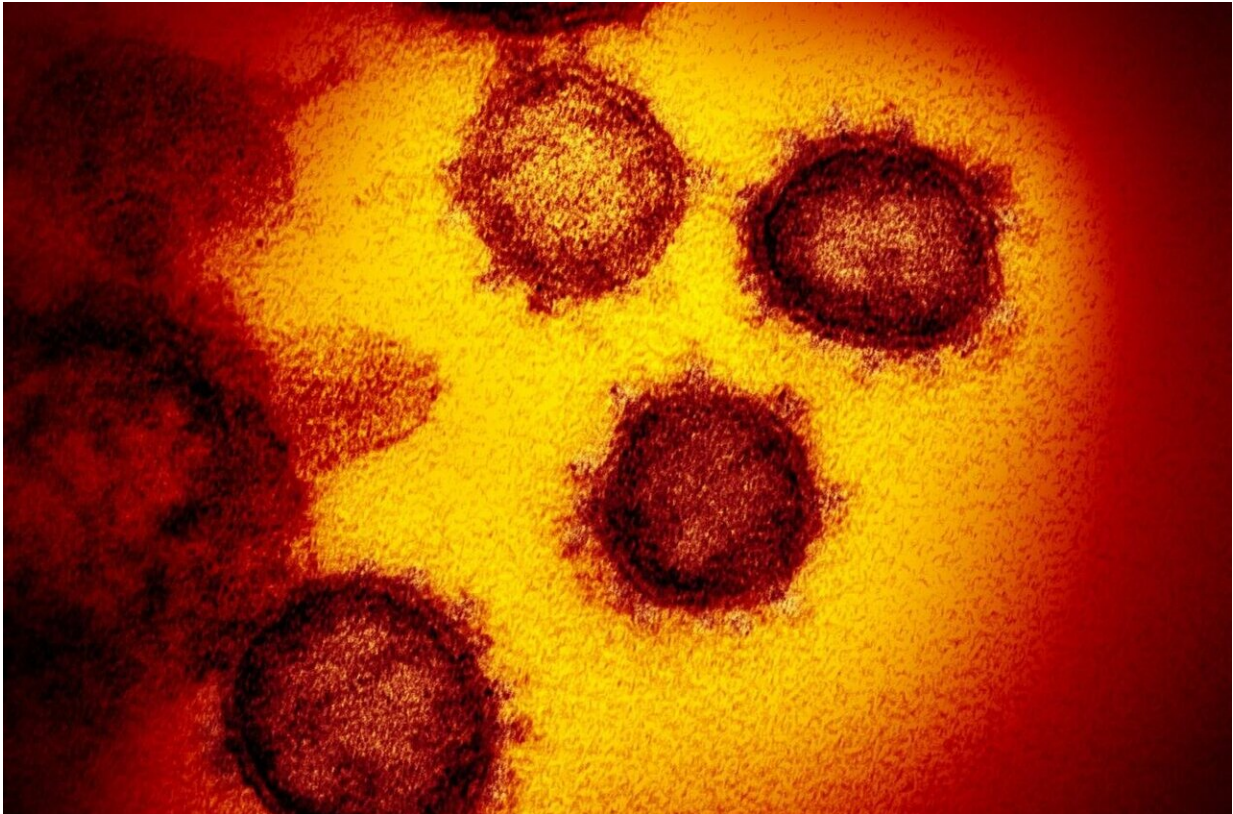


EU ahead of US in vaccination drive

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Transmission electron microscope image of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, emerging from human cells. Credit: NIAID

Half of the population of the European Union has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to an AFP tally Tuesday, putting it ahead of the United States in the inoculation drive.

Nearly 224 million people across the 27 member states have been covered, with Spain leading the pack of larger countries with 58.3 percent of its population vaccinated, followed by Italy (54.4 percent), France (52.9) and Germany (52.2).

The figures mean Europe has now nosed ahead of the US in the vaccine drive.

Some 49.7 percent of the US population are fully vaccinated, but take-up is slowing particularly in the conservative states of the South and Midwest.

The country reached President Joe Biden's goal of administering at least one dose to 70 percent of adults Monday—almost a month late—as the newest wave of infections pushed hospitalisations to levels seen last summer.

The US has also fallen behind its northern neighbour Canada, which started its immunisation campaign later but has now fully vaccinated 59 percent of its people.

The EU has given first shots to 59.3 percent of its [population](#), according to the AFP tally from official sources, while the US is just behind at 57.8 percent in the latest figures released Monday.

The tiny island nation of Malta tops the EU league with three quarters of its people fully vaccinated followed by Belgium at 58.9 percent.

Bottom of the European class are Balkan neighbours Bulgaria (14.5 percent) and Romania which has covered a quarter of its people.

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