

SOLACE GLOBAL

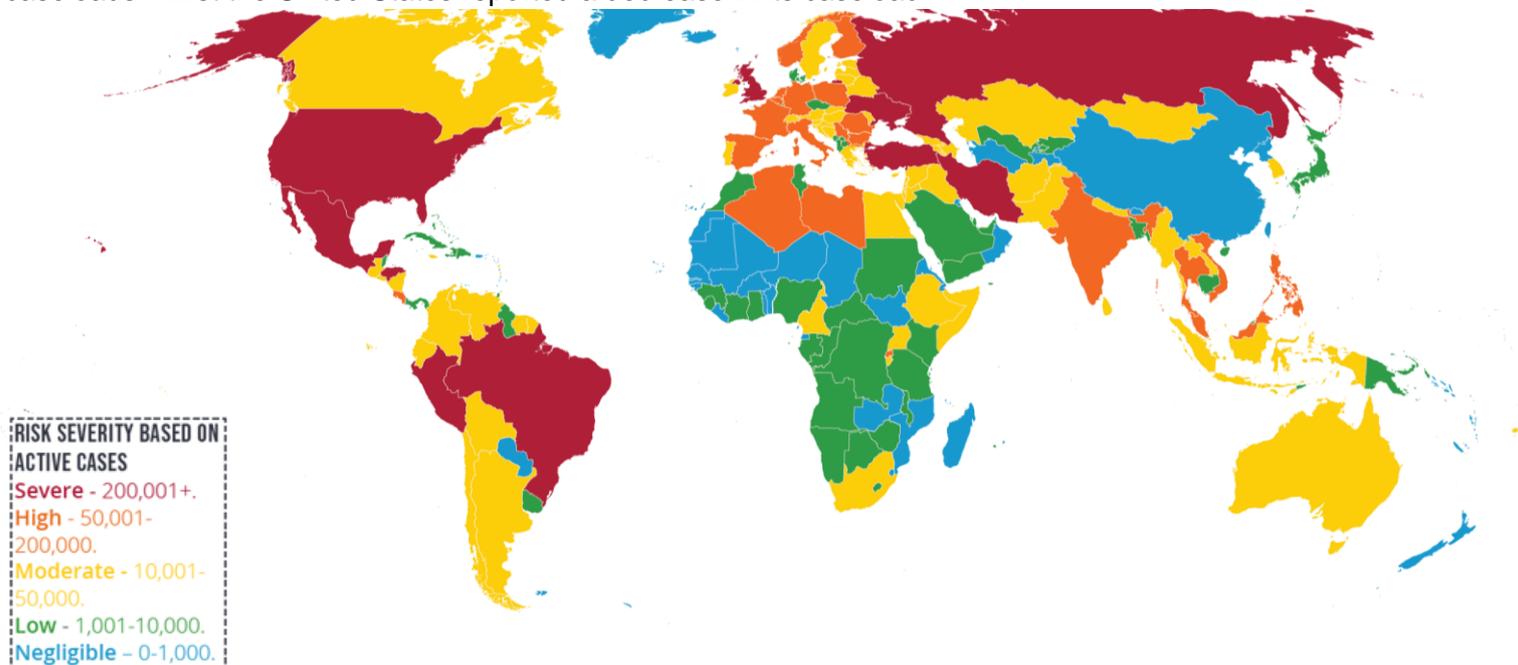
COVID-19 Weekly Update

21 October 2021



Executive Summary

Globally this week the number of cases and deaths remain at broadly similar levels to that of last week with around 2.7 million new cases and a little over 46,000 new weekly deaths. According to information from the World Health Organisation all regions of the world apart from Europe reported that new weekly cases were in decline. The largest weekly declines came from Africa and the Western Pacific, where the decline was 18 and 16 percent respectively. On a national basis the countries which were reporting the highest numbers of new cases were the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia. Both the United Kingdom and Russia also reported an increase in their weekly caseloads whilst the United States reported a decrease in its caseload.



Notable Updates

The United Kingdom has announced that it is investigating a new “descendent” of the Delta Variant. This has been called AY.4.2. This variant has some new mutations which are believed to affect the virus’ spike protein, and at the time of writing AY.4.2 is believed to account for around 10 percent of all new British COVID-19 cases. There are early concerns amongst British epidemiologists that the new variant may be around ten to fifteen percent more transmissible than the original Delta variant. The UK Health Agency has also stated however that the mutations which have developed in AY.4.2 have previously been seen in other lineages of the Delta variant which have sprung up across the world.

Meanwhile the WHO has also announced that they have appointed a new panel of 26 scientists to try and work out exactly what and where the origins of the Sar-Cov-2 virus which causes COVID-19 are. It will be hoped that the new panel will have more success than the WHO’s original investigation which stalled due to accusations of biases and became embroiled in international political disputes. At the same time as the announcement from the WHO, China announced that it would analyse over 200,000 blood samples held in the country’s blood banks. These blood samples most of which date from 2019 are believed to be key in trying to locate the early emergence of COVID-19. This analysis however is caveated by the fact that China has also stated it will not allow foreign scientists to see any of the data that this study produces.

The global economy continued its slowdown, as the continued overhang from the pandemic, and pandemic induced supply shortages is leading to an “unstable and uneven” recovery. The spectre of inflation in several industrialised nations is leading central banks and policy makers to contemplate a quicker winding up of the economic stimulus packages they put in place to safeguard national economies through the pandemic. This is as they wish to try to get ahead of any possible inflationary spirals. There are warnings however that doing so might threaten the often-patchy nature of the global economic recovery from the pandemic.

Vaccination Updates

The first comprehensive scientific study to investigate the benefits of mixing and matching COVID-19 vaccines shows that this tactic is considerably more effective than receiving the same vaccine twice over. The study showed that those that had had the AstraZeneca vaccine followed by the Pfizer one had a 67 percent lower infection risk, whilst those who received AstraZeneca, followed by Moderna vaccines saw their risk of infection drop by 79 percent. These drops are compared to a 50 percent reduction amongst those who received the AstraZeneca vaccine twice.

This week new data has emerged showing that the vaccine developed by the French company, Valneva, is likely to be as effective as the AstraZeneca developed vaccine. The Valneva vaccine works on the traditional vaccine method

of delivering the whole – but inactivated – Sars-CoV-2 virus into the body.

It is also believed that this more traditional approach means the vaccine is less likely to be affected by variants as it is unlikely that multiple parts of the virus will mutate at the same time. Early trial results with the vaccine also indicated that the Valneva vaccine was also more successful in triggering T cells. The Valneva vaccine was able to give rise to T cells that not only were able to respond to the spike cell protein of the virus, but to two other key proteins in the virus’ genetic makeup. This is believed to be occurring since the vaccine uses the entirety of the Sars-Cov-2 virus, and not just the specific part of the spike protein as other vaccines, such as AstraZeneca, Pfizer, and Moderna currently do.

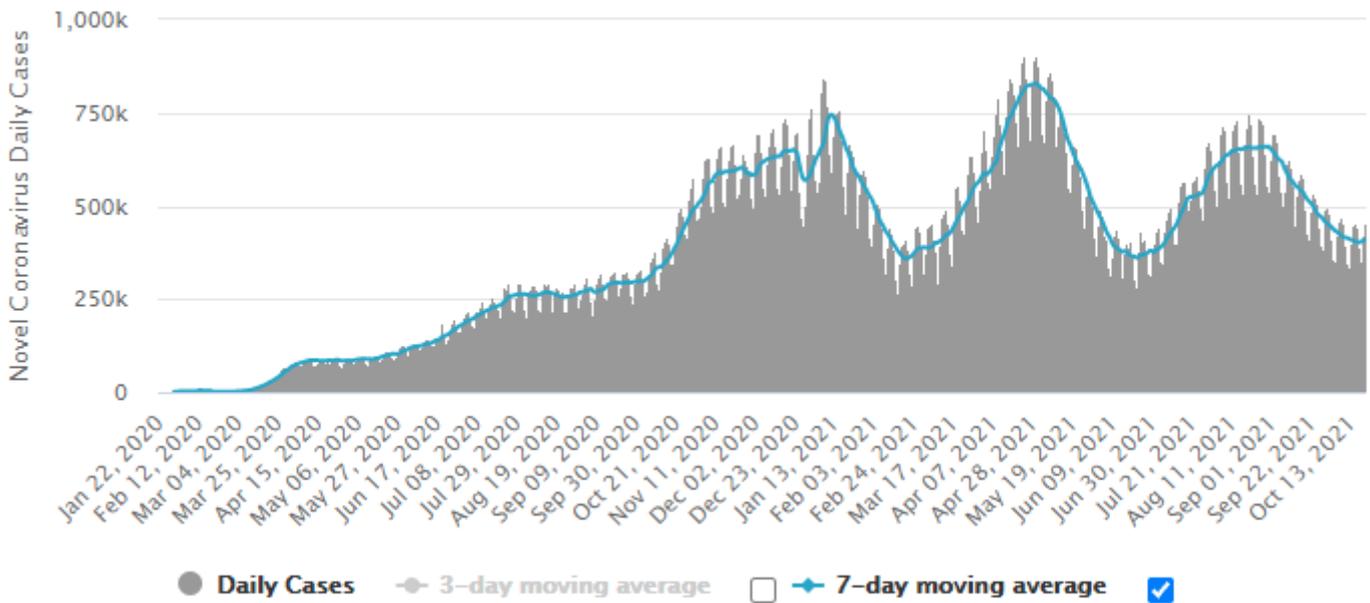
Due to Valneva’s more traditional vaccine product it is hoped that it might be more acceptable as an option to those who currently are refusing to take up the offers of vaccination based on their concerns over the longer-term health concerns due to the unproven nature of the current COVID-19 vaccines in circulation.

Germany has announced that it may well miss its target to donate 100 million vaccines to poorer countries by the end of 2021. If this is the case it would likely mean that the EU would also miss its targets, as German donations make over half the total of EU donations for this year. Germany states that the reasons for missing its targets are due to longer than expected delivery times and stringent conditions imposed by vaccine manufactures. As of October 19, the German Foreign Office stated that the country had so far donated 15 percent of its 2021 donation targets. This has once again shone a spotlight on the issues of vaccinations for poorer countries, whilst previously richer countries have been accused of being behind the lack of vaccines for poorer countries, it is not the first time the pharmaceutical companies have also been implicated in this shortage.

In response to the German announcement Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca have both stated that they were supporting donations and supplies to poorer nations, either through arranging the transportation of surplus doses, or through working with COVAX. Both companies also stated the vaccine donation process could sometimes have long lead times that manufacturers and donor countries could sometimes do little to shorten

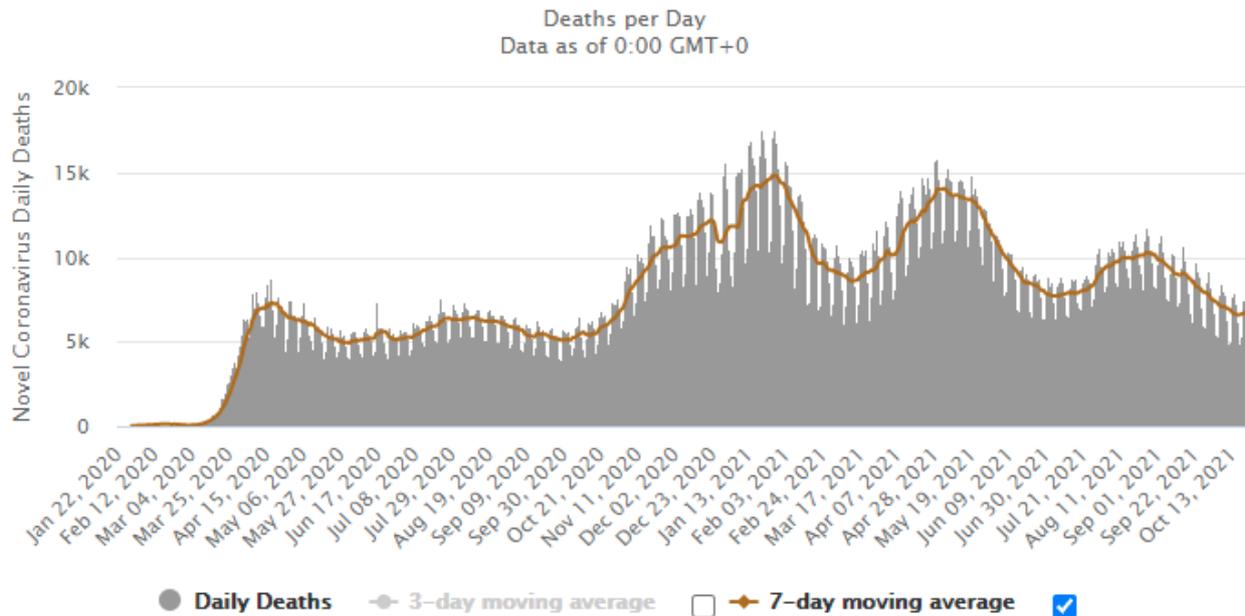
Daily New Cases

Cases per Day
Data as of 0:00 GMT+0



Source: Worldometer - www.worldometers.info

Daily Deaths



Source: Worldometer - www.worldometers.info

Select Country Updates

Russia

The Russian government has announced that 30 October to 7 November will be declared “non-working days” to try and curb the country’s epidemic before winter sets in with a new countrywide lockdown.

The mayor of Moscow meanwhile has passed a city-wide order that all unvaccinated residents over 60 years of age or who suffer from “chronic disease” are to remain inside their home until February. This is as the city tries to protect them from the double threat of COVID-19 in the middle of a Russian winter.

The COVID-19 epidemic has worsened with each passing week over recent months, with new record high death tolls often being set in each 24-hour period. Indeed, on 20 October a new record high death toll of 1,028 was set.

One Russian epidemiologist who used to be an advisor to the WHO stated that Russia had “fallen into a disaster”, and that the situation would only likely worsen through the winter. Several Russian regions such as Oryol have now run out of hospital capacity. Despite these grim warning signs, the rate of vaccination across the country remains low, at 31 percent fully vaccinated. Vaccine scepticism is high though with 52 percent of the country not willing to receive the vaccine.

Latvia

The country has become the first country in Europe to reimpose a stringent lockdown after the country recorded one of the highest infection rates per capita in the world. The new lockdown will last for one month, and closes all non-essential businesses, schools, and includes a curfew between the hours of 20:00 and 05:00am.

The country has only vaccinated 57 percent of its population which is below the EU average of 75 percent. Some regions of the country have an even lower vaccination rate of 25 percent. The government has blamed the country’s vaccine hesitancy on Russian language disinformation which has spread rapidly through Latvia’s large Russian speaking minority.

Poland

The Polish Deputy Health Minister has announced that the country has seen cases increase by 85 percent in a week, as on 20 October the country’s daily case rate surpassed 5,000 for the first time since May.

The government stated that even though they may have to take “drastic” measures to get the situation under control again. However, they have ruled out a new lockdown of any form or duration.

The country’s infection rate has picked up again from a low base as people have become less concerned about following the few remaining restrictions in place. Furthermore, in recent months the national vaccination campaign has slowed significantly as those most likely to get the vaccines have done so.

China

The country has reported a fourth day with new locally transmitted COVID-19 infections. 17 new cases were reported on 19 October. One of the new cases was reported to be in Beijing where officials are beginning to make final preparations for the city’s hosting of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

Other cases were reported in Inner Mongolia, and Hunan province. The geographical disparity of the cases has led some to conclude that China currently has multiple sources of infection and transmission across

the country. If this were the case it would complicate China's "Zero COVID-19" policy.

Of the 17 newly reported infections, several of them were close contacts of an elderly couple who travelled around Shaanxi, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia on holiday before testing positive for the virus. Authorities in the country have not yet stated whether the couple are the source of the new outbreak, or whether they contracted the virus from someone else.

Cambodia

The Cambodian government has announced that it will be pushing for a 100 percent vaccination target, one of the few countries in the world to set such a target. At the time of writing, 75.5 percent of the country's residents are fully vaccinated, whilst over 80 percent have received at least one dose.

As result of the country's successful vaccination campaign, the country's daily new infection rate is below 200 and the economy which had suffered under the strict lockdown measure is beginning to resume activity – which for the six million in the country's informal economy who lost jobs because of the shutdown will be seen as a positive.

Philippines

The government has announced that it has increased target number of daily COVID-19 vaccinations to 1.5 million a day. This new target is triple the current daily rate of vaccine dispensation of around 405,000. At the time of writing, 24.5 million Filipinos have been completely vaccinated which roughly equates to around 31.7 percent of the population whilst a further 28.3 million have received at least their first dose. The country has received the first tranche of a donation of 20,000 AstraZeneca vaccines from Brunei Darussalam. The Philippines has so far received around 92.5 million doses of vaccines with the two major suppliers being the United States and China

Pakistan

The country has seen its active caseload drop below 25,000 for the first time in seven months. Whilst this week daily coronavirus infections in Pakistan also fell to their lowest level in a year after the country recorded 554 fresh cases on 18 October.

The national vaccination drive has administered around 93.5 million vaccines. This is enough to have fully covered around 21 percent of the country's population. The authorities have announced that they are vaccinating around 10 percent of the country's population every 48 days.

Nigeria

On October 20, the Nigerian centre for Disease Control stated that the country had recorded no new deaths from the virus in the preceding 24 hours. The country in the same period had recorded a further 159 new infections across the country.

The Kaduna State Government has announced that being vaccinated and wearing facemasks will now be compulsory for anyone who wishes access to any state government office.

Somalia

A new study has been published which shows that in Somalia, deaths from COVID were at least 32 times higher than figures officially recorded by the government. The study published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases estimates that between 3,200 to 11,800 people died from the effects of COVID-19 between March and September 2020 in Mogadishu alone. During the same time frame, the Somalian government only reported that the national death toll was 99.



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