

Brazil tops 400,000 virus deaths amid fears of renewed surge

April 30 2021, by Mauricio Savarese



Relatives grieve during the burial service for Monica Cristina, 49, who died from complications related to COVID-19, at the Inahuma cemetery in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Wednesday, April 28, 2021. Some 2,400 people have died every day over the past week, triple the amount in the U.S. (AP Photo/Bruna Prado)

Brazil on Thursday became the second country to officially top 400,000

COVID-19 deaths, losing another 100,000 lives in just one month, as some health experts warn there may be gruesome days ahead when the Southern Hemisphere enters winter.

April was Brazil's deadliest month of the pandemic, with thousands of people losing their lives daily at crowded hospitals.

The country's Health Ministry registered more than 4,000 deaths on two days early in the month, and its seven-day average topped out at above 3,100. That figure has tilted downward in the last two weeks, to less than 2,400 deaths per day, though on Thursday the Health Ministry announced another 3,001 deaths, bringing Brazil's total to 401,186.

Local [health experts](#) have celebrated the recent decline of cases and deaths, plus the eased pressure on the Brazilian health care system—but only modestly. They are apprehensive of another wave of the disease, like those seen in some European nations, due to a premature resumption of activity in states and cities combined with slow vaccination rollout.

Less than 6% of Brazilians have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to Our World in Data, an online research site. President Jair Bolsonaro, who is now being investigated by a Senate panel over his administration's handling of the crisis, has repeated he will be the last to get a shot and he has attacked mayors and governors who enforce restrictions to control the virus' spread.



A family attends the burial service for David Ferreira Gomes, who died from complications related to COVID-19, at the Campo da Esperança cemetery in Brasilia, Brazil, Friday, April 16, 2021. Brazil marked a milestone of 400,000 COVID-19 deaths Thursday, April 29, 2021, the world's second-highest tally, with the majority recorded in just the last four months. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres)

Shortly after the grim landmark was published, Bolsonaro said in a [live broadcast](#) on his social media channels that "a big number of deaths has been announced," adding that he is "sorry for every death." But he repeated his stance against social distancing measures.

"I pray to God so there is not a third wave" of the [coronavirus](#), the president said. "But if the lockdown policies continue this country will be dragged to extreme poverty."

Epidemiologist Wanderson Oliveira, one of the Health Ministry's top officials at the start of the pandemic, said he expects a third wave to hit by mid-June. He told radio station CBN on Tuesday that the country's immunization effort won't prevent a new surge because many people won't receive shots before winter, when indoor gatherings and activities are more common even in the tropical nation.



In this March 31, 2021 file photo, cemetery workers work hours past sundown, as they lower the coffin that contain the remains of a COVID-19 victim into a freshly dug grave at the Vila Formosa cemetery in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Nighttime burials at Vila Formosa and three other cemeteries in Sao Paulo were suspended Wednesday, April 28, after two weeks of declining deaths. (AP Photo/Nelson Antoine, File)



In this March 16, 2021 file photo, healthcare workers leave a home after vaccinating residents with the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine, during a house-to-house vaccination campaign in the Kalunga Vao de Almas quilombo on the outskirts of Cavalcante, Goiás state, Brazil. The country's vast size and deficient infrastructure make getting coronavirus vaccines to far-flung communities of Indigenous peoples and descendants of slaves a particularly daunting endeavor. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres, File)



In this March 19, 2021 file photo, a healthcare worker leans against a wall in the corridor of an ICU unit for COVID-19 patients at the Hospital das Clinicas, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The number of Brazilian states with ICU capacity above 90% has slipped from 17 months ago, according to data from the state-run Fiocruz medical research institute. (AP Photo/Jefferson Bernardes, File)

"Our vaccination is such that in 2022 maybe we will have a much less tragic summer than we did now," he said, referring to the last few months.

He added he expects limited help from local leaders' partial shutdowns, which have yielded weaker results than European-style lockdowns. Many Brazilians flouted social distancing recommendations and partial shutdowns even in the throes of the pandemic's peak.

Brazil's vaccination program, though a far cry from its triumphant campaigns of decades past, has slowed the pace of deaths among the nation's elderly, according to [death](#) certificate data published on Monday. Younger people remain unprotected, and have begun falling ill in far greater numbers as a more transmissible variant circulates in Brazil.

Adding to concerns, Brazil's Health Ministry has repeatedly cut its outlook for vaccines in the short term. The country's two biggest laboratories are facing supply constraints for imports from producers in China and India, which has become the pandemic's global epicenter.

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