



# COVID-19 Monthly Update

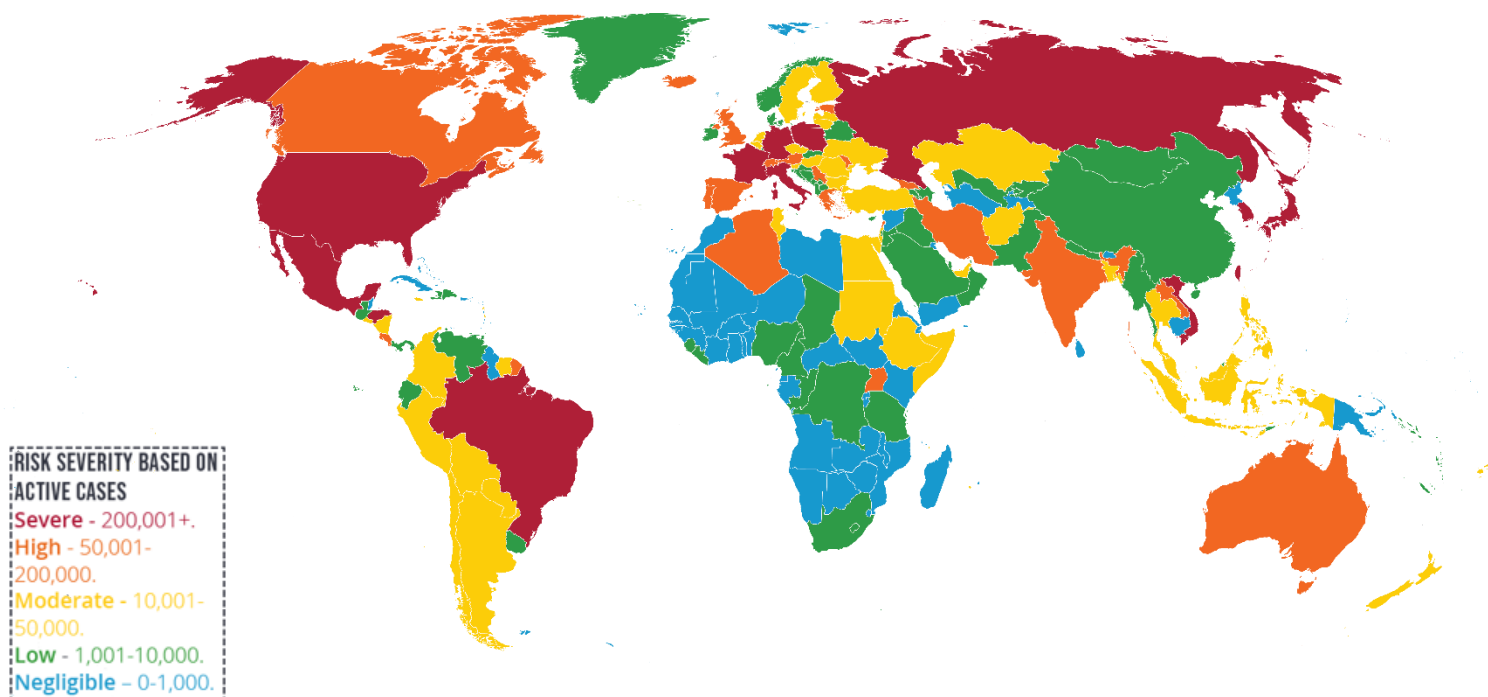
## September 2022

## Executive Summary

Over the last month, the global number of COVID-19 cases has decreased for the first time since May, whilst the monthly death toll has continued to increase. Data from the WHO shows that the month of August saw over 25.1 million infections and 70,184 deaths. This compares to 29.7 million cases and around 55,500 deaths recorded in July. This is a decrease of around 15.5 percent in cases, whilst the monthly death toll has increased by over 26 percent.

The global decrease in new cases is likely driven by changing global testing strategies for COVID-19, resulting in fewer tests being performed and therefore lower numbers of new cases detected. Although global cases have decreased, it is likely that global death figures have continued to increase as a result of infections in those who had not yet been infected, which included those who had “sheltered” or “shielded” due to ill health during the earlier phases of the pandemic, and are therefore at greater risk of death from the disease. High death rates may also be partially due to the prevalence of Omicron subvariants which have been associated with more severe disease.

Data from genome sequencing continues to show that Omicron and its lineages made up 99.4 percent of all infections reported and sequenced in the last 30 days. The BA.5 Omicron variant constitutes around 86 percent of these infections, and the BA.4 descendent constituting approximately 4 percent. Differences in sequencing capacity and sampling strategies between countries, combined with an overall reduction in global testing rates, may limit the accuracy of genomic sequencing for SARS-CoV-2.



## Notable Updates

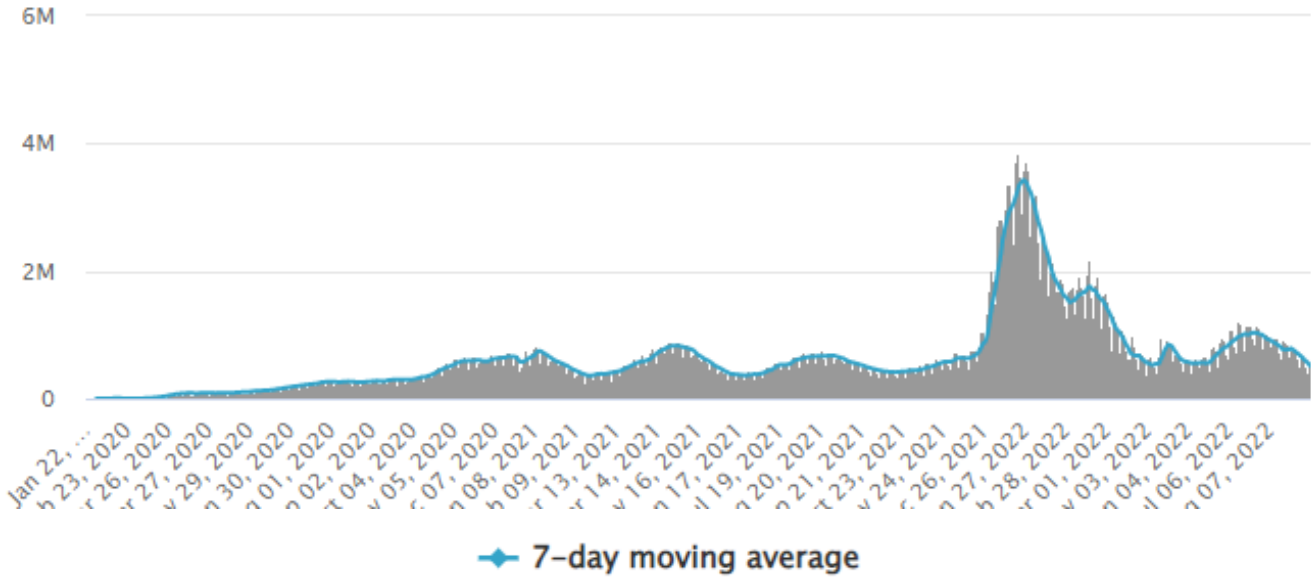
An interdisciplinary group of scientists who have been researching “long-COVID” have published a paper in Nature which they claim goes some way to answering outstanding questions about the medical condition. Their research shows that in patients who develop long-COVID, antibodies responsible for neutralising the viral threat simultaneously targeted their own organs and tissues, and that these antibodies can remain in immune systems for months or years after the initial infection has subsided. This group of researchers believes that the activities of these antibodies in attacking their host’s own body are directly contributing to the symptoms long-COVID patients have reported. Despite these findings, the paper’s authors held back from labelling long-COVID a classic auto-immune disease, although they suggested that given the similarities between other auto-immune diseases and long-COVID certain therapeutic models which work on the former may also provide relief for those suffering with the latter.

With the transition from summer to autumn underway in Europe, several countries have begun preparations for a comprehensive campaign for winter flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. The European Medical Agency (EMA) has approved Pfizer vaccines which have been reworked to specifically target the BA.1 omicron variant of COVID. It is expected that approval for doses which target the BA.4 and BA.5 strains will be approved later this month. Alongside this, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has recommended that all people aged 60 and over, those with compromised immune systems due to illness or treatment, and health care workers should be prioritised for another booster dose.

Daily Case and Death Graphs via *Worldometer*

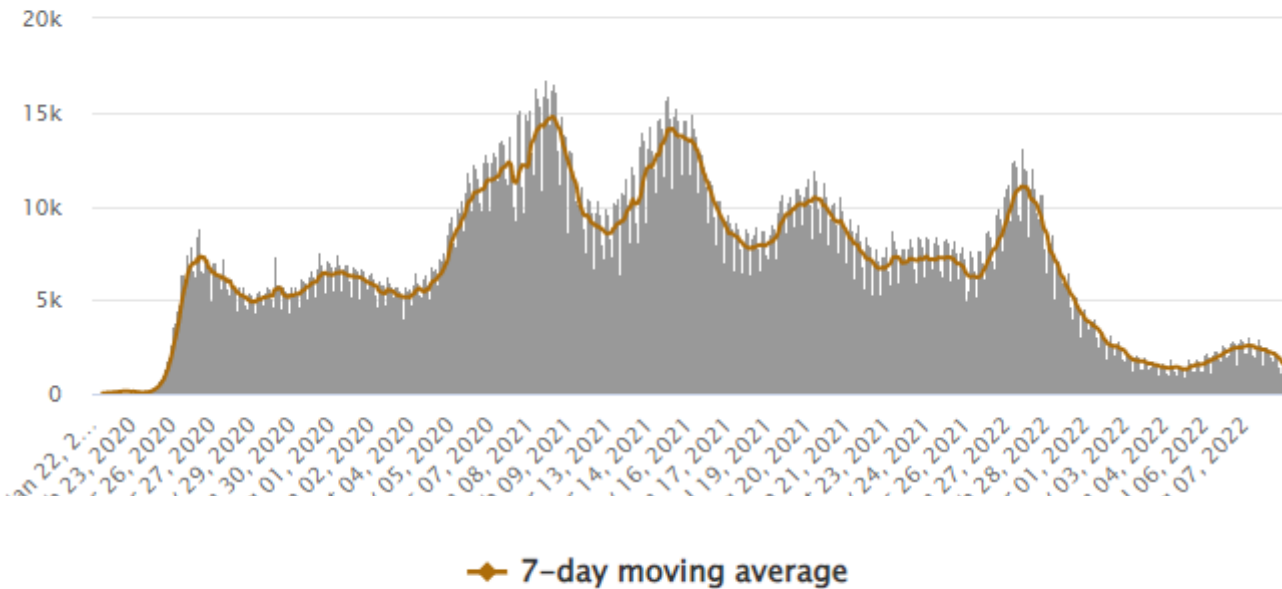
**Daily New Cases**

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



**Daily Deaths**

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



## Select Country Updates

### New Zealand

The New Zealand government has announced that they are consulting on loosening some of their pandemic measures. This includes axing the country's "traffic light" system of COVID-19 restrictions. Since this risk rating system was adopted in December 2021, much of the country has either been rated red or orange, with the entire country rated orange since April 2022. Other measures under consideration for review include New Zealand's existing mask mandate. It is likely that mask mandates whilst travelling into and out of New Zealand on international flights will be dropped.

As of early September, New Zealand's seven day rolling average of daily new cases has dropped below 2,000, with approximately 270 patients in hospitals nationwide suffering from COVID-19. With the spring and summer months ahead, the country's flag carrier Air New Zealand has announced that the worst of the pandemic has passed and that they are "experiencing a very strong recovery". This recovery comes after New Zealand's borders fully re-opened for the first time only four weeks ago following their closure in March 2020.

### China

Following the re-opening of Australia and New Zealand's international borders, China remains the only major country still operating a Zero-COVID policy. A total of 33 Chinese cities have been subjected to restrictive measures of some description during the country's current outbreak of COVID-19. Chengdu, a city of 21 million people, has been placed on lockdown since 1 September with residents not permitted to leave their homes.

Entry and exit restrictions have also been introduced in Chengdu, and the citywide lockdown has restricted access to groceries. Only one person in each household is permitted to leave once a day to purchase foodstuffs and other essential goods, but they must report a negative COVID-19 test result prior to leaving the home. A period of mass-testing has been announced as Chinese authorities seek to root out all cases of COVID-19 in the city.

Meanwhile, across China, ten educational districts have been disrupted at the start of the new academic year as their cities or regions have implement sudden pandemic controls. As a result, schools have had to return to social distance measures such as online learning.

Other cities in China which have seen new restrictions placed on them but have not yet been locked down include Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Dalian. All three cities play a notable role in the Chinese economy. Currently, 41 cities and urban areas, which between them account for over one third of all China's GDP, are currently under restrictions, district level lockdowns, or city-wide lockdowns.

Beijing has not been locked down despite cases of COVID-19 emerging there, however it is increasingly difficult to travel in and out of the city due to the multiple health checks needed to enter, whilst residents of the capital region are currently tested three or four times a week. Next month, Beijing will host the National Congress of the Communist party, and as a result it is likely that COVID-19 restrictions on Beijing will only intensify in the run up to this event.

### France

France's leading epidemiologist, Martin Blachier, has announced that France is preparing for an eighth wave of COVID-19 this autumn. However, French authorities believe that due to the widespread level of immunity generated by vaccinations and previous population-wide outbreaks of COVID-19, the impact will be similar to that of the seasonal flu. To try and lessen the impact of the eighth wave further, a fourth vaccine dose (second booster) is being recommended for people who are over 60 years of age, suffer from a medical condition causing immunosuppression, or have other health conditions putting them at risk of hospitalisation or death from COVID-19 infections.

In the last month, official statistics show that cases of COVID-19 in France have hovered around 20,000 cases per day. During the country's seventh wave which was caused by the emergence of the Omicron variant in June and July 2022, infection numbers reached as high as 150,000 cases per week.

Vaccination remains a controversial issue within French politics and public life. Eric Brocardi, one of the French fire service's highest-ranking officials, has received death threats and suffered personal harassment after he called for all firefighters who have refused the vaccine to be suspended from their positions. Brocardi has been labelled a "collaborator" and a "traitor" by detractors. Meanwhile, in the city of Toulouse, local decision-makers have suffered abuse after they began to take down anti-vaccine posters claiming that COVID-19 vaccines were dangerous and/or deadly. These posters had been put up by a conspiracy and fake news organisation called reinfoCovid Collective.

### Russia

On 3 September, Russia announced for the second day running that they had recorded more than 50,000 new cases of COVID-19, and that the daily figures were the highest since 9 March. In tandem with these infection figures, Russian authorities announced that 92 people had died of COVID-19 within a 24-hour period on 2 September, whilst 3,726 people were hospitalised with the virus. Russia's daily infection numbers have slowly risen. Infection rates as high as 33,000 cases per day were recorded in mid-August.

The uptick in COVID-19 cases has been driven by two primary factors. The first is the arrival of more infectious

variations of COVID-19 in Russia, such as the Omicron and Delta strains. The second is the Russian government's reluctance to impose any epidemiological control measures, and the Russian population's similar reluctance to undergo vaccination. At the time of writing, only 50 per cent of the Russian population has been fully vaccinated.

### Israel

Serious COVID-19 cases have fallen below 100 for the first time since June, whilst the number of active cases of COVID-19 countrywide has fallen below 10,000 for the first time since the beginning of 2022. As of early September, the Israeli Health Ministry has recorded 94 hospitalised patients in-country with COVID-19, of whom 33 are in a critical condition. These figures indicate that Israel is continuing to experience an overall trend of declining COVID-19 cases following an earlier sixth wave of infections fuelled by the Omicron variants in June.

Despite this decline, Dr. Sharon Alroy-Preis, the head of public health services has stated that the country is likely to see a "potentially dangerous" winter due to the circulation of both COVID-19 and the flu amongst the general population. To combat any excessive strain on the health system, Israeli authorities are considering the authorisation of a combined COVID-19 and flu vaccine. Currently, approximately 420 Israelis per day are still receiving vaccine doses, of which the majority of doses are booster vaccinations. As of early September, 72 per cent of Israelis have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, 66 per cent have received two doses, 48 per cent have received three doses, and 9 per cent have received a fourth dose of the vaccine.

### Canada

Canada's health authority, Health Canada, has announced that a revised version of Moderna Inc.'s COVID-19 vaccine that has been designed to specifically target the Omicron variant has been given regulatory approval. It has been designed as a booster shot for use in adults. As a result, Canada is expected to undertake a delivery of 10.5 million doses of the vaccine, known as the "Spikevax Bivalent", later this month. Canadian health officials recommend that anyone who is 18 years or older who is eligible for a booster should receive the Spikevax Bivalent shot.

In Ontario, the province's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, has announced that the province will be dropping the mandatory five-day isolation period for those who test positive for COVID-19. This decision has been reached following a transition from treating the pandemic as a crisis to a community issue in Ontario. As Canada's most populous province, this new relaxation of restrictions will affect around 40 per cent of Canada's total population.

### Bangladesh

The US government has announced that they have donated a further 10 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine

to the Bangladeshi Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Alongside this, the US has now trained at least 51,000 healthcare professionals in COVID-19 healthcare and vaccine administrations.

The Bangladeshi government has in recent weeks begun to rollout its national vaccination campaign in the country's Rohingya refugee camps. As a result of this, approximately 100,000 Rohingya children aged between 12 and 17 have received the vaccine during the campaign. In the Cox's Bazaar refugee settlement, around 82 per cent of all Rohingya living there have been fully vaccinated.

Due to Bangladesh's efficient vaccination rollout, over 68 per cent of the country's population has been fully vaccinated. The successful vaccination programme has augmented Bangladesh's existing epidemiological rules, such as mask wearing and capacity restrictions, to suppress the country's COVID-19 infections. Bangladesh's infection rate is hovering in the vicinity of 150 new cases per day, with most of these being recorded in the capital Dhaka.

### United Arab Emirates

In mid-August, the UAE's health authorities announced that the country had surpassed a total of one million COVID-19 infections since the beginning of the pandemic. This milestone comes amidst a decline in the number of daily infections in the UAE, with case numbers dropping to below 500 cases per day for the first time in three months in the run-up to September.

While most COVID-19 restrictions have been removed, schools and other educational settings continue to retain some restrictions, such as the wearing of masks indoors. This policy is set to continue indefinitely; however, UAE authorities have declared that "social bubbles" and social distancing will no longer be required in the country's educational institutions from the start of the 2022 academic year.

In the Emirate of Dubai, the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) has announced the closure of the Oud Metha COVID-19 Vaccination Centre due to a lack of demand. Authorities have also eased entry requirements to the city and have declared that those who are unvaccinated and aged between 13 and 16 no longer need to undertake a PCR test in order to visit the Emirate.

### Brazil

President Jair Bolsonaro has been charged by the Federal Police in Brazil for crimes relating to the spread of disinformation during the pandemic. The Brazilian Supreme Court and Federal Police have stated that the President's actions in discouraging compliance with pandemic-linked health measures amounted to criminal activity, whilst his encouragement of the spread of disinformation, such as suggesting a link between AIDS/HIV to vaccination, constituted a misdemeanour.

Brazil's domestic COVID-19 vaccine, which has been developed by the Federal University of Minas Gerais

and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, has shown “promising” results in lab testing. It is expected to proceed to human stage trials imminently. The vaccine is named the “SpIN-TED” and is made up of both S & N proteins, thus potentially offering it an advantage against other pre-existing COVID-19 vaccines.

As of early September, Brazil's seven-day average for COVID-19 infections is around 12,000 cases per day, whilst around 80 per cent of the country is now fully vaccinated. Financially, the Brazilian economy continues to perform well in part because of the lower transmission rates and high levels of vaccination that have prevented the re-emergence of a situation requiring economically-damaging restrictive measures. The country's unemployment rate has fallen to 9.1 percent according to data collected by the government. This is the lowest unemployment rate recorded since December 2015.

### Nigeria

The slow pace of Nigeria's national vaccination rollout has been questioned by some of the country's health officials. The Executive Director of the National Primary HealthCare Development Agency (NPHCDA), Faisal Shuaib, announced that 17 months after the vaccination programme commenced, only 25 per cent of the eligible

population has been fully vaccinated. The Federal Government's target was that by the end of 2022, 70 per cent of all eligible citizens should be fully vaccinated. To achieve this goal, it would mean that 140 million people would need to receive their full course of vaccine doses by the end of the year.

To try and drive the uptake of vaccinations across the country, health authorities in Nigeria's states have opened community outreach posts, where citizens receive vaccines and tests for a number of the country's most common illnesses, alongside COVID-19. These include TB, Leprosy, and AIDS/HIV. It is hoped that these posts which target multiple illnesses, many of which are considered by Nigeria's population to be of greater concern to their personal health, will not only drive the uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations but will also allow for better surveillance and monitoring of some of Nigeria's other major diseases.