

South Africa's new coronavirus cases surge to record levels

July 4 2021, by Andrew Meldrum



In this June 3, 2021 file photo an elderly patient receives a dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, at a clinic at Orange Farm, near Johannesburg, The African Union special envoy tasked with leading efforts to procure COVID-19 vaccines for the continent is blasting Europe as Africa struggles amid a crushing third wave of infections. Credit: AP Photo/Denis Farrell, File

South Africa's resurgence of COVID-19 is setting record numbers of new daily cases, centered in Johannesburg and driven by the delta variant, health officials said Sunday.

More than 26,000 new cases were reported on Saturday, up from 24,000 the previous day, according to the [National Institute for Communicable Diseases](#), surpassing the highest number of new cases in previous waves and quickly bringing many hospitals to capacity. More than 13,800 COVID-19 patients are currently in South African hospitals where some facilities are canceling elective surgeries to free up beds and [health care workers](#).

South Africa's official death toll has risen above 63,000, although statistics on excess deaths suggest the country's actual number of virus fatalities may be more than 170,000.

South Africa's 2 million cases account for more than 30% of the cases reported by Africa's 54 countries, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

President Cyril Ramaphosa last week increased restrictions to try to reduce the spread of the virus, including extending a nighttime curfew, banning the sale of alcohol, closing many schools and stopping travel into and out of Gauteng, the country's most populous province that includes Johannesburg and the capital, Pretoria. Gauteng accounts for more than 60% of the new cases and officials fear other provinces and cities will soon follow.



In this Thursday June 17, 2021 file photo medical staff wearing protective equipment attend to patients affected by COVID-19, on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Machakos County Level-5 hospital in Machakos, Kenya. Driven by the delta variant, a new wave of COVID-19 is sweeping across the African continent where new cases, hospital admissions, and deaths are increasing. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga/File



In this Sunday, June 27, 2021 file photo a Muslim burial of a COVID-19 victim takes place at the Westpark Cemetery in Johannesburg. Driven by the delta variant, a new wave of COVID-19 is sweeping across the African continent where new cases, hospital admissions, and deaths are increasing. Credit: AP Photo/Ali Greeff



In this Tuesday, June 22, 2021 file photo, healthcare workers prepare to test patients for COVID-19 at the Lancet Laboratories in Johannesburg. Driven by the delta variant, a new wave of COVID-19 is sweeping across the African continent where new cases, hospital admissions, and deaths are increasing. Credit: AP Photo/Denis Farrell, File

After a slow start, South Africa's vaccination drive is picking up pace but is still far behind developed nations. To date, [more than 3.3 million](#) of South Africa's 60 million people have received at least one jab of the Pfizer or Johnson & Johnson vaccines. The inoculation campaign started with health care workers, those aged 60 and over and schoolteachers. On Monday police can get a jab and soon those 50 and over can too.

The nation's Health Products Regulatory Authority on Saturday authorized the [vaccine manufactured by China's Sinovac](#), providing that it submits final results of ongoing clinical studies.

Neighboring southern African countries including Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe are also struggling to cope with a surge of infections.

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