

Five billion COVID shots: a state of play worldwide

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This transmission electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 -- also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19 -- isolated from a patient in the US. Virus particles are shown emerging from the surface of cells cultured in the

lab. The spikes on the outer edge of the virus particles give coronaviruses their name, crown-like. Credit: NIAID-RML

More than five billion anti-COVID jabs have been given globally, but wide disparities between rich and poor countries in access to vaccines persist.

While the most advanced countries are already giving booster shots, vaccination drives are not getting off the ground in poorer, mainly African, countries.

At least 5.006 billion jabs have been injected into people's arms around the world, according to an AFP tally of official sources at 1600 GMT.

On average around the world 64 first, second or sometimes even third doses have been injected per 100 inhabitants.

The worldwide inoculation drive has reached cruising speed.

While it took around 140 days to get the first billion shots into people's arms, the third, fourth and fifth billions each took between 26 and 30 days, the data show.

Emirates lead the way

Nearly 40 percent (1.96 billion) of the five billion shots have been administered in China. India (589 million) and the United States (363 million) complete the trio of countries that have given the most jabs.

In terms of population protected among countries with more than one million people, the United Arab Emirates is the leader. It has

administered 179 doses per 100 inhabitants, meaning it has fully vaccinated nearly 75 percent of its population.

Uruguay follows with 154 per 100 inhabitants, Israel and Qatar (149 each), Singapore (147), Bahrain (144), Denmark (143), Chile (140), Canada (139), Portugal and Belgium (138 each), China (136), Spain (134), Ireland (133) and the United Kingdom (132).

Most of these countries have fully vaccinated between 65 percent and 70 percent of their populations.

Some, like the Emirates, Bahrain, Israel, Uruguay and Chile have even started giving out booster shots to prolong the immunity of the fully vaccinated.

France, which will start giving booster shots from September, is not far behind, with 126 doses injected per 100 people and 62 percent of the population completely vaccinated.

It has bypassed the United States which has given 110 doses per 100 inhabitants, with 52 percent completely vaccinated, and was previously at the top of the game.

Asia and Latin America speed up

While countries in Western Europe, North America and parts of the Middle East have advanced vaccination campaigns, they are inoculating less quickly than countries in Asia, Latin America and Oceania which have picked up speed.

Over the past week Ecuador vaccinated most quickly, giving shots to 1.69 percent of its population every day, followed by Panama (1.62 percent), South Korea and Malaysia (1.54 percent each).

Laos, Uruguay, Norway, Salvador, Australia and Paraguay each jab more than one percent of their population each day.

Africa lags behind

Most poor countries have now started to vaccinate, mainly thanks to the Covax scheme, but the coverage remains very unequal.

High-income countries (as defined by the World Bank) administered an average of 111 doses per 100 inhabitants compared with just 2.4 doses in low-income countries.

Injections in these countries have picked up recently after donations by some richer countries.

Africa is the continent which is lagging behind by far, with 6.5 doses per 100 inhabitants, 10 times less than the world average of 64.

Sub Saharan Africa's most populous countries—the Democratic Republic of Congo (0.1 doses per 100 inhabitants), Tanzania (0.4), Nigeria (1.9) and Ethiopia (2.0) are among the least vaccinated countries in the world.

Three countries have yet to start their vaccination drives: Burundi, Eritrea and North Korea.

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