

**CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER RESPONSE CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE**

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COVID-19

PART 33/2021

(11 – 24 MAR 2021)

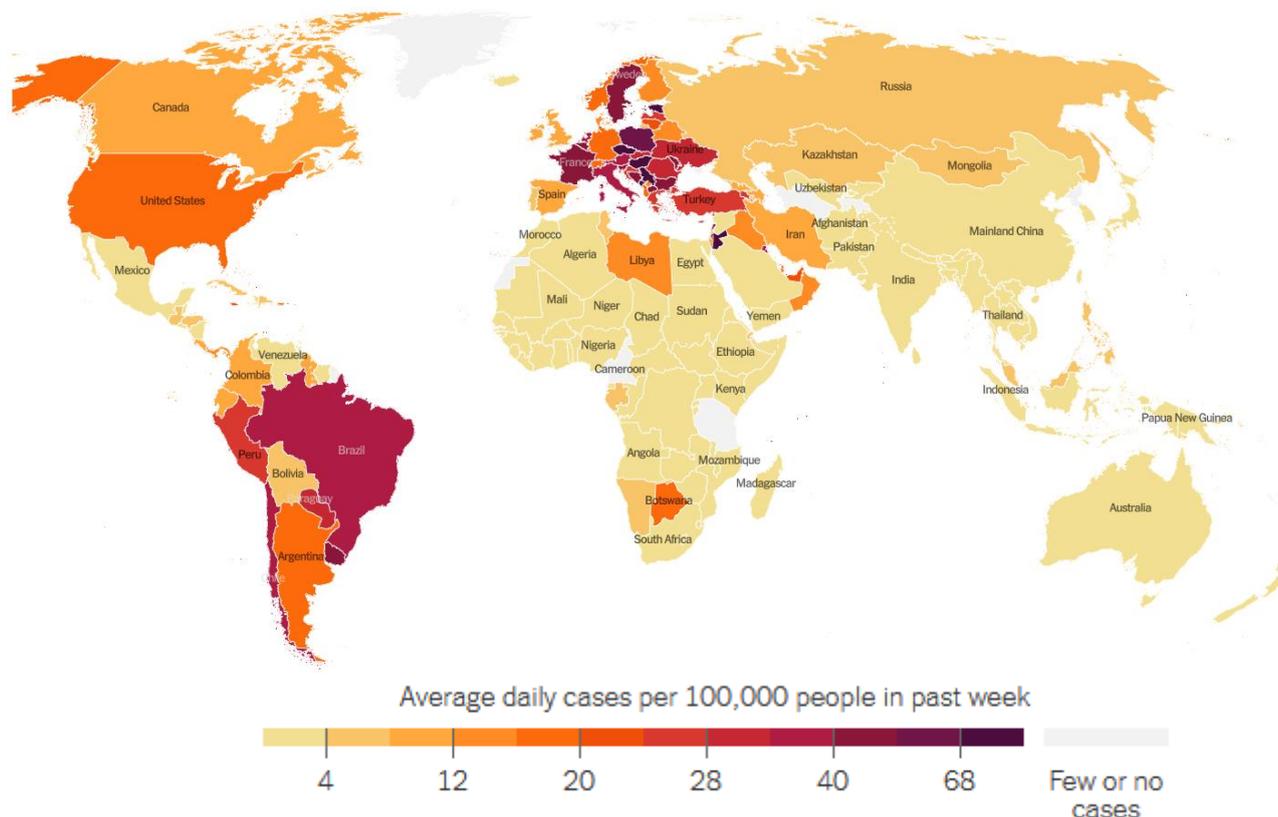
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERAL SITUATION ON THE WORLD	3
ASTRAZENECA'S COVID-19 VACCINE ISSUES	5
MONITORING	7
1. BRAZIL.....	7
2. BULGARIA	8
3. FRANCE	9
4. GERMANY	10
5. GREECE	12
6. JORDAN.....	14
7. INDIA.....	15
8. ISRAEL	17
9. NORWAY	19
10. POLAND	20
11. RUSSIA	23
12. TURKEY	24
13. USA	26
CONCLUSIONS	28

OVERALL SITUATION ON THE WORLD.

COVID-19 cases is close to 127-million mark globally during last two weeks, with USA, Brazil, India, Russia and France occupying top five worst affected countries on the world respectively. Number of deaths is above 2,7 million with USA, Brazil, Mexico, India, and UK among top five countries on the world.



Globally, COVID-19 confirmed cases continued to rise for a fourth consecutive week, with just under 6.9 million new cases reported in the last week. At the same time, the number of new deaths reported plateaued after a six week decrease, with just over 60 000 new deaths reported. Marked increases in the number of new cases were reported from the South-East Asia, Western Pacific, European and Eastern Mediterranean regions, all of which have been on an upward trajectory in recent weeks. Case incidence in the African Region and the Region of the Americas has remained stable in recent weeks, notwithstanding concerning trends observed in some countries within these regions. The European Region and the Region of the Americas continue to account for nearly 80% of all the cases and deaths. The only region to report a decline in new deaths this week was the Western Pacific where deaths fell by nearly a third, compared to the previous weeks.

The **African Region** reported nearly 51 000 new cases and over 1400 new deaths, a 3% decrease and a 10% increase respectively compared to the previous weeks. This is the first time in eight weeks, that an increase in new deaths has been reported. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Ethiopia (28% increase), South Africa (2% increase), and Kenya (66% increase). The highest numbers of new deaths were reported in the same countries, from South Africa (34% increase), Ethiopia (11% decrease), and Kenya (132% increase).

The **Region of the Americas** reported nearly 1.2 million new cases and just over 31 000 new deaths, a 5% decrease and a 2% increase respectively compared to the previous weeks. After six weeks of decline in deaths, this week there has been a slight increase

reported. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Brazil (3% increase), the United States of America (19% decrease), and Peru (11% increase). The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Brazil (23% increase), the United States of America (19% decrease), and Mexico (21% decrease).

The **Eastern Mediterranean Region** reported nearly 264 000 new cases and just over 3200 new deaths, an 8% and a 12% increase respectively compared to the previous weeks. New weekly cases have increased for the past six weeks and deaths have increased for the past four weeks. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Jordan (21% increase), the Islamic Republic of Iran (6% decrease), and Iraq (13% increase). The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from the Islamic Republic of Iran (6% increase), Jordan (31% increase), and Lebanon (19% increase).

The **European Region** reported over 1.4 million new cases and nearly 22 000 new deaths, a 13% and a 1% increase respectively compared to the previous week. Cases in the Region have been steadily increasing over the past four weeks. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from France (27% increase), Italy (similar to the previous weeks), and Poland (36% increase). The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Russian Federation (2% decrease), Italy (20% increase), and Poland (12% increase).

The **South-East Asia Region** reported over 298 000 new cases and over 2400 new deaths, a 49% and a 14% increase respectively compared to the previous week. Eighty per cent of all new cases were reported from India. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from India (62% increase), Indonesia (similar to the previous week), and Bangladesh (91% increase). The same countries reported the highest numbers of new deaths in the region; India (35% increase), Indonesia (5% decrease), and Bangladesh (86% increase).

The **Western Pacific Region** reported nearly 64 000 new cases and nearly 500 new deaths, a 29% increase and a 33% decrease respectively compared to the previous week. Although the number of new cases in the region has increased for the third consecutive week, the number of new weekly deaths continues to decline. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the Philippines (55% increase), Malaysia (12% decrease), and Japan (11% increase). The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Japan (24% decrease), the Philippines (45% decrease), and the Republic of Korea (23% decrease). Japan and the Philippines reported 86% of new weekly deaths in the Region.

WHO, in collaboration with national authorities, institutions and researchers, continues to monitor the public health events associated with SARS-CoV-2 variants and provides updates as new information becomes available. Below in the table, there is an update on the geographical distribution, and emerging evidence surrounding transmissibility and severity, and potential impacts on vaccines and diagnostics.

Next strain clade	20I/501Y.V1	20H/501Y.V2+	20J/501Y.V3
PANGO lineage	B.1.1.7	B.1.351	B.1.1.28.1, alias P.1†
GISAID clade	GR	GH	GR
Alternate names	VOC 202012/01	VOC 202012/02	-
First detected by	United Kingdom	South Africa	Brazil / Japan
First appearance	20 September 2020	Early August 2020	December 2020
Key spike mutations	H69/V70 deletion; Y144 deletion; N501Y; A570D; and P681H	L242/A243/L244 deletion; K417N E484K, N501Y	K417T, E484K; N501Y
Key mutation in common	S106/G107/F108 deletion in Non-Structural Protein 6 (NSP6)		
Transmissibility	Increased (36%-75%), increased secondary attack rate (10% to 13%).	Increased [1.50 (95% CI: 1.20-2.13) times more transmissible than	Increased, more transmissible than previous circulating variants.

		previously circulating variant	
Severity	Possible increased risk of hospitalization, severity and mortality.	Possible increased risk in-hospital mortality by 20%	Under investigation, limited impact.
Neutralization capacity	Slight reduction but overall neutralizing titers still remained above the levels expected to confer protection	Decreased, suggesting potential increased risk of reinfection.	Decreased, reinfections reported.
Potential impacts on vaccines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant impact on post-vaccine neutralization by Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Novavax and Bharat vaccines No significant change in prevention of disease by Oxford-AstraZeneca, Novavax, and Pfizer Evidence for prevention of infection evidence limited. Reduced effect reported for Oxford-AstraZeneca. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-vaccine neutralization reductions range from minimal to moderate for Moderna and Pfizer; however, there is also some evidence of more substantial reductions. A single study has evaluated Sinopharm. Substantial reductions have been found for the Oxford-AstraZeneca product. Results for Novavax and Janssen are pending. Efficacy against disease was retained, but somewhat lower, in South Africa when 501Y.V2 was dominant compared to settings without this variant. In a small study, AstraZeneca did not demonstrate vaccine efficacy against mild-moderate COVID-19 disease, with wide confidence intervals, while efficacy against severe disease was not assessed and is undetermined. There is no evidence to inform vaccine impact on asymptomatic infection by 501Y.V2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to modest reduction in post-vaccine neutralization by Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. Preliminary suggestion of loss of neutralization following vaccination with Sinovac.
Potential impacts on diagnostics	S gene target failure (SGTF). No impact on Ag RDTs observed.	None reported to date	None reported to date
Countries reporting cases	125	75	41

ASTRAZENECA'S COVID-19 VACCINE ISSUES

Many European countries, such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain, had stopped temporarily using the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine over blood clot concerns, which increases the burden of the vaccination campaign in the region at a time when the German Public Health Agency has warned that a third wave of coronavirus infections has already begun. Other countries, such as Austria, have temporarily stopped using certain batches of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, and Thailand became the first Asian country to stop using the shot due to safety concerns.

In response to these circumstances, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) of the European Union launched its investigation campaign to find out whether there is a link between this vaccine and emerging cases of clotting disorder. When results of this investigation were finally published, it became clear that the COVID-19 vaccine made by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford is safe and there are no evidences of an increased risk of blood clots.

However, at this moment, the link between these cases and the vaccine definitely cannot be ruled out after days of in-depth analysis of laboratory results, clinical reports and other information from clinical trials.

On 18 March, the EMA Safety Committee completed its preliminary review of the blood clot signal in humans vaccinated with COVID-19 AstraZeneca and confirmed that:

- the benefits of the vaccine in combating the still widespread threat of COVID-19 (which itself results in clotting problems and may be fatal) continue to outweigh the risk of side effects;
- the vaccine is not associated with an increase in the overall risk of blood clots (thromboembolic events) in those who receive it;
- there is no evidence of a problem related to specific batches of the vaccine or to particular manufacturing sites;
- however, the vaccine may be associated with very rare cases of blood clots associated with thrombocytopenia, i.e. low levels of blood platelets (elements in the blood that help it to clot) with or without bleeding, including rare cases of clots in the vessels draining blood from the brain (CVST).

More than 17 million people in the U.K. and EU have already received the AstraZeneca shot, according to a March 14 statement from AstraZeneca. "The number of cases of blood clots reported in this group is lower than the hundreds of cases that would be expected among the general population".

Furthermore, the company has not observed any evidence of increased bleeding among the tens of thousands of people in clinical trials for the vaccine, according to the statement.

According to some experts theoretically, clotting and bleeding disorders can be provoked by an exaggerated immune response to the vaccine. Other scientists are wondering if the problem could be rooted in certain batches of the vaccine, which they suggest may have become contaminated or contained a higher dose than usual.

The decision taken by many European countries to suspend use of the AstraZeneca/University of Oxford coronavirus shot could have far-reaching consequences. Vaccine uptake is proving sluggish and the wider immunization program is already lagging in the region. The EU's vaccination rollout is already much slower than the U.K. and U.S. and the bloc's leadership has come under fire for its immunization strategy.

Not all EU countries were following the same route, however, with Belgium, Poland and the Czech Republic all did not stop using the shot, considering that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Last week, Germany, France and several other EU countries decided to continue using the AstraZeneca vaccine after the European Medicines Agency (EMA) deemed the shot "safe and effective." Germany resumed administering the jab on March 19. The vaccine, however, will come with new advice on potential side effects.

Norway and Sweden will keep the AstraZeneca vaccine suspended as their public health bodies assess the situation. Meanwhile, public confidence in the vaccine is on the wane in a number of European countries. A new survey shows that a majority of people in leading EU member countries feel that the vaccine is unsafe.

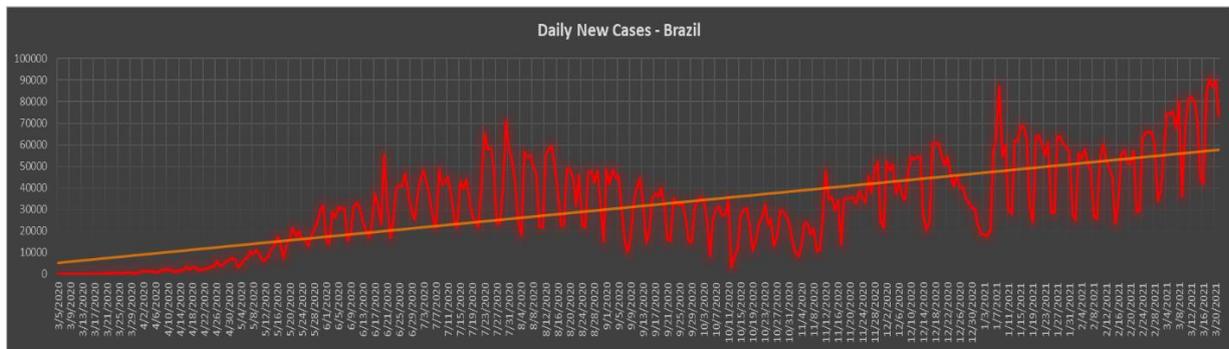
Sources:

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2. <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca-benefits-still-outweigh-risks-despite-possible-link-rare-blood-clots>

MONITORING

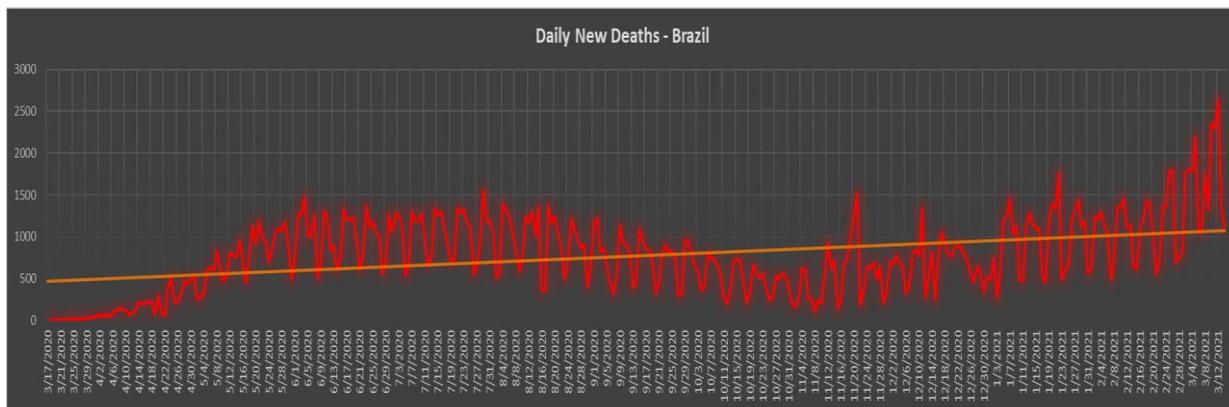
1. BRAZIL

Coronavirus cases are surging in Brazil, and the country's health systems are increasingly overwhelmed. In nearly every state across Brazil, occupancy rates in intensive care units (ICUs) are at or above 80%. Some of them are at or above 90%, and a few have exceeded 100% occupancy, forcing them to turn some patients away.



State governors, city mayors and local medical personnel now say they are running out of supplies to treat even the Covid-19 patients who have been allocated precious ICU beds. Stocks of medicines that facilitate intubation could vanish in the next two weeks, according to a report from the National Council of Municipal Health Secretaries. And Brazil's National Association of Private Hospitals (ANAHP) has predicted that private hospitals will run out of medicines necessary for intubating Covid-19 patients by Monday.

According to a CNN analysis, nearly a quarter of global Covid-19 deaths over the past two weeks occurred in Brazil. At least 294,042 people in the country have died since the pandemic began.



Last week, Brazil's National Front of Mayors (FNP) sent a letter to President Jair Bolsonaro and the health ministry asking for "immediate measures" from the federal government to provide sedation medications and oxygen for intubated patients who have Covid-19 and other illness.

The Federal Pharmacy Council (CFF) also warned there was evidence of the shortage of neuromuscular blockers, sedatives, and other drugs used in intensive care, like midazolam, essential for humane and safe intubation.

Meanwhile the President has refused to endorse lockdown measures, arguing that he is protecting citizens' liberty and the country's economic health. His administration has also said that state-level officials are empowered to take precautionary measures.

However, Bolsonaro announced last week that his government had filed a lawsuit to block governors and mayors from imposing certain restrictions, after several adopted curfews and other strict measures. "This is a state of siege, which only one person can decree -- me," he said.

More than 500 prominent Brazilian bankers, economists and politicians on Sunday published an open letter in the country's biggest newspapers asking the federal government to rethink its approach to the pandemic.

Sources:

1. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/21/americas/brazilian-covid-intubation-medicine-patients-intl-latam/index.html>

2. BULGARIA

New measures are in force from Mar 22 initially for 10 days, as the number of COVID-19 cases has been surging for days and the health system is struggling to deal with the situation.

For 10 days, therefore, the government is closing all schools, kindergartens, universities, shopping malls, restaurants, fitness and gambling facilities. Restaurants at hotels can work but only for room service. The government is also closing all bigger stores except for those selling food. All public events are also banned, as well as private gatherings.

In the last few weeks, the government had eased almost all restrictions despite the rising number of new cases and has claimed the situation was under control. However, the number of new cases has now soared above 4,000 (four thousand) a day, reaching nearly 5,000 (five thousand) on some days.

Details about the new measures:

- Visits to all dining and entertainment establishments are suspended, only home and office deliveries are allowed;
- All legal persons who run the dining facilities in the hotels should organise their activities in such a way as to ensure that guests have meals in their rooms;
- Visits to gaming venues and casinos are suspended;
- Visits to all outlets offering non-food products with a commercial area of more than 300 sq.m are banned;
- An exception is allowed for establishments offering groceries in supermarket and hypermarket stores;
- Visits to shopping centres located in one or more buildings in which there are shops, establishments, retail outlets, and mall-type outlets, etc. will be suspended, exempt are grocery stores, medical institutions, pharmacies, drugstores, opticians, pet shops, banks, insurers, payment service providers, dry cleaning studios, offices of telecommunications operators, and other providers of communications services there.
- Congresses, conferences, seminars, competitions, training, team building activities, exhibitions and other public events in attendance form are suspended;
- Visits to gyms, venues for team activities, as well as private swimming complexes and swimming pools are suspended;

- All cultural and entertainment events – cinemas, museums, galleries, stage events, concerts, dance, creative and musical art classes, etc., are suspended;
- It is not allowed to organize and hold celebrations of a private nature – weddings, christenings, etc., with more than 15 people;
- All collective and individual sports events of a training and competitive nature for all age groups indoors and outdoors are held without an audience;
- Group tourist trips, organized transport excursions and group visits to tourist sites are suspended;
- It is forbidden to hold organized mass public events outdoors – celebrations, festivals, etc.;
- In all markets and markets, the arrangement should be made for one-way movement and a distance of at least 1.5 m between customers, workers, as all are obliged to wear a protective face mask covering nose and mouth;
- In-person classes, including practices, traineeships, outdoor all classes, exams, dual training system, etc. are suspended in schools and support centres for personal development. The decision to switch over to training in an electronic environment at a distance is taken by the Minister of Education under the terms and conditions provided by the law;
- Group extracurricular activities and activities, interest activities, activities of interest, activities, etc. are suspended in an attendance environment. for all age groups;
- Extracurricular team activities and activities, interest clubs, etc. are suspended in an in-person environment for all age groups;
- The in-person learning in the higher educational establishments is suspended, the exception is allowed for practical exercises in clinical disciplines; learning practice; clinical experience; pre-graduate internship and state exams of students in regulated medical professions from the majors of "Medicine", "Dental Medicine", "Pharmacy", "Health Care", as well as the state exams in all Higher educational establishments in strict compliance with the anti-epidemic measures;
- Attendance group classes in language centres, educational centres, etc. are suspended;
- Visits to kindergartens and crèches, as well as children's centres, clubs and others providing organized group services for children are suspended.

3. FRANCE

In France, according to the latest report from the health authorities as for the COVID-19 pandemic, about 4,313,073 cases have been reported naming +14,678 in 24h.

This Tuesday 23 March 2021: 92,908 people have died including +287 deaths in 24 hours have been reported. The death toll in nursing homes states 25,405 (0) deaths. And 67,503 (+287 in 24h) people have died in hospitals.

The reproduction rate R reaches 1.12, the incidence rate reaches 312.66, and the hospital pressure is at 91.6%. Positivity rate reaches 8.9%.

THE French government is ready to take tougher measures if current restrictions to limit the spread of the coronavirus fail, Health Minister Olivier Veran said on Wednesday.

Last week, France imposed a month-long lockdown on Paris and parts of the north after a faltering vaccine rollout and spread of highly contagious coronavirus variants forced President Emmanuel Macron to shift course.

This Sunday, March 21 marks the second day of partial confinement decreed in 16 departments, in particular in Île-de-France and Hauts-de-France. The 21 million French people concerned will finally be able to make short trips, within a radius of 10 km, without this certificate, as long as they can present proof of address.

In an interview with the Journal du dimanche, Arnaud Fontanet warned of the need to introduce reinforced measures in other regions. He said that now is the time to act and test the impact of new measures elsewhere to see if they work, before reaching the stage where we have no other choice but to close everything. According to him, by putting in place similar restrictions in these areas preserved from the epidemic outbreak.

The government's aims to vaccinate 10 million people by mid-April, then 20 million in mid-May and 30 million by mid-June. According to data the daily number of deaths in nursing homes has fallen, under the effect of vaccination.

As of 24 Mar 2021, 6 370 705 people has been given one dose (9.5 % of the population) and 2 463 973 people have been given full vaccination (3.67 % of the population).

Sources:

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2. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-03-24/coronavirus-france-ready-to-take-tougher-measures-if-necessary-health-minister>

4. GERMANY

- As of 22 March 2021, Germany has the 10th most coronavirus confirmed cases worldwide, as the same two weeks ago. As of the same date the total numbers are: Over 2.5 million (2,667,225) confirmed cases, 74,714 COVID-19 related deaths with a fatality rate of 2,80% while approximately 2,423,400 people have recovered from their virus infection.
- Germany has recorded its highest number of new COVID-19 infections since January, on March 18 (17,504 cases). In the past 14 days, there have been 162,032 newly registered virus infections throughout Germany, around 42% increase compared to the previous two weeks (with 114,265).
- On 18 December, daily reported cases reached the maximum since the start of the pandemic with 33,777 new cases and furthermore on 14 January a daily record of 1244 deaths.
- The cumulative nationwide incidence over the past 7 days was 107.0 cases (while 68.0 two weeks ago) per 100,000 inhabitants. The 7-day incidence of people 60-69 years is currently 68.0 cases/100,000 population (from 45.0 two weeks ago).
- On March 22, 3,145 COVID-19 patients were in intensive care (from 2,865 two weeks ago).
- On December 13, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that most stores in Germany will shut from December 16, along with schools and day care centers.
- As of January 05 lockdown has been extended for another three weeks. The current lockdown regulations, including the closure of schools, will now be in place until at least January 31, and new rules have been introduced: i. Hotspot travel ban, ii. Private meeting

limit, iii. Double testing for people arriving from high-risk areas and iv. Extra leave for parents.

- As of March 22 lockdown has been extended until April 18 (from Mar 28). There is a five-step plan to relaxing restrictions on a regional or state level. Each step will be taken every (14) days if regional infection numbers are stable or reduced. An emergency brake system will return regions to current lockdown levels if there are (3) consecutive days with an incidence rate above 100 per 100,000 people per week.
- The first doses of the BioNTech-Pfizer coronavirus vaccine arrived in Germany's 16 states on December 26, a day before the country begins a large-scale immunization program.
- As of March 22, 7,523,137 German citizens, around 8.98% of total population, had been vaccinated with the 1st dose (see figure 3) and 3,345,235, around 3.99% of total population, had been vaccinated with the 2nd dose, which phase began on January 17 (see figure 4).
- As of March 15, Germany has temporarily halted the use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine as a precaution and restarted its vaccinations on March 19, after EMA declared it safe for use after it was suspended by 13 EU member states.



Figure 1: COVID-19 confirmed cases in Germany (22/03/2021)

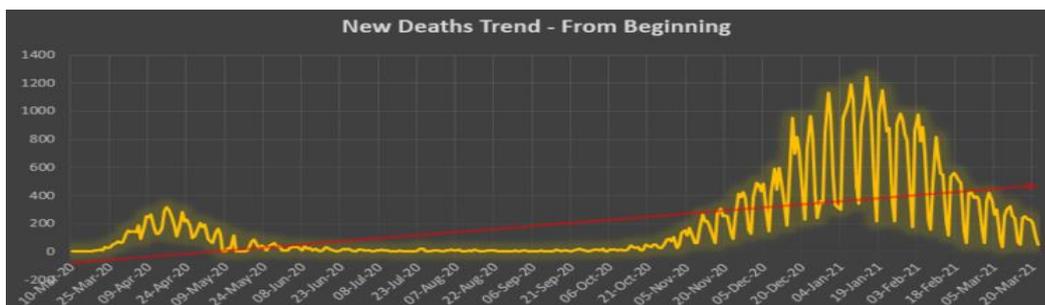


Figure 2: COVID-19 deaths in Germany (22/03/2021)

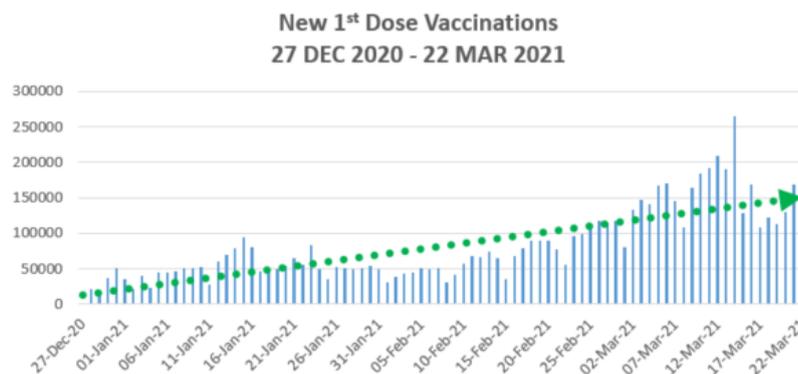


Figure 3: COVID-19 1st Dose Vaccinations in Germany (22/03/2021)

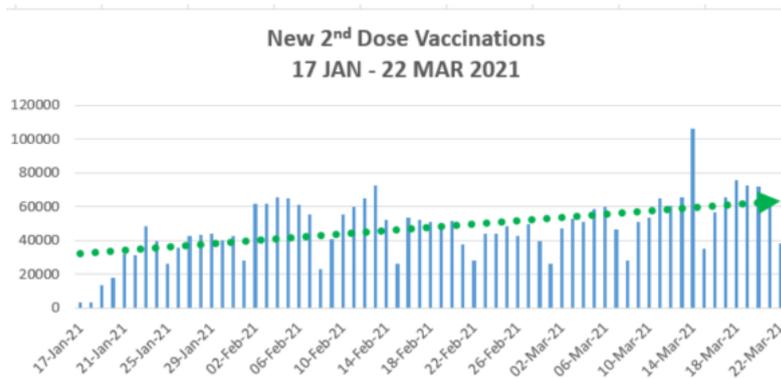


Figure 4: COVID-19 2nd Dose Vaccinations in Germany (22/03/

Sources:

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2. <https://www.deutschland.de/en/news/coronavirus-in-germany-informations>
3. <https://www.dkv.global/governments-ranking>
4. https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Situationsberichte/2021-01-25-en.pdf?_blob=publicationFile

5. GREECE

- As of 22 March 2021, Greece has the 56st most coronavirus confirmed cases worldwide. As of the same date the total numbers are: More than 200 thousand (238,830) confirmed cases, 7,531 COVID-19-related deaths with a fatality rate of 3,15 %.
- While Greece has been under lockdown for months, the country recorded the highest number of coronavirus cases (3465 cases) and intubations (681 patients) it has ever had in one day, on March 17 & 22 respectively.
- Starting from November 11, Greek borders will remain open, but anyone arriving from abroad by any way will have to present a negative COVID-19 PCR test performed at least 72 hours prior their arrival. At the same time, all travelers must continue to complete the Passenger Locator Form (PLF) at least 24 hours before their departure or arrival respectively. As of March 22, the decision applies until April 05.
- Starting from November 09 only essential travel, properly documented is allowed for passengers on all domestic flights, commercial and general/business aviation. Essential travel should include travel for health issues, business purposes, for imperative family reasons and return to their permanent residence. As of March 22, the decision applies until March 29.
- As of March 19, Greece loose Covid-19 restrictions: i. As of March 20, the existing weekend curfew from 7:00 PM to 5:00 AM will start later, in effect from 9:00 PM to 5:00 AM. ii. Hair salons will open again by appointment starting on March 22, the first step in re-opening non-essential businesses in the country. iii. Archaeological sites will welcome visitors starting March 20. iv. Churches will be open to the faithful on Holy Days with strict social distancing measures in place.
- The first 9,750 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine against Covid-19 arrived in Greece under tight security on December 25. The vaccination against COVID-19 started on December 27 at five (5) hospitals in Attica region. Vaccination of the general population against the coronavirus - starting with those aged 85 or over - started on

January 18. Currently vaccinated are those aged over 75; 60-64 and patients with high risk diseases.

- As of March 22, 997,964 Greek citizens, around 9.58% of total population, had been vaccinated with the 1st dose (see figure 3) and 471,056, around 4.52% of total population, had been vaccinated with the 2nd dose, which phase began on January 18 (see figure 4). It is noticeable that Greece never halted the AstraZeneca vaccine like other European countries did last week.



Figure 1: COVID-19 confirmed cases in Greece (22/03/2021)

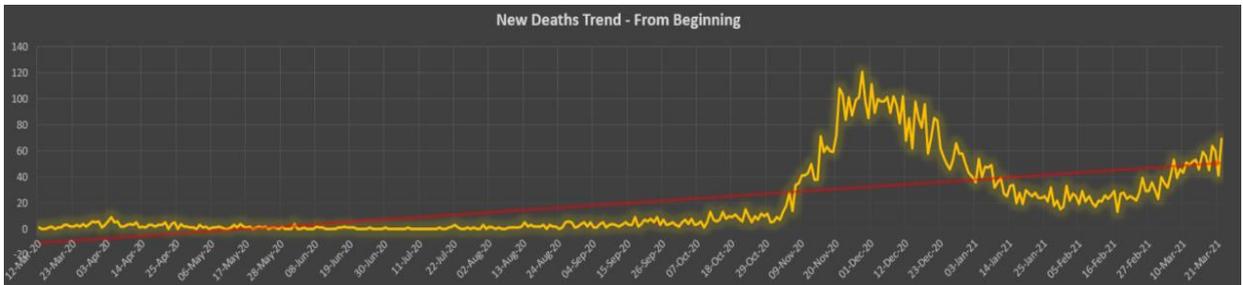


Figure 2: COVID-19 deaths in Greece (22/03/2021)

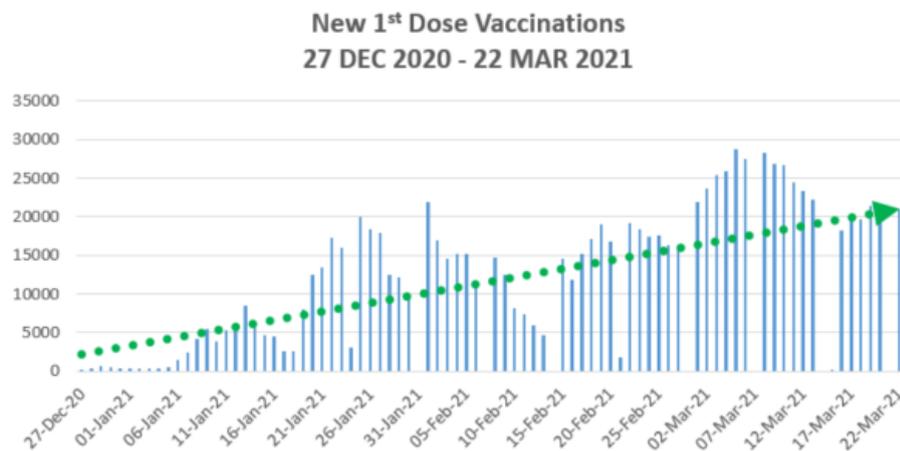


Figure 3: COVID-19 1st Dose Vaccinations in Greece (22/03/2021)

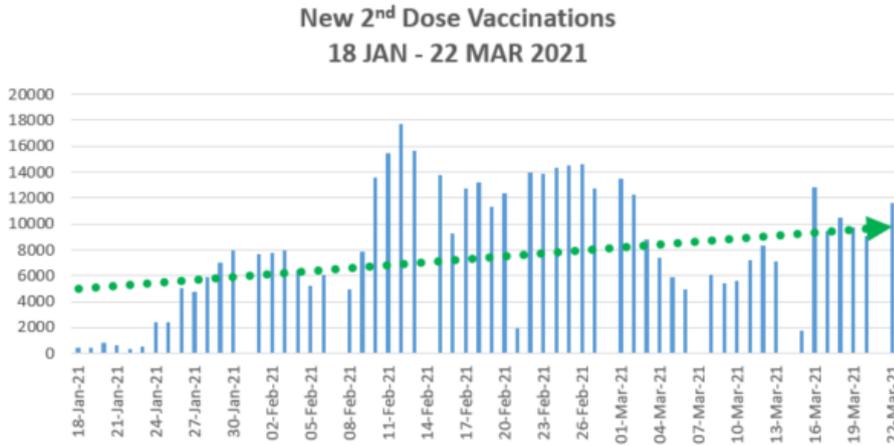


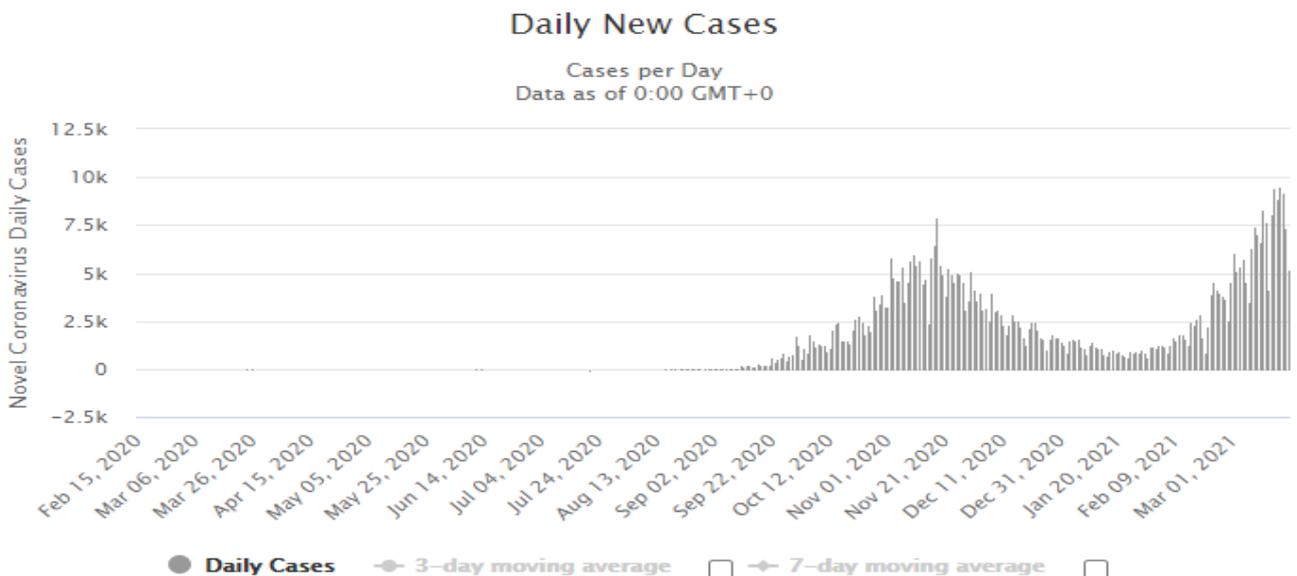
Figure 4: COVID-19 2nd Dose Vaccinations in Greece (22/03/2021)

Sources:

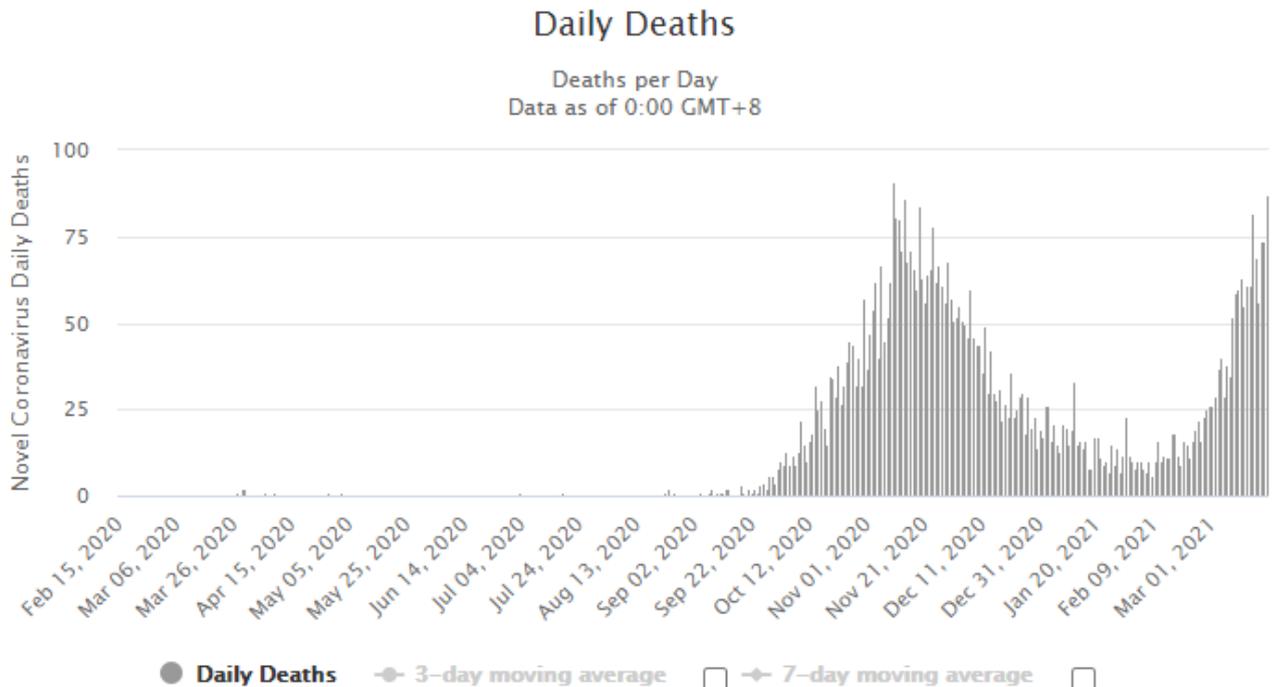
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6. JORDAN

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has recorded 5,876 deaths and 535,455 cases since the pandemic began. With the rapid ascent of new cases this week the government continues to impose its new measures to curb the spread of coronavirus in the country as daily reported cases have tripled in a month with highest number of daily new cases at around 9500 for 17th of March blamed largely on the rapid spread of the highly infectious UK variant, B.1.1.7. Among the imposed measures were a blanket lockdown during weekends, including Friday prayers in mosques and Sunday masses in churches, until the end of this month.



However, protests erupted across many of Jordan’s cities and provincial towns against the government’s coronavirus restrictions, a day after oxygen ran out at a state hospital leading to the deaths of at least six COVID-19 patients. Hundreds of people spilled into the streets in defiance of a night curfew in the northern city of Irbid and several other provincial cities including a neighborhood in the capital and the city of Salt. Prime Minister Bisher al Khasawneh fired the health minister as a consequence.



“Down with the government. We don’t fear coronavirus,” hundreds of youths chanted in Irbid where outrage at the hospital scandal combined with anger over tighter restrictions that include extending a night curfew to stem a major surge of infections driven by a more contagious variant of the virus. King Abdullah visited the hospital in Salt in a move officials said was intended to defuse tensions.

The country is struggling with its inoculation plan with an economy suffering from unemployment due to the pandemic and a large refugee population for whom the kingdom looks after. As Jordan struggles to obtain sufficient supplies to combat the increasing spread of the virus, Foreign Minister Safadi said that nobody "will benefit from politicizing this issue," referring to Western concerns over the procurement of Russian and Chinese vaccines. Jordan allows Sputnik V vaccine for emergency use against the virus.

Sources:

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7. INDIA

For several months (since mid-September 2020) India registered constant decline in all important indicators related to the pandemic. However, this positive trend reversed in early March 2021 and currently, for the 14th day in a row, the country is registering an increase in the number of active COVID-19 cases, new daily infections and new daily deaths. As of 23 March 2021 India has the 3rd largest number of COVID-19 infections in the world with nearly 11,7 million registered cases but also almost 10,2 million recoveries –

99% of total cases. The death rate remains impressively low at 1%. On 21 March 2021 India registered 46 951 new infections in a span of 24 hours – the highest number recorded so far this year. For comparison at the end of February – beginning of March the country was registering from 10 to 12 thousand new daily cases. The increase in fresh coronavirus cases last week was one of the worst weekly increases since the pandemic began early last year.

The sharp COVID-19 surge is not coming as a surprise to different health experts. Some of them attribute the new crisis to the different COVID-19 variants, which existence in the country has been already proven – the South African, UK and Brazilian variants, together with at least 2 domestic variants. Other experts believe that the current situation is caused by the “false notion of optimism” that swept the country when the caseload was decreasing at the start of the 2021, which resulted in poor adherence to safety protocols.

Regardless of the reasons for the sharp surge, the situation triggers fear among the politicians and experts of new, 2nd wave of the pandemic in India. In fact, the magnitude and speed of the rise in new cases is comparable to the first wave according to the Indian officials. During a virtual meeting with regional leaders to discuss the surge, the Indian Prime Minister Modi has called for measures to halt an “emerging second peak”. However, the major nationwide restrictions imposed during the lockdown last year have mostly been lifted. Only the Governmental Guidelines “On Surveillance, Containment and Caution” were extended till 31 March 2021. Several badly hit states have announced fresh restrictions such as curbs on movement and public gatherings in some cities and towns. Inter-state travel restrictions are also being enforced, with some state governments mandating RT-PCR tests for travelers from other states. At the same time the mass religious gatherings are currently allowed to continue, with millions of maskless pilgrims gathering for religious festivals and 5 Indian states are holding regional elections over the next 5 weeks, with political rallies attracting huge, often maskless, crowds.

In this worrisome situation, the Vaccination seems to be a key to control COVID-19 pandemic. For the moment 2 vaccines are locally approved and in use (Oxford-AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech) and a few other candidates are under consideration for approval by Indian regulators. According to the India’s health minister, no significant difference has been noted in the efficacy of Bharat Biotech vaccine against the UK and Brazilian variant, while analysis of its efficacy against South African strain is ongoing. As for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, it has shown 74.6 % efficacy against the UK strain and has been shown to be effective against the Brazil strain. However, its efficacy against the South Africa strain is just 10%.

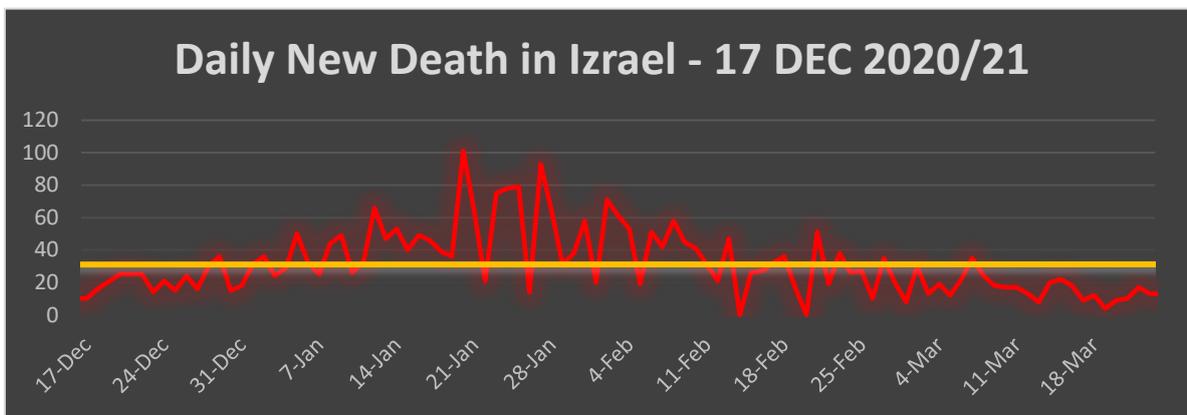
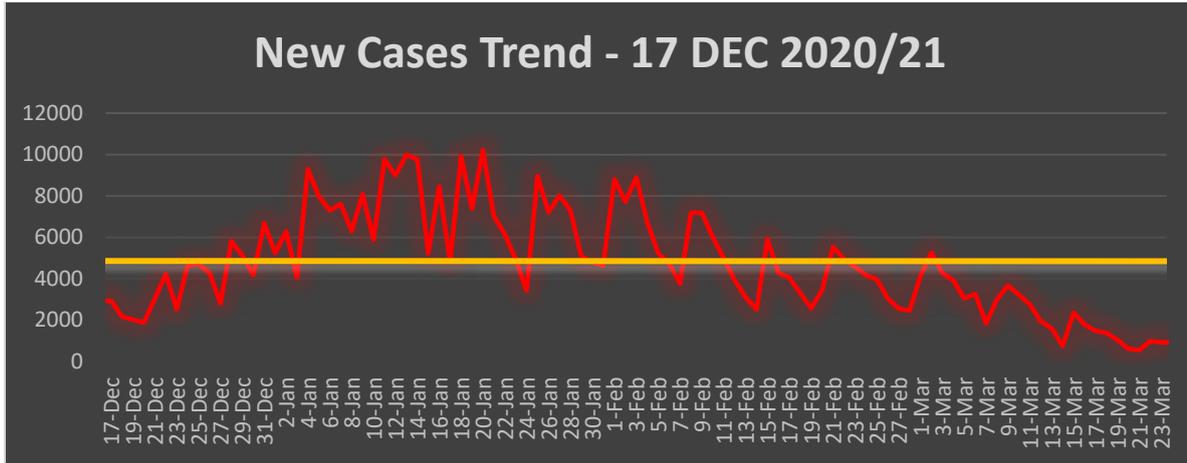
India has no issues with availability of vaccines. The country is even donating millions of doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to low- and middle-income countries and exporting vaccines also to countries like Canada.

In accordance with the vaccination plan, the Phase I of the vaccination in India (for frontline workers) started on 16 January 2021. On 1st March started the 2nd phase of the vaccination drive for 270 million people above the age of 60 and those older than 45 but with comorbidities. Private hospitals join the effort to increase the pace but their services are not free of charge. The vaccination started slowly but is steadily gathering pace with the aim to cover 270 million “priority people” by the end of July. Despite the increased pace of vaccination – more than 3 million people were administered doses in a single day – experts warn that the target could be missed unless the drive is scaled up further. More than 40 million people have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine so far, but that’s less than 4% of the country’s population.



8. ISRAEL

The number of infected in the country reached a total of 14698 currently infected cases of coronavirus and 6122 deaths (low death rate 0,87). Israel remains 26 in the world in this indicator. The share of the recovered is approximately 99.13 percent of the total number of infected. Daily new cases on 23 MAR – 925.



Coronavirus infection rates continued to drop in Israel. The number of active cases decreased from 27,974 to 16003. All persons traveling to Israel via air, land, or sea are required to produce a negative result from a COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival. Moreover, all incoming international travelers are also required to undergo a second COVID-19 test upon arrival; this second test will be carried out either at the border crossing or at a government-designated quarantine facility. Violations may be punishable by fines.



Meanwhile, over 4.5 million Israelis have been fully vaccinated with both doses of the coronavirus vaccination. In total, 5,187,471 Israelis have received at least the first dose of the vaccination.

A study from Israel found that Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE's coronavirus vaccine prevented 97% of symptomatic cases, hospitalizations and deaths. It was also 94% effective at blocking asymptomatic cases of infection, suggesting the jab can reduce transmission. Unvaccinated people were 44 times more likely to develop symptomatic COVID-19 and 29 times more likely to die from the disease.

At the time, the UK coronavirus variant, known as B.1.1.7, had also become the dominant strain in the Middle Eastern country, with more than 80 percent of specimen tested at the time linked to the variant.

However, the analysis could not evaluate the vaccine's effectiveness against the South African variant due to the very few cases linked to the strain in Israel at the time.

Those who have received both doses of the vaccine and those who have recently recovered from COVID-19 are allowed to download a Ministry of Health app that issues a unique QR code. This code is intended to serve as a passport for citizens to access public places such as gyms, theaters, restaurants and bars.

The preliminary information from Israel — showed those who received the vaccine did not develop symptoms or transmit the disease. An absence of clear data on transmission has led health authorities to recommend vaccinated people be careful around unvaccinated people, particularly those at risk for severe COVID-19 infections.

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3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_Israel

9. NORWAY

“We are now setting records which none of us wanted to set and we are into a third wave,” health minister said at a briefing.

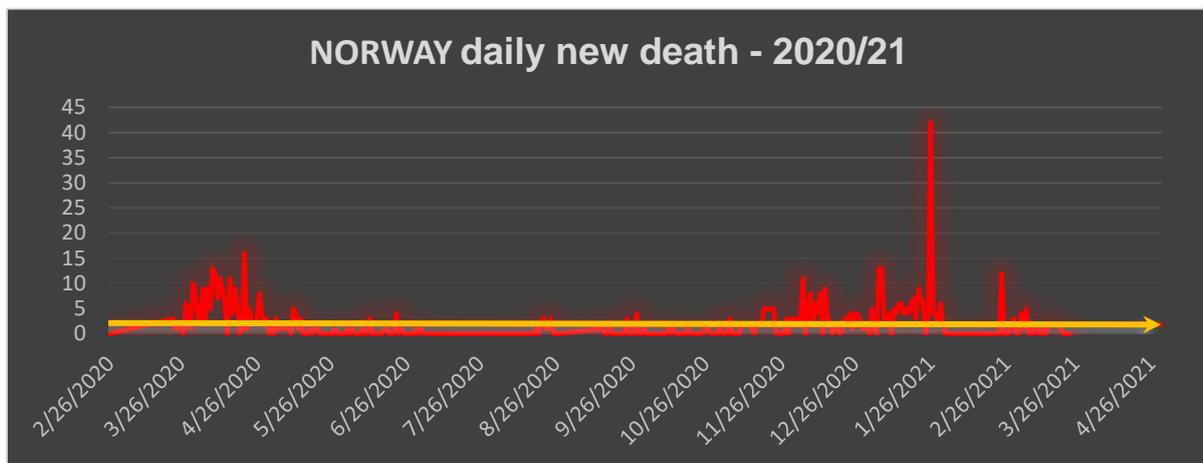
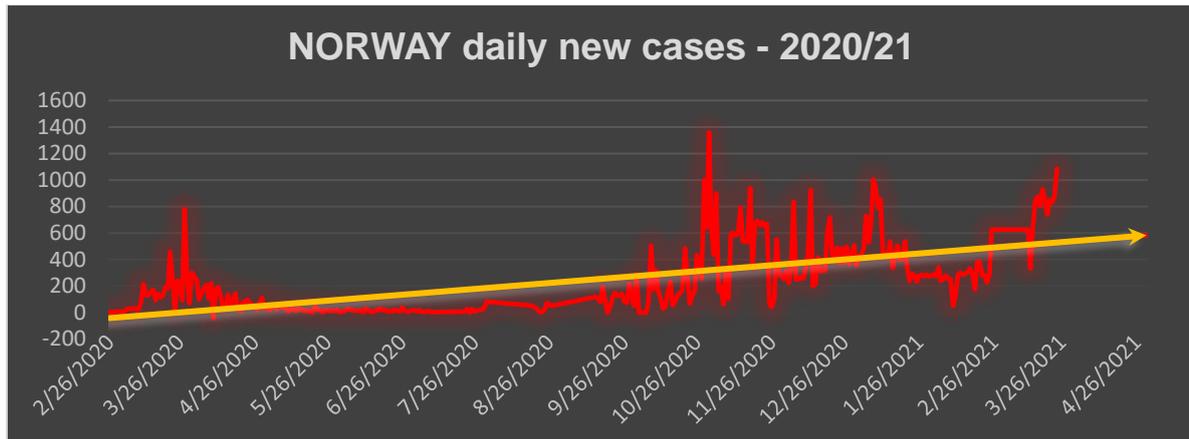
The more infectious B117 variant of the virus, first identified in the United Kingdom, is now the dominant form in Norway. B117 is responsible for 72 percent of new infections currently, according to data from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH). In Oslo, the proportion is as high as 82 percent.

Norway's reproduction rate or R-number for the virus is now at 10 infected people will pass the virus on to an average of 14 others, enabling the epidemic to grow.

Despite the concerning numbers, minister said that restrictions to control the virus will remain largely in the hands of local authorities for now. If they were to introduce stricter measures nationally, they would be influenced by the parts of the country where infections are lower. If there are many more outbreaks in more parts of the country, Norway has plans to introduce national measures.

Authorities did advise travelling domestically, only, during the forthcoming Easter holidays.

Norway is currently investigating whether there may be a link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and serious incidences of blood clots in a small number of vaccinated people. But the consequences of the investigation for Norway's vaccination program could be limited regardless of the outcome. Regardless of what the European Medicines Agency finds out, NIPH, will conduct an independent assessment of whether Norway will retain this vaccine in their program.



Sources:

1. [Norway in 'third wave' of coronavirus but no new national restrictions yet - The Local](#)

10. POLAND

The third wave of pandemic is accelerating in Poland since 24th of February. The epidemic situation in Poland is getting worse. The British coronavirus mutation causes the number of new cases and hospitalized patients to increase significantly. Therefore, government decided to introduce extended safety rules throughout Poland. The new rules were introduced from Saturday, March 20. They will be valid until April 9, which means they will also cover the Eastern period.

The total number of infections increased 14% from last report. The average daily number of new cases has already reached almost 21,000 that makes significant rise of 42% comparing to previous period. British mutations of virus have been identified in Poland, which now is estimated to be at level of 80% of all infections.

Ministry of Health decided to introduce new measures:

- Full lockdown on entire territory of the country;
- All students and pupils will switch to remote education;
- Whenever possible distributed work is recommended.

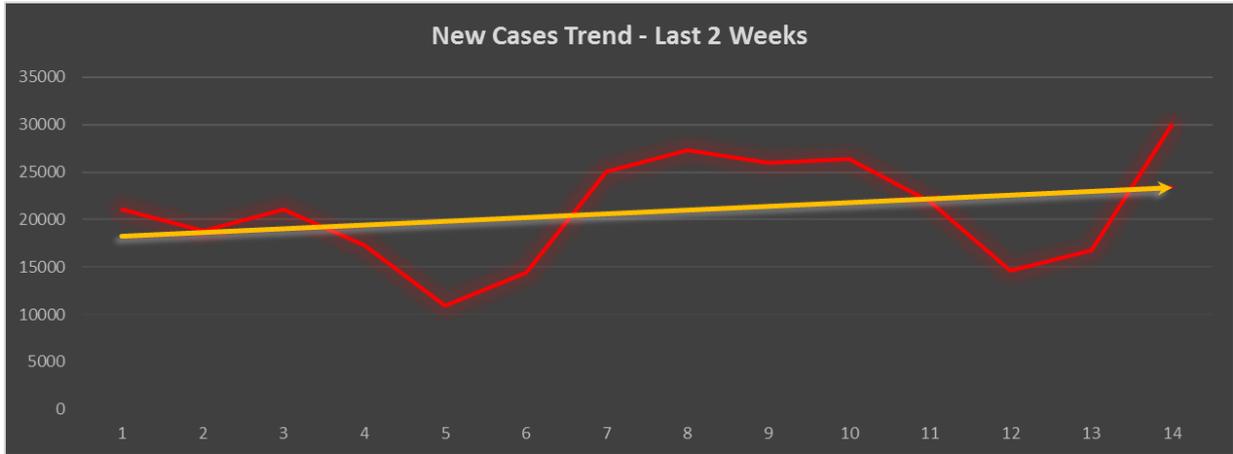


Figure 1: New cases trend during last two weeks

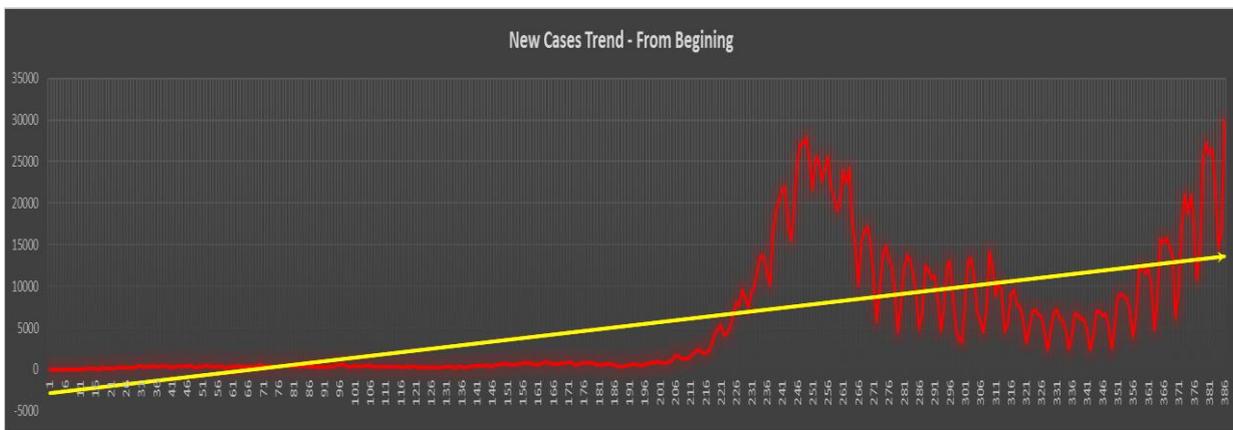


Figure 2: Total cases trend from the beginning

Statistic Dashboard

	Total		New	Trend	Percentage
Cases	2 119 483		+ 291 182	↗	+43%
Deaths	45 934		+ 4 330	↗	+17%
Recovered	1 507 905		+199 941	↗	+42%
Active Cases	274 347		+87 026	↗	+45%
Critical	2 537		+ 635	↗	+13%
Daily Average	20 807		+ 8 864	↗	+48%
Hospitalized	26 511		+ 8 133	↗	+40%
Quarantine	396 701		+146 103	↗	+39%

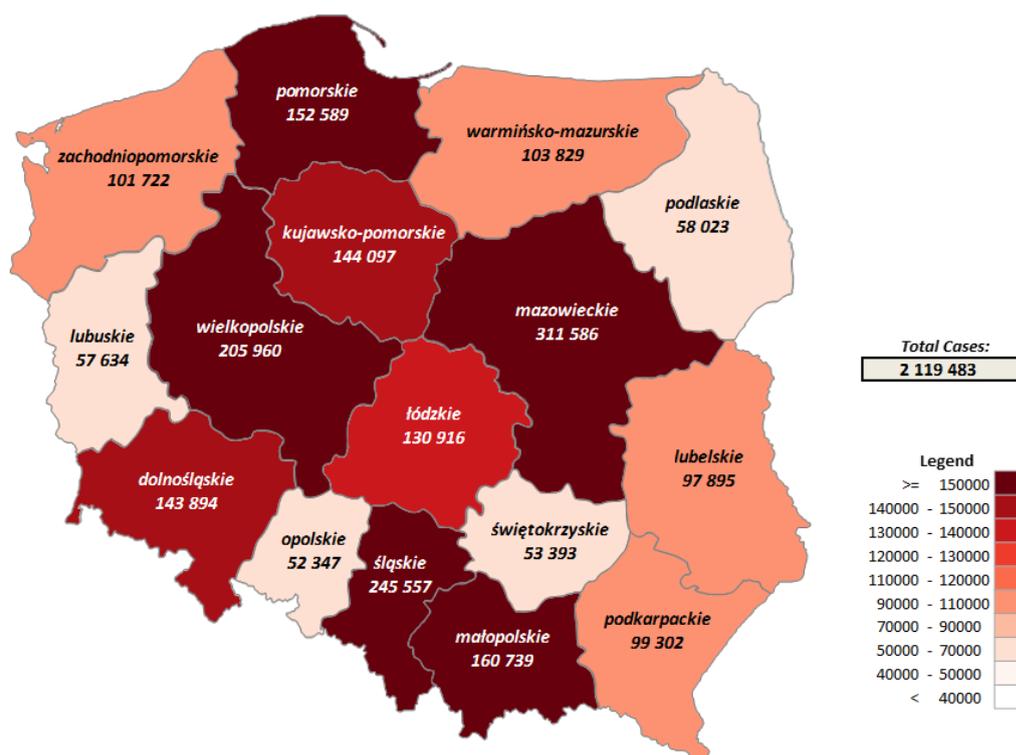
National Vaccination Program

Logistic Data		
	Number of delivered doses	6 510 680
	Doses delivered to vaccination points	5 403 630
	Doses in reserve medical storage	115 190
	Utilized doses	6 335

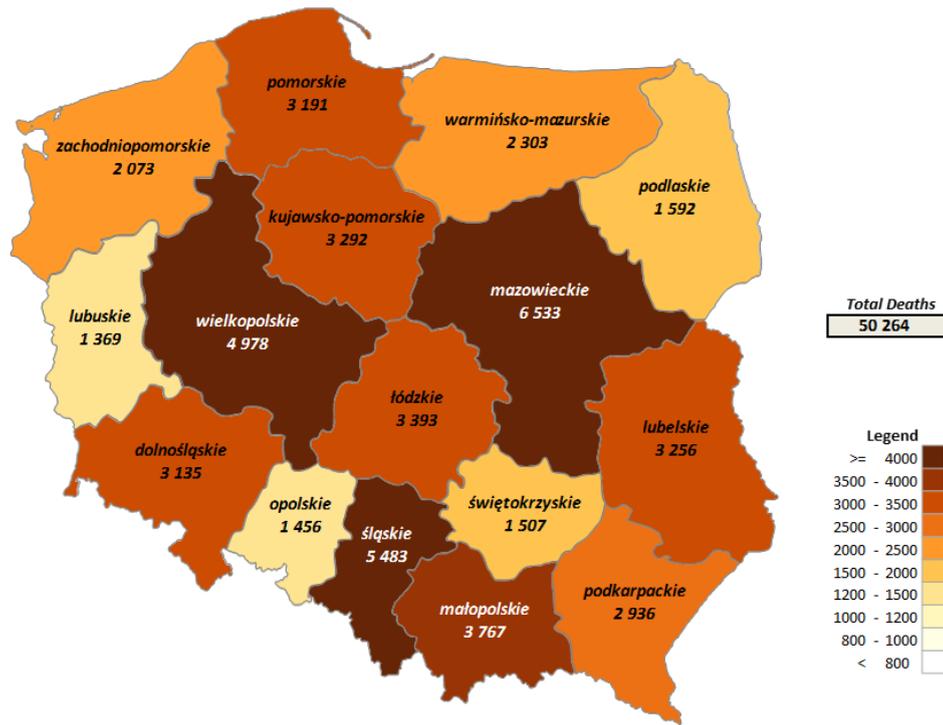
Vaccination		
	Number of vaccinations done	5 193 835
	Vaccinated with first dose	3 385 827
	Vaccinated with two doses	1 808 008

National vaccination program is continued, focusing now on people over 65 years old and patients with chronic diseases. Next foreseen faze will cover those from medical staff who was not vaccinated yet and uniformed services. As of now 13, 72% from entire population took at least 1 dose, which placed Poland on 11th place among NATO countries.

Number of cases by voivodship:



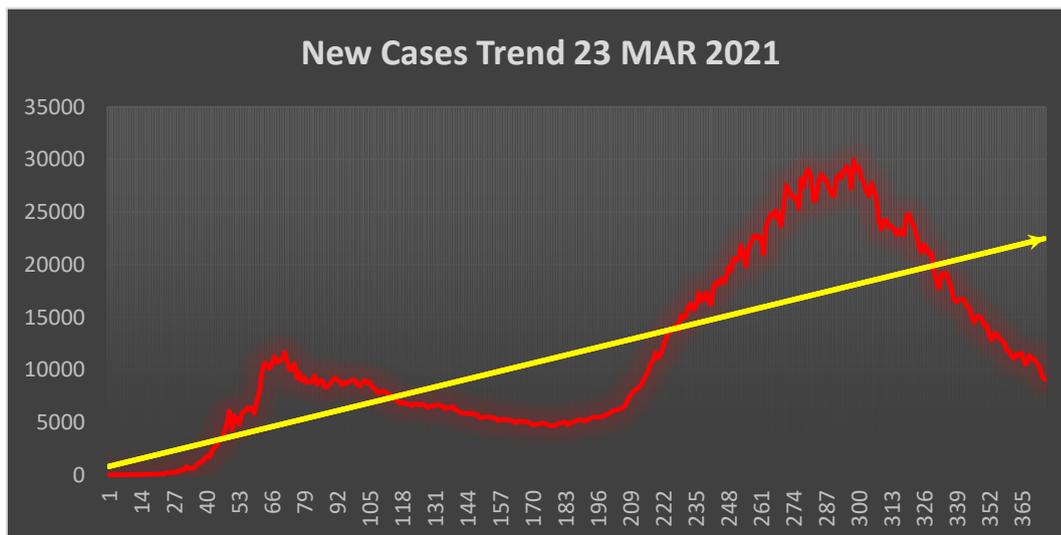
Number of deaths by voivodship:



11. RUSSIA

Russia recorded 8,861 COVID-19 cases on 23 March 2021, bringing the total case tally to 4,483,471, IAW information provided by the anti-coronavirus crisis center.

In relative terms, the growth rate amounted to 0.2%¹. The lowest growth rates were registered in the Tuva Republic, the Sakhalin Region (0.01%), the Magadan Region (0.04%) and the Republic of Adygea (0.06%).



Independent analysis shows missing antibodies and low virus protection levels among those vaccinated with the Vektor Institute’s EpiVacCorona shot.² Clinical trial volunteers for Russia’s

¹ <https://tass.com/society/1269691>

² <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/03/24/trial-subjects-for-russias-second-coronavirus-vaccine-urge-probe-into-effectiveness-a73351>

second coronavirus vaccine have demanded the country's Health Ministry launch an investigation to explore claims the jab does not produce an immune response.

The group — which is currently taking part in Phase 3 studies for Russia's EpiVacCorona shot, a peptide vaccine developed by the Vektor Institute in Novosibirsk — say they have conducted their own independent analysis of antibody levels which throws doubts on developers' claims that the jab produces an immune response in 100% of recipients. Their analysis of 116 members of the Phase 3 clinical trials, which were launched in mid-November, shows 52 failed to develop antibodies. Given that only 25% of the total 3,000 participants in the trial were given a placebo, the group calculated the likelihood that all 52 in their independent analysis were in the placebo group — and thus would not be expected to produce antibodies — at just one in 333,000. The group also analyzed samples from 19 people who were administered the EpiVacCorona vaccine as part of Russia's nationwide vaccination campaign. It found four had not developed antibodies.

The Russian government approved EpiVacCorona for use in mid-October, one month before late-stage Phase 3 clinical trials started, based on earlier studies which claimed the vaccine developed an immune response among 100% of test subjects.

The Vektor Institute has already been forced to dismiss earlier concerns about the absence of antibodies among those vaccinated, saying that the vaccine's peptide-based formula means normal antibody tests cannot detect its specific immune response. The group's independent analysis was based on a special testing kit developed by the Vektor Institute. The group raised concerns not only about the absence of antibodies, but also the levels and kind of antibodies produced by the vaccine. Conversely, neutralizing antibodies were present in a control group of both those who had received Russia's first coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V, and Covid-19 patients. In fact, the group found that the only person from a group of 20 to develop neutralizing antibodies after receiving EpiVacCorona had previously contracted Covid-19. Despite being the first country in the world to approve a coronavirus vaccine with Sputnik V, Russia's vaccination campaign has seen a slow uptake, beset by logistical challenges and widespread public skepticism. The government does not share nationwide statistics on the number of completed vaccinations, but independent analysis suggests around 6.2 million people — 4.3% of Russia's population — have received at least one vaccine dose.

12. TURKEY

Turkey has recorded 3 061 520 million infections and 30 316 deaths due to COVID-19 in the last two weeks. Daily cases have increased over 20 000 in recent days. According to data, a jump is about 3000 for the last two days. Currently, the average number of infected people is 21 000 a day. Things are more complicated in the big cities, especially Istanbul. Turkey steadily occupies 9th place in the world among the countries.

Vaccinations go on. So far, 12.2 million vaccine doses administered across Turkey. These include 8.00 million first doses and 4.2 million second doses. The vaccination rate among citizens aged 65 and older reached 71 percent in Istanbul, the country's largest city with over 16 million citizens. Turkey granted a vaccination priority to workers in the tourism industry to stay ahead of its competitors. The process started with personnel from opened facilities, other facilities gradually included. 1.1 million workers pending vaccination.

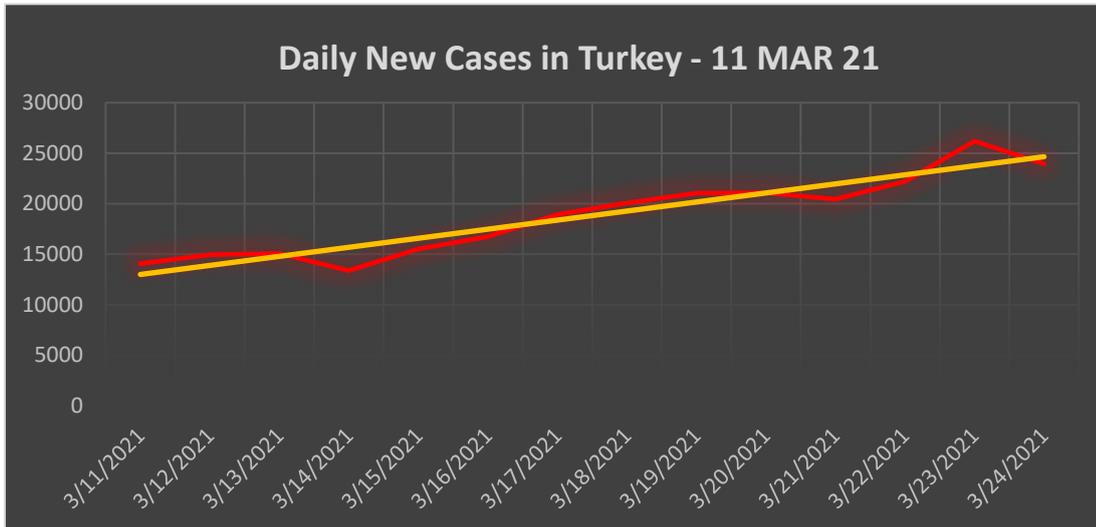
Color-coding is in force as of March 1. Blue provinces are those where the number of cases is between zero and 11 per 100,000 people, Yellow from 11-35 and orange from 35-100. Provinces with more than 100 cases per 100,000 people are red³.

Earlier this month, the country started easing restrictions based on low numbers in

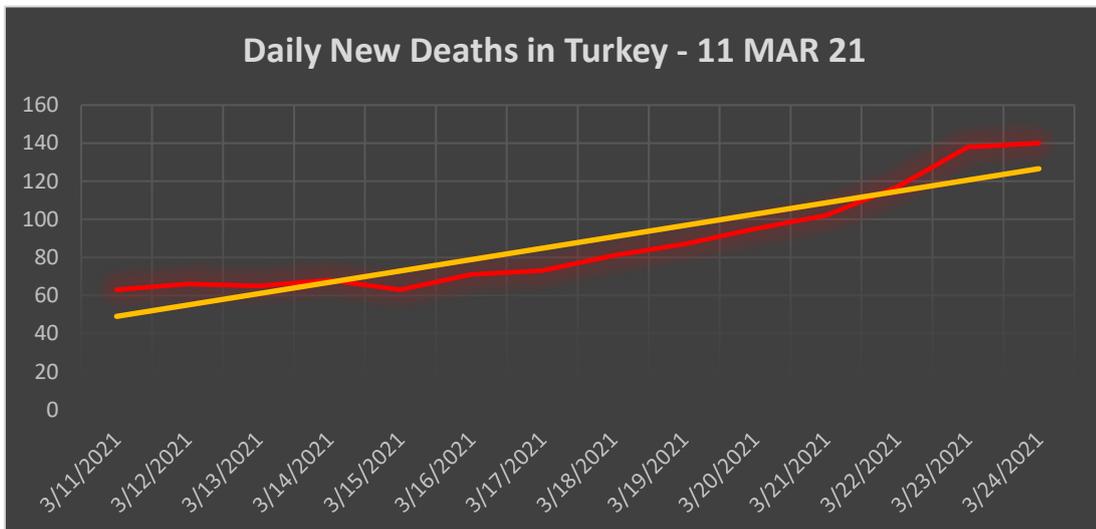
³ (<https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>, n.d.)

some provinces. The government vowed not to bring them back unless necessary. The impact of the “normalization process,” which included an end to Saturday curfews and the reopening of some businesses like restaurants, is yet to be seen far new cases have displayed an upward trend.

Experts tie the rise in case numbers to three factors: increased mobility amid normalization, new variants of the virus spreading faster across the country, and the public failure to comply with rules drop their guard in light of the normalization process.



The number of new cases is showing increasing tendency; a daily level is nearly 21 000 last days.



The number of daily new deaths trend line continues to going slightly up, approximately 120 daily, and now is close to 30 000.

Direct flights from Brazil, Denmark, South Africa, and the UK remain cancelled.

COVID-19 control measures for land and sea travel continue. Passengers arriving in Turkey will be required to complete an information form and checked for symptoms. Anyone, who suspected of having COVID-19, will be transported to a hospital for examination or a dormitory for self-isolation. If an individual on a particular aircraft/vehicle/vessel is found to have COVID-19, the information forms completed upon arrival will identify others who have been in contact with them; those individuals will then be subject to 14-day isolation/quarantine.

However, short-notice changes, especially temporary closures of land borders, are possible. All travelers from all points of departure to Turkey must have a negative PCR test undertaken within 72 hours before departure. The wearing of masks is mandatory at all times outside the home throughout Turkey. It includes, but is not limited to, all public places, including streets, side streets, parks, gardens, picnic areas, markets, and public transportation Metro, buses, taxis, and ferries. Curfews imposed on weekends.

Turkey COVID-19 Patient Table	Today	THIS WEEK	Total
	NUMBER OF TESTS	211.848	PNEUMONIA RATE IN PATIENTS %4,2
NUMBER OF CASES	26.182	BED OCCUPANCY RATE %53,8	NUMBER OF CASES 3.061.520
NUMBER OF PATIENTS	1.006	INTENSIVE MAINTENANCE OCCUPANCY RATE %65,0	NUMBER OF DEATHS 30.316
NUMBER OF DEATHS	138	VENTILATOR OCCUPANCY RATE %23,3	NUMBER OF SEVERE PATIENTS 1.710
NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENTS	19.201	AVERAGE CONTACT DELIVERY TIME 9 HOURS	NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENTS 2.863.882
		FILIATION RATE %99,9	

<https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

Turkey has launched a 21 point stimulus package (Economic Stability Shield) worth USD 15.4 billion to tackle the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, Turkey has pledged a “series of measures” relating to Fiscal Policy, comprising tax breaks and deferrals, along with credit guarantees and delays in loan repayments.

13. USA

The U.S. has over 30.4 million confirmed coronavirus cases and more than 554,871 deaths. Over the past week, there has been an average of 54,949 cases per day, a decrease of 9 percent from the average two weeks earlier.

Overall, COVID-19 cases have decreased for the past 9 weeks. The current 7-day moving average of new cases decreased 78.7% compared with the highest peak on January 11, 2021, (249,389), and 20.9% compared with the second highest peak on July 23, 2020 (67,277). On March 17, there was a 3.0% decrease in the 7-day average number of daily cases reported compared with the prior week, which provides an encouraging sign of continued progress.

	TOTAL REPORTED	ON MARCH 20	14-DAY CHANGE
Cases	30.4 million	54,620	-9%
Deaths	541,493	773	-40%
Hospitalized		40,207	-17%

Reports of new cases have increased by more than 80 percent over the last two weeks in Michigan, and hospitalization levels have also increased. Though infection levels remain well below their peak, outbreaks are growing around Detroit and Port Huron.

New Jersey and New York have led the country in recent cases per capita, while officials there continue to take steps to open up the economy.

A year after much of the country entered strict lockdowns designed to contain the coronavirus, it remains largely up to state and local officials to determine what restrictions, if any, to impose to slow new infections.

Many states are moving closer to lifting all restrictions now that the vaccine rollout is underway. Others are still mandating the use of masks in public and keeping other limits in place. Many states offer exceptions to broader rules, for example allowing bars to operate if they also serve food. Nearly all states limit capacity or require social distancing measures for businesses that are allowed to open.

President Biden signed \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 economic relief package into law on March 11. Key features of the plan include up to \$1,400-per-person stimulus payments that will send money to about 90% of households, a \$300 federal boost to weekly jobless benefits, an expansion of the child tax credit of up to \$3,600 per child and \$350 billion in state and local aid, as well as billions of dollars for K-12 schools to help students return to the classroom, to assist small businesses hard-hit by the pandemic and for vaccine research, development and distribution.

Overall, about 81.4 million people, or 25 % of the U.S. population, have received at least one dose of vaccine. About 44.1 million people, or 13% of the U.S. population have been fully vaccinated. 65% of people aged 65 or older have received at least one shot, and 36% are fully vaccinated. At least 17 states have announced plans for universal adult vaccine eligibility in March or April.

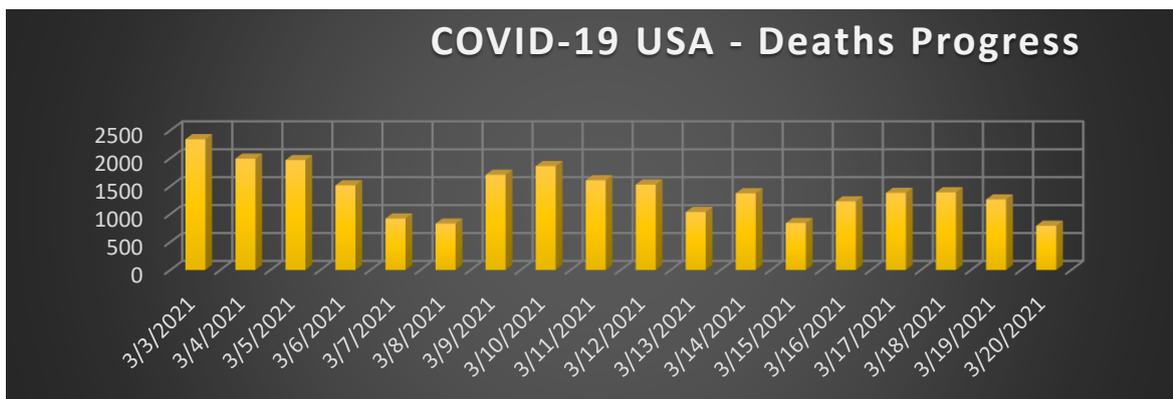
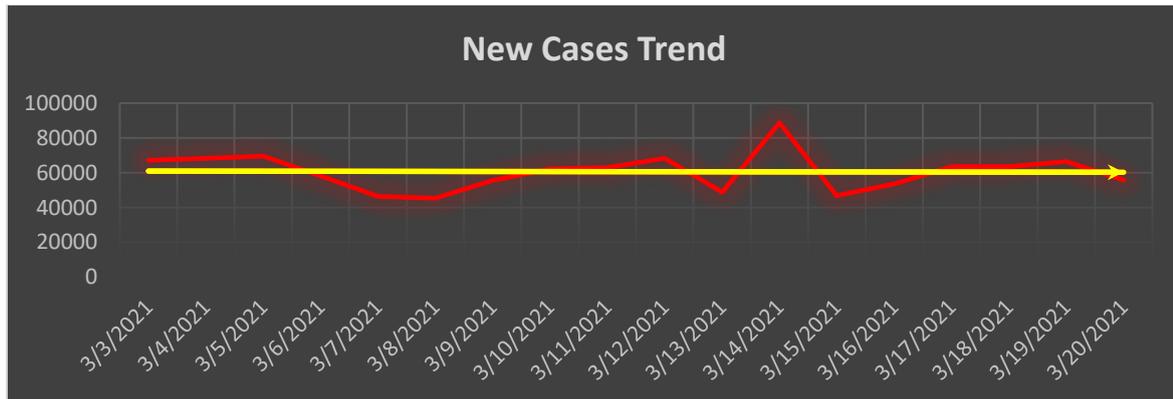
As of March 18, the 7-day average number of administered vaccine doses reported to CDC per day was 2.5 million, a 12.1% increase from the previous week. If the country maintains its current pace of vaccinating people, about half of the total population would be at least partially vaccinated around mid-May, and nearly all around late July, assuming supply pledges are met and vaccines are eventually available to children.

Moderna has begun testing its COVID-19 vaccine in children as young as 6 months old and up to 11 years old, the company announced.

President Joe Biden stated that by July 4 the US could be celebrating its independence from the pandemic.

Vaccination	At least one shot	Two shots	Doses delivered	Shots given	Doses used
U.S. total	25% -81.4 million	13 %-44.1 million	156,734,555	121,441,497	79%

The US is at risk of losing all its recent gains in the battle against Covid-19 as highly contagious variants take advantage of Americans loosening up with security measures. Despite recent progress, the United States remains the most affected country, with more than 30.4 million infections and more than half a million deaths. As the virus continues to circulate widely within the United States and thousands of new cases are still being identified each day true normalcy remains a distant vision.



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CONCLUSIONS

1. As of March 24 the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases across the planet has surpassed 124 million, more than 2.7 million deaths and almost 21,7 million active cases.
2. The benefits of the vaccines in particular outweigh the risk of coagulation disorders and

the vaccines prevents other effects of COVID-19, including deaths.

3. The growing Covid-19 cases in Europe, Brazil and India is a major driver of the recent rise in new infections worldwide.
4. The United States is still experiencing a welcome fall in the number of new infections. The reduction in Covid-19 cases is coming as more than 121 million Americans have received their first vaccine.
5. Vaccination in the EU is already lagging behind that of the United Kingdom and other countries due to problems with vaccine supplies
6. The use of one of the more widely available vaccines had been temporarily suspended by many countries in the EU, and fears of an increase in the spread of the virus have grown.
7. There is enough evidence that a third (and more serious) wave of COVID-19 is ongoing across Europe and around the world.
8. In many countries around the world, experiencing yet another significant upward trend in new infections and deaths, the government has been forced to reintroduce restrictive measures, including lockdowns and curfews.
9. Living with COVID-19 will require ongoing effort that's why the risks associated with spread of COVID-19 and the unintended social and health consequences of restrictive public health measures must be carefully balanced.