

Greece pressures vaccine skeptics as infections surge

July 12 2021, by Derek Gatopoulos



Tourists watch the changing of the Presidential guards ceremony outside the Greek parliament in central Athens, on Monday, July 12, 2021. Just over 40% of residents have been fully vaccinated but appointments to start the vaccine process have been falling in recent weeks -- prompting the Greek government to increase the pressure on vaccine skeptics. Credit: AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris

Health care workers in Greece will be suspended if they refuse to get vaccinated under a new mandatory policy announced Monday by the country's prime minister.

Staff at nursing homes will be suspended starting Aug. 16 if they fail to book a vaccination appointment, with a similar policy to follow in September for workers at state-run and private hospitals.

Starting Friday, and until the end of August, all indoor commercial areas, including bars, cinemas, and theaters, will only be available for the vaccinated.

"After a year and a half, no one can claim ignorance about the coronavirus anymore," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a televised address. "The country will not shut down again due to attitude adopted by certain people ... It's not Greece that's a danger, but unvaccinated Greeks."

The new restrictions will apply nationwide, including the Greek islands and other key tourism destinations.

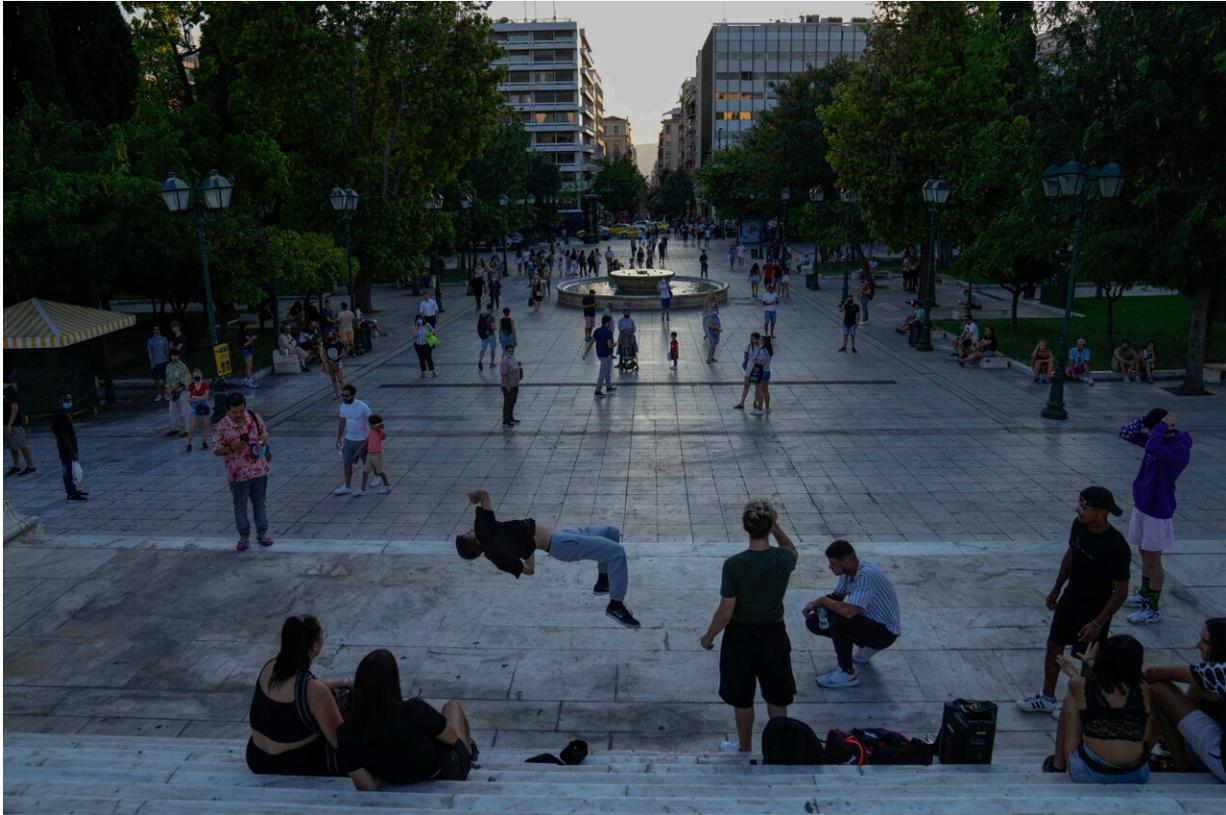
COVID-19 infections in Greece have surged since late June, with authorities blaming carelessness at bars and restaurants as well as the spread of the highly infectious delta variant. The number of daily infections per 100,000 residents over seven days rose from 3.5 on June 24 to above 17 now.



Tourists watch the changing of the Presidential guards ceremony outside the Greek parliament in central Athens, on Monday, July 12, 2021. Just over 40% of residents have been fully vaccinated but appointments to start the vaccine process have been falling in recent weeks -- prompting the Greek government to increase the pressure on vaccine skeptics. Credit: AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris



A woman reads a book in the National Garden, central Athens, on Monday, July 12, 2021. Just over 40% of residents have been fully vaccinated but appointments to start the vaccine process have been falling in recent weeks -- prompting the Greek government to increase the pressure on vaccine skeptics. Credit: AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris



Young men dance in Syntagma square, central Athens, on Monday, July 12, 2021. Just over 40% of residents have been fully vaccinated but appointments to start the vaccine process have been falling in recent weeks -- prompting the Greek government to increase the pressure on vaccine skeptics. Credit: AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris

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Authorities on Thursday will begin accepting vaccination requests from minors over 14 with parental consent.

Lengthy lockdowns and a steep drop in tourism in 2020 halted the country's financial recovery and swung Greece into recession, with the economy contracting 8.2% last year. The European Commission says it expects output to rebound by 4.3% this year and 6.0% in 2022 if tourism continues to recover and new lockdowns are avoided.

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