

Lisbon drives virus surge as Portugal is chided for failings

June 23 2021, by Barry Hatton



A Navy nurse gives a shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to a man at an inoculation center operated by the Portuguese armed forces at Lisbon University's sports stadium, Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The Lisbon region's recent surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's number of daily cases to a four-month high, as a report by health experts found fault with the government's pandemic response. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

The Lisbon region's surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's daily new cases to a four-month high as a report by health experts finds fault with the government's pandemic response.

Portugal on Wednesday reported almost 1,500 new cases, two-thirds of them in the capital region where 2.8 million people live. Three people died in Portugal of COVID-19 over 24 hours.

The national 14-day cumulative COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people has risen to 130—over double what it was three weeks ago.

The pressure on hospitals remains manageable, with 437 virus patients admitted and 100 in intensive care. The Portuguese government has already banned travel into and out of the Lisbon region on weekends, though policing last weekend was patchy.

Experts blame the delta variant for Lisbon's virus spread, estimating it accounts for more than 70% of cases. The government is widely expected to announce new restrictions for Lisbon after a Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

To step up the pace of vaccinations, authorities on Wednesday reopened an inoculation center at Lisbon University's sports stadium that is being operated by the Portuguese armed forces. Beginning Monday, a walk-in vaccination center will open in the capital's riverside neighborhood of Alcântara.



People wait in a recovery area after getting shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at an inoculation center operated by the Portuguese armed forces at Lisbon University's sports stadium, Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The Lisbon region's recent surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's number of daily cases to a four-month high, as a report by health experts found fault with the government's pandemic response. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

Meanwhile, the head of the national vaccination task force said he hopes to hit the target of 70% of the population inoculated by the third week of August.

That is later than the initial plan, which was to reach the goal in [early summer](#), but Rear Admiral Henrique Gouveia e Melo said Portugal is

receiving fewer vaccine doses than the 130,000 jabs a day it can administer.

Also Wednesday, a report by [health experts](#) into Portugal's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic warned that the country is not learning from what happened over the past 15 months. The report said there was "a worrying absence of drawing conclusions from what went wrong."

The report for the Portuguese Observatory of Health Systems, which groups current and former public [health](#) chiefs, said it was good that the country's main political parties stood together and that the Portuguese mostly complied with the rules on social distancing and mask-wearing.



A woman gets a shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at an inoculation center operated by the Portuguese armed forces at Lisbon University's sports stadium,

Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The Lisbon region's recent surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's number of daily cases to a four-month high, as a report by health experts found fault with the government's pandemic response. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A nurse prepares doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at an inoculation center operated by the Portuguese armed forces at Lisbon University's sports stadium, Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The Lisbon region's recent surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's number of daily cases to a four-month high, as a report by health experts found fault with the government's pandemic response. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



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An army nurse carries doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at an inoculation center operated by the Portuguese armed forces at Lisbon University's sports stadium, Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The Lisbon region's recent surge in COVID-19 cases is powering ahead, with new infections pushing Portugal's number of daily cases to a four-month high, as a report by health experts found fault with the government's pandemic response. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

But it said politicians pressured health experts to give them recommendations that were more politically "convenient" and that the National Council for Public Health was barely used and is severely underfunded. Also, it said, authorities have not activated two specialist units to improve the country's pandemic response.

"We are not learning through this experience what we need to do better in the future," the report said.

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