Baltic states such as Latvia and Lithuania, however, when compared to other higher incoming EU countries such as Finland, Austria and France it is a lower rate.

Due to the country's lower vaccination rate and high per 100,000 infection rates, it has now been placed on the EU Health Agency's red list of member states. This means that travel to and from Estonia should be discouraged.

**Russia**

The country has once again broken its daily death toll from COVID-19. The new highest daily death toll is 984 deaths recorded on 13 October. Meanwhile, Rosstat, the country's official statistics agency, stated that their records show that 49,389 people died of coronavirus in August. This is more than double the official government COVID-19 figures.

The country's persistently low vaccination rate is being blamed for the high death levels. Only 29 percent of the country are fully vaccinated whilst around 33 percent have had at least one dose. This low vaccination rate has continued despite many incentives such as lotteries and prize giving.

Despite the government's blame that the high infection rate is simply down to the country's lack of vaccinations other factors are also likely. These include the fact that preventative measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing are loosely enforced, if at all, and the government continues to dismiss calls for action at the federal level such as some form of lockdown.

**Serbia**

The country's leading epidemiologist has announced that the country is most likely one the hardest hit by the ongoing pandemic due to the "lax" attitude towards the pandemic. This lax attitude is compounded by societies widespread mistrust in the government.

The country has officially reported 1 million confirmed cases and 8,500 deaths. The excess mortality figures show a figure in excess of 30,000. This is, per capita, the fifth-highest excess death toll in the world. This is despite the country's vaccination campaign starting well, with three times as many people as the EU average vaccinated by February 2021. Since then, the vaccination drive has struggled and now less than 42 percent of the population have been inoculated.

The slump in vaccinations can be traced to poor government communication, the widespread mistrust in government and institutions, including the health care system, and the fact that the country's media has given prominence to well-known vaccine sceptics.

**Japan**

Despite a slow start earlier this year with the country's vaccination campaign, over 60 percent of the nation's population are now fully vaccinated, and positive daily case numbers are trending downwards.

Japanese medical authorities believed that with the earlier strains of COVID-19 this percentage of vaccination coverages would be enough to reach herd immunity. They now believe however that as the Delta strain has a reproduction value between 5 to 9 people, that the country needs to vaccination at least 80 per cent of the country to reach the same levels of herd immunity initially hoped for.

Meanwhile, the country's new Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, has stated that in response to the pandemic, one of his priorities will be to strengthen the country's healthcare system. He is planning to increase the financial compensation that healthcare workers receive after many resigned due to the strains placed on them by the pandemic. Further to this, he wishes to prepare the country's healthcare system for future waves of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases.

**Hong Kong**

The city's Chief-Executive is coming under increasing pressure to abandon travel curbs as its main regional rival, Singapore, increasingly reopens for business travel. Ms Lam stated that it was her duty to protect Hong Kong and that Beijing sees the city as a "weak link" in China's zero-COVID-19 strategy.

Hong Kong's restrictive border policy only allows travel between the semi-autonomous region and mainland China. Those who do wish to enter the city, and are permitted to do so, must spend 21 days in mandatory hotel quarantine regardless of vaccination status.

A gradual border reopening could take place when the city reaches a threshold of 70 percent fully vaccinated. At the time of writing less than 60 percent of the city is fully vaccinated. More widely than Singapore, Hong Kong's main economic rivals, such as London, New York and Dubai, are increasingly beginning to open their international borders and drop their most restrictive travel restrictions.

**Kenya**

The country has fully vaccinated just over 1 million with 4.1 million residents partially vaccinated. This means that it has now fully vaccinated around 2 percent of its total population. The country's vaccination campaign began in March has used a variety of vaccines including AstraZeneca, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Sinopharm and Pfizer.

Meanwhile one of the country's towns, Homa Bay, is facing what doctors in the country have called a triple tragedy. It currently is battling three epidemics at once, HIV, COVID-19 and Malaria. Such a situation of simultaneous epidemics is the worst fear of several African countries where other deadly diseases are

endemic, and, as such, the convergence of these three diseases in Kenya and how the health authorities manage them will be watched closely across Africa.

### Ghana

The country has received a further 1.3 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine via the COVAX facility. This brings the total number of vaccines received by the country from COVAX up to 2.5 million. Meanwhile, a study of keyword trends has shown that on the Ghanaian internet, hashtags and keywords have in recent weeks relating to anti-vaccination conspiracy theories have seen a marked increase in usage, suggesting that those against vaccines are becoming increasingly vocal, or that anti-

vaccination disinformation is spreading through the country.

The country's president has also once more spoken publicly about the precarious nature of vaccines supplies across Africa more widely, stating that in Ghana and across Africa they are dependent on the goodwill of wealthier nations who "give out their stockpiles".



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