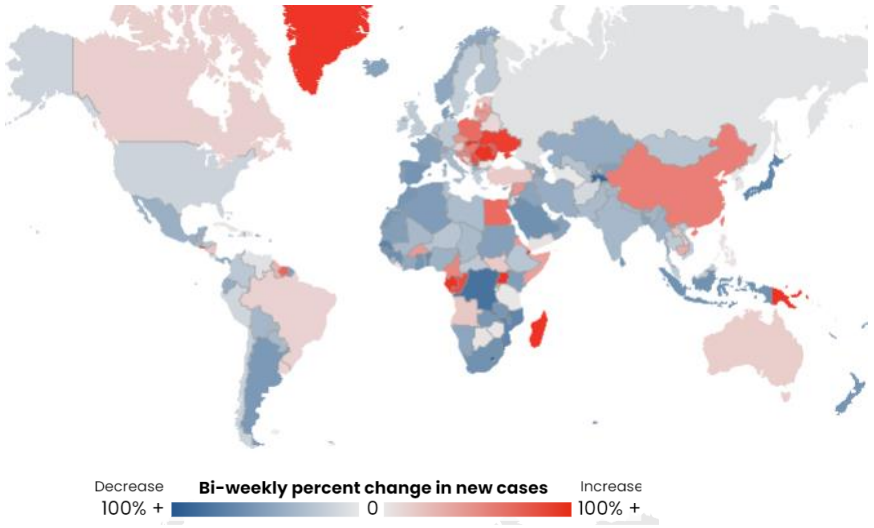
COVID-19 Update: Weeks 37-38

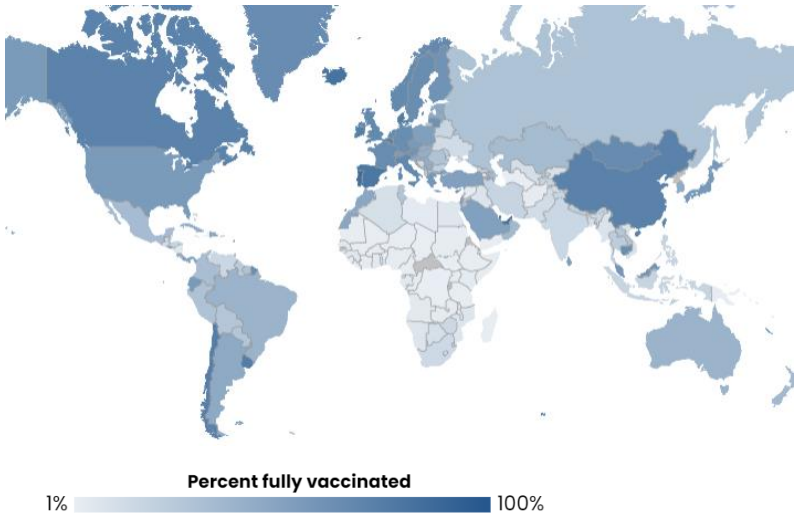
12th – 25th September 2021

Bi-weekly COVID-19 updates from IFRC focusing on the epidemiological trends and updated evidence are shared through the Health Help Desk. Additional external resources for deeper weekly or monthly subject-area analysis have also been added to the public access page on the Health Help Desk. Internal reports from the IFRC are available on IFRC Go page for the COVID-19 pandemic (including operational updates, immunization updates and updated figures by IFRC region).

Bi-weekly percent change in new cases

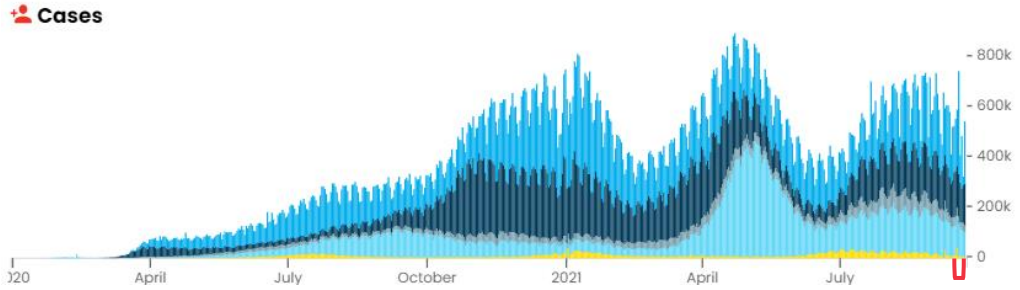


Percentage of population fully vaccinated



- **Global COVID-19 incidence for cases and deaths decreased for the second week in about one and a half months.**
- **Only 2.3% of those living in low-income countries have had at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine**
- An estimated 44.7% of the global population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, with an estimated 32% fully vaccinated.
- Over 80% of vaccines distributed have been administered in middle-high and high-income countries.

Situation update & Risk Assessment



The number of weekly cases and deaths continued to decrease at the global level, with just over 3.6 million cases reported and just under 60,000 new deaths in the last week. All regions reported decreasing trends except for the Africa region with reported a small increased incidence in COVID-19 cases, the WHO Western Pacific Region (part of IFRC's Asia Pacific Region) reporting a 7% increase in mortality, and the European Region reporting roughly the same number of deaths as the previous week. The highest number of new COVID-19 cases reported over the last week were reported from the United States, the United Kingdom and India.

For further information or feedback please contact: Rachel Goodermote, with the Health and Care Department, IFRC

Secondary Impacts

- OECD released a report emphasizing that the gap between rich and developing economies is expanding and in part driven by unequal access to vaccination, allowing those who have higher vaccination levels (and higher-income) to begin bouncing back economically following a dip at the beginning of the pandemic, with unemployment remaining high in other contexts.

Vaccine Safety and Efficacy

- In a pre-print study from the US, researchers investigated the efficacy of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine during periods of high Alpha and Delta transmission in the US and found that the vaccine had similar efficacy among the adult population monitored that received the J&J vaccine over both periods of time. Vaccine efficacy was found to be around 79% against infection during high Alpha transmission, and 78% during high Delta transmission. Vaccine efficacy against severe disease and hospitalization was similar or higher (81% during high Alpha transmission and 85% during high Delta transmission). Similar results were seen in ecological studies looking at vaccine efficacy of AstraZeneca and Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines.
- Recent study published in Lancet Infectious Diseases from Kings College London found that among those who became infected with COVID-19 post vaccination (about 0.2% of those included), vaccination reduced symptoms of long-covid by 49% and reduced the risk of hospitalization by 73%
- The US FDA has given approval for booster shots of the Pfizer mRNA vaccine to adults who have been fully vaccinated 6 months or longer and are 65 years of age and older as well as immunocompromised populations (previously reported).
- Following a Phase 3 clinical trial, Johnson & Johnson announced lasting protection of the one-shot vaccine, as well as results showing a booster shot administered two months after the initial shot increased vaccine efficacy against severe disease and potentially 75-95% against symptomatic disease.

Variants of Concern or of Interest & Implications

Summary impacts of Variants of Concern designated by WHO (referenced from WHO Situation Report #58)

Name/ Label	Alpha Detected in 193 countries	Beta Detected in 142 countries	Gama Detected in 96 countries	Delta Detected in 185 countries
Transmissibility	Increased transmissibility and secondary attack rate	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility and secondary attack rate.
Disease Severity	Increased risk of hospitalization, possible increased risk of severity and mortality	Not confirmed, possible increased risk of in-hospital mortality	Possible increased risk of hospitalization and/or risk of severity, research still underway	Increased risk of hospitalization
Risk of reinfection	Neutralizing activity retained, risk of reinfection remains similar	Reduction in neutralizing activity reported; T cell response elicited by D614G virus remains effective	Moderate reduction in neutralizing activity reported	Reduction in neutralizing activity reported

Clinical Trials and Treatments

- In a Phase 3 clinical trial (not peer reviewed yet) scientists have found that an intravenous administration of Remdesivir early in the disease among those at higher risk of severe disease or death due to COVID-19 significantly reduced the of COVID-19 related hospitalizations (by 87%) and medical visits. There have been mixed study results on the use of Remdesivir for COVID-19 treatments.
- The WHO added combination monoclonal antibody treatment Regeneron to its list of recommended COVID-19 therapeutic treatments for patients with non-severe COVID-19 who are at high risk of hospitalization and those with severe cases but no antibodies. A "living WHO guideline on drugs for COVID-19" can be found here on the BMJ.

References

Internal

IFRC Go COVID-19 response

- Dashboards and operational reports
- Monthly vaccine updates and highlights

IFRC Health Help Desk

- Webinars
- Operational Guidance related to the health response to COVID-19

External

ALNAP COVID-19 Response Portal

British Medical Journal Coronavirus Hub

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)- COVID-19 Reports

Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

- Particularly the COVID-19 Updates (weekly)

Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs COVID-19 Behavior Dashboards

Journal for American Medical Association COVID-19 focus (JAMA)

Nature SARS-COV-2 Review

New England Journal of Medicine COVID-19 page (NEJM)

Our World in Data

Prevent Epidemics In-Depth Science Reviews

UNDP Vaccine Affordability

WHO COVID-19 Dashboards

WHO Epidemiological Situation Reports