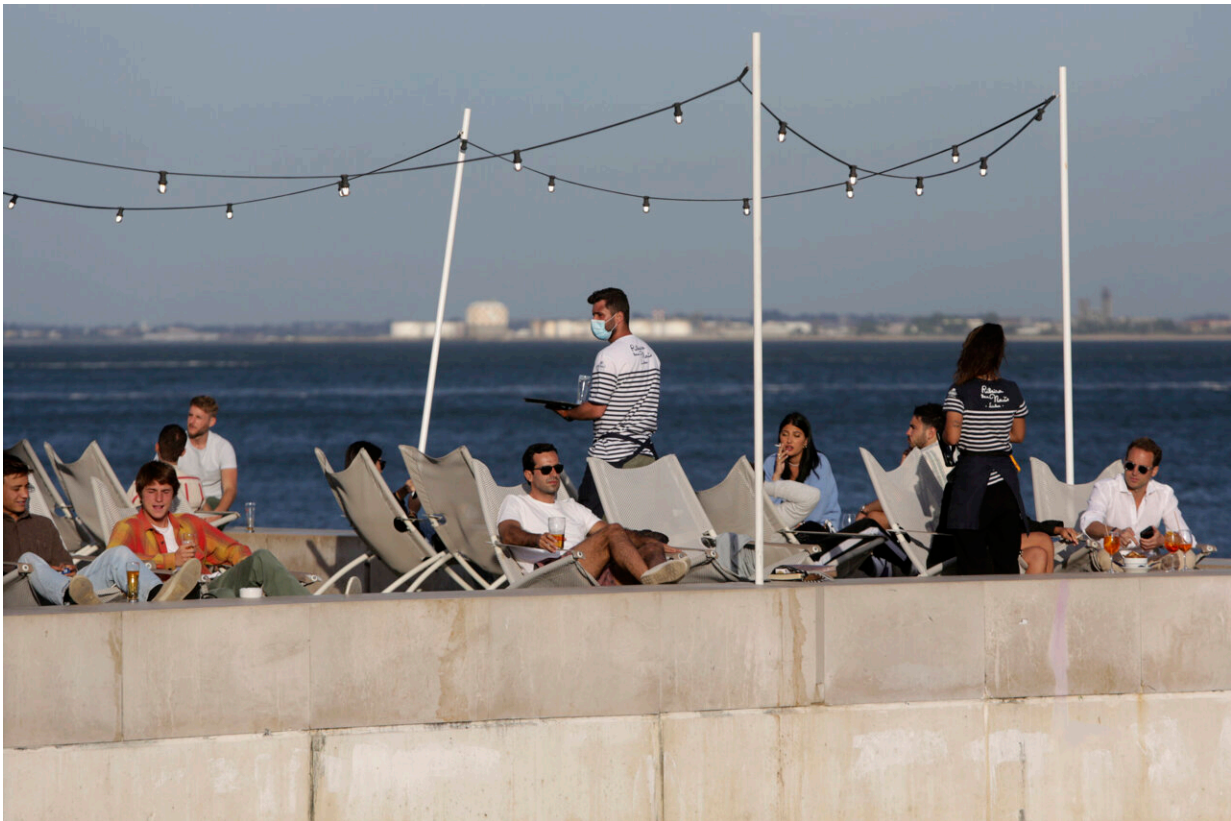


Portugal in reverse as delta variant grips Lisbon, cases up

June 24 2021, by Barry Hatton



In this Friday, June 4, 2021 file photo, people have drinks by the Tagus river in Lisbon as the sun sets. Two months after Portugal began to ease a prolonged lockdown, the Lisbon region is going into reverse due to a surge driven by the coronavirus' delta variant, which now accounts for more than 7 in 10 new infections in the capital. The country reported 1,556 new infections Thursday, June 24, 2021—the highest number since Feb. 20. Just over 1,000 of them were in the Lisbon region. Officials say hospital admissions are increasing at a "worrying" level. Portugal was the worst-hit country in the world, in terms of

weekly infections, in January. But an extended lockdown contained the spread.
Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca, File

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Prime Minister António Costa warned that the problem isn't just in Portugal: Experts predict the delta variant, which originated in India, will account for 90% of new infections across Europe by the end of August, he said Thursday.

The Lisbon region, where some 2.8 million people live, will go back to a 3.30 p.m. closing time for restaurants and cafes at weekends, with limits on how many customers can be served. Among other restrictions, wedding and baptism venues will be allowed to fill only 25% of their capacity, down from the current 50%.

Travel into and out of Lisbon will not be permitted at weekends.

Though hospital admissions for COVID-19 patients remain manageable, the trend is "worrying," Cabinet Minister Mariana Vieira da Silva told a press conference.

She said the number of hospitalizations and patients in [intensive care](#)

went up by 30% and 26% over the past week, respectively.

"The situation is getting worse," she said. "We expect the number of new cases to keep going up in coming weeks."

Vieira da Silva noted that some 700,000 people aged over 60 have not yet had their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Portugal is administering around 320,000 jabs a week, "but it's a race against time," she said.

Portugal was the worst-hit country in the world, in terms of weekly infections, in January. But an extended lockdown contained the spread.

Since the pandemic began, Portugal has officially recorded around 869,000 cases of COVID-19 and some 17,000 deaths.

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