

# Dispiriting setback: COVID deaths, cases rise again globally

July 14 2021, by Heather Hollingsworth and Maria Cheng

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Workers in protective gear lower a coffin of a COVID-19 victim to a grave for burial at the Cipenjo Cemetery in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The world's fourth most populous country has been hit hard by an explosion of COVID-19 cases that have strained hospitals on the main island of Java. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim

COVID-19 deaths and cases are on the rise again globally in a dispiriting setback that is triggering another round of restrictions and dampening hopes for a return to normal life.

The World Health Organization reported Wednesday that deaths climbed last week after nine straight weeks of decline. It recorded more than 55,000 lives lost, a 3% increase from the week before.

Cases rose 10% last week to nearly 3 million, with the highest numbers recorded in Brazil, India, Indonesia and Britain, WHO said.

The reversal has been attributed to low vaccination rates, the relaxation of mask rules and other precautions, and the swift spread of the more-contagious delta variant, which WHO said has now been identified in 111 countries and is expected to become globally dominant in the coming months.

Sarah McCool, a professor of public health at Georgia State University, said the combination amounts to a "recipe for a potential tinderbox."

"It's important that we recognize that COVID has the potential for explosive outbreaks," warned Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease specialist at Johns Hopkins University.

Amid the surge, the death toll in hard-hit Argentina surpassed 100,000. Daily coronavirus deaths in Russia hit record highs this week. In Belgium, COVID-19 infections, driven by the delta variant among the young, have almost doubled over the past week. Britain recorded a one-day total of more than 40,000 new cases for the first time in six months.





People wear face masks to curb the spread of coronavirus during the morning rush hour at Waterloo train station in London, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Dunham

In Myanmar, crematoriums are working morning to night. In Indonesia, which recorded almost 1,000 deaths and over 54,000 new cases Wednesday, up from around 8,000 cases per day a month ago, people near Jakarta are pitching in to help gravediggers keep up.

"As the diggers are too tired and do not have enough resources to dig, the residents in my neighborhood decided to help," Jaya Abidin said. "Because if we do not do this, we will have to wait in turn a long time for a burial."

In the U.S., with one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, newly confirmed infections per day have doubled over the past two weeks to an average of about 24,000, though deaths are still on a downward trajectory at around 260 a day.

Los Angeles County, the most populous county in the U.S., reported its fifth straight day Tuesday of more than 1,000 new cases.

Tokyo is under a fourth state of emergency ahead of the Summer Games this month, with infections climbing fast and hospital beds filling up. Experts have said caseloads could rise above 1,000 before the Olympics and multiply to thousands during the games.

The spike has led to additional restrictions in places like Sydney, Australia, where the 5 million residents will remain in lockdown through at least the end of July, two weeks longer than planned. South Korea has placed the Seoul area under its toughest distancing rules yet because of record case levels.

Parts of Spain, including Barcelona, moved to impose an overnight curfew. London Mayor Sadiq Khan said masks will be required on buses and trains even after other restrictions in England are lifted next week. Italy warned all those going abroad that they might have to quarantine before returning home.



Humerto Stefanon, left, visits the gravesite of his late wife, Maria Olga Herrera, who died of COVID-19, at the Chacarita cemetery in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Argentina is close to reaching 100,000 deaths related to COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Victor R. Caivano

Chicago announced that unvaccinated travelers from Missouri and Arkansas must either quarantine for 10 days or have a negative COVID-19 test.

Connecticut lawmakers voted Wednesday to again extend Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont's emergency declarations, despite pushback from Republicans and some Democrats who argued it is time to get back to normal. Among other things, the move keeps in place orders requiring masks in certain settings.



An Alabama military base has ordered troops to show proof of vaccination before they can go maskless as the state sees an uptick in COVID-19 cases, a rise attributed to low vaccination rates. The measure was put in place Tuesday at Fort Rucker, home to the Army's aviation program.

As troubling as the figures are around the world, they are still well below the alarming numbers seen earlier this year.

Seven months into the vaccination drive, global deaths are down to around 7,900 a day, after topping out at over 18,000 a day in January, according to Johns Hopkins data. Cases are running at around 450,000 a day, down by half since their peak in late April.

WHO acknowledged that many countries are now facing "considerable pressure" to lift all remaining precautions but warned that failing to do it the right way will just give the virus more opportunity to spread.

Pressure is growing worldwide to boost vaccination rates to counter the rise.



A health worker administers a dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to a woman at Central Vaccination Center in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. Health authorities in Thailand said Wednesday they will seek to put limits on the export of locally produced AstraZeneca vaccine, as the country's supplies of COVID-19 vaccines are falling short of what is needed for its own population. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

"If you have been waiting, if you have been on the fence, sign up and get that shot as soon as possible," New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi pleaded.

Eighteen-year-old actress and singer Olivia Rodrigo appeared at the White House on Wednesday as part of an effort by President Joe Biden to persuade more young people. Getting a vaccination is something "you

can do more easily than ever before," she said.

While nearly 160 million Americans have been fully vaccinated, or over 55% of the population, young adults have shown less interest.

Ohio is planning another prize program to encourage vaccinations, and Gov. Mike DeWine urged the government to give the vaccines full approval instead of just emergency authorization to ease people's doubts.

"The reality is we now have two Ohios," said Bruce Vanderhoff, the state's chief medical officer. "An Ohio that is vaccinated and protected on the one hand, and an Ohio that is unvaccinated and vulnerable to delta on the other."

Michigan already started a COVID-19 vaccine sweepstakes and announced the first four \$50,000 winners Wednesday. Bigger prizes, including a \$2 million jackpot, are coming.

In Missouri, second only to Arkansas with the worst COVID-19 diagnosis rate over the past week, political leaders in and around St. Louis have stepped up efforts to get people vaccinated through gift cards and by enlisting beauty salons and barbershops to dispense information.

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