

# Uruguay facing world-record COVID-19 infection rate

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Uruguay has reported a 24-hour record coronavirus death toll, as it has gone from one of the least-affected countries to registering the most new daily cases per capita in the world.

Government data released late Monday showed a record 71 deaths in the previous 24 hours, bringing the toll to 1,533 in the country of 3.4 million

inhabitants.

Some 1,300 of the deaths—nearly 90 percent—have been registered since January this year, a third so far in April alone.

Long held up as an example in the fight against COVID-19, Uruguay has never had a curfew or lockdown, despite calls from some [health experts](#), and businesses, bars and restaurants remain open.

Over the past week, COVID-19 deaths have averaged above 50 per day.

President Luis Lacalle Pou, in a briefing last month, rejected any notion of lockdown or quarantine and stressed the importance of personal responsibility taken by individual citizens.

"It is a matter of principle," he said.

On AFP's count, Uruguay recorded an infection rate equivalent to nearly 1,370 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the last 14 days, by far the highest, with no other country surpassing 1,000 infections per 100,000 people in this period.

The country has identified on its territory the P1 variant from Brazil, with which it shares a border.

Monday's data showed 2,564 new cases in 24 hours, for a total of 147,173 positive tests to date.

Pressure on hospitals and intensive care units is growing.

Tiny Uruguay was the last country in South America to start its vaccination campaign, in March.

It is now second in South America, after Chile, in terms of doses administered, with about a quarter of the population having received one shot, and under six percent the required two doses.

Uruguay is relying mainly on China's Coronavac, which trials have shown is about 50 percent effective at preventing infection.

While [commercial activity](#) has been allowed to continue, in-person schooling, concerts and festivals are on hold and non-essential government offices closed.

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