

Russia sees surge in virus cases amid slow vaccine drive

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Russia on Wednesday reported a spike in the number of coronavirus infections as officials struggle to encourage Russians to get vaccinated.

A government tally reported 10,407 new coronavirus infections across the country, the highest since March 14.

Moscow, the worst-hit city in Russia, also saw a surge in new infections, registering the highest number of daily cases since January 16.

Russia has been among the countries hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic with the sixth-highest number of cases in the world.

But Russian authorities have been accused of downplaying the pandemic's severity by only counting fatalities where the coronavirus was found to be the primary cause of death after an autopsy.

Figures released by federal statistics agency Rosstat show that Russia had actually recorded some 270,000 virus-related deaths by the end of April—more than double the official tally.

Russia imposed a strict lockdown when the pandemic first swept across the country last spring.

But authorities lifted most measures within several months, opting to protect the struggling economy and pinning their hopes on curbing the outbreak with vaccines.

Officials have registered four homegrown vaccines—Sputnik V, it's single-dose version Sputnik Light, EpiVacCorona and CoviVac.

While Russia's domestic vaccination campaign started in early December ahead of most countries, so far around 18 million Russians or 12 percent of the population has received at least one dose of a [vaccine](#).

President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly called on Russians to get immunised as authorities struggle to ramp up vaccination efforts.

According to a recent survey by the independent Levada pollster, over 60 percent of respondents said they do not intend to be vaccinated.

Independent sociologists say vaccine hesitancy is a sign of a breakdown in trust between Russians and the authorities after decades of Kremlin propaganda.

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