

Africa COVID death toll tops 200,000

September 7 2021



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

More than 200,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Africa since the start of the pandemic, according to an AFP tally compiled from official records as of 1700 GMT.

The 54 countries of the region may not have suffered as badly as other

parts of the world—at least according to the officially recorded figures. They seem to have avoided the catastrophic scenarios some feared at the start of the pandemic.

But Africa, home to more than 1.3 billion people, has still recorded a total of 200,254 deaths since the virus emerged in China in December 2019.

The worldwide total stands at more than 4.57 million.

After several deadly months, including some 27,000 deaths in July and 26,000 in August, the pandemic appears to be easing on the continent, with current daily figures of 617 compared to as many as 990 in late July, a record for the region.

The figures are based on tolls communicated daily by [health authorities](#) in each country or by the UN's World Health Organization (WHO) and include the countries of North Africa.

The WHO has said that if excess deaths directly or indirectly linked to coronavirus are taken into account, the real toll could be two or three times higher.

The total number of infections is also likely to be an under-estimate, given insufficient testing capacity in Africa.

"It's probably a lot higher than that," said researcher Glenda Davidson of South Africa's Cape Peninsula University of Technology. "Testing resources are very low on the continent."

Death registration processes were often delayed and inaccurate, she added.

Fall in cases, deaths

The current drop in the continent's tally is a result of declining numbers in the hardest-hit countries.

South Africa has recorded 83,899 deaths so far. But last week's daily average of 7,400 new cases and 234 deaths is significantly lower than in late July, when the daily average was as many as 20,000 new cases and 420 deaths.

The decrease has been even more striking in Tunisia, which has recorded a daily average of 1,680 cases and 64 deaths: declines of 41 percent and 39 percent respectively from the previous week.

The figures are well below those of July, which were described by the government as "catastrophic", with as many as 7,900 cases and 207 deaths daily.

Tunisia's summer was also marked by a sharp acceleration in its vaccination drive, with nearly 37 percent of the population having received at least one dose, compared to just 11 percent on July 1.

Africa has seen the lowest vaccination rate to date of all the continents, with only eight jabs administered per 100 inhabitants, according to an AFP tally, compared with 102 in Europe and 116 in the United States and Canada.

According to the WHO, around three percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population are fully vaccinated. By comparison, 52 percent of people are fully vaccinated in the United States of America and 57 percent in the European Union.

'Disturbing' vaccine inequity

"The inequity is deeply disturbing. Just two percent of the over five billion doses given globally have been administered in Africa," WHO Africa chief Dr. Matshidiso Moeti said last week.

Last week, the WHO said 42 of the continent's 54 nations were set to miss their vaccination targets.

"Vaccine hoarding has held Africa back and we urgently need more vaccines," said Moeti.

However, inoculation in South Africa has been picking up after a rocky start.

"The vaccine has been our weapon," said South African public health practitioner Shakira Choonara.

"It is contributing to certain changes in trends we are beginning to see."

Zimbabwe, meanwhile, on Tuesday announced a tough line to get vaccination rates up. Civil servants and teachers will have to resign if they refuse to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: Africa COVID death toll tops 200,000 (2021, September 7) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-africa-covid-death-toll-tops.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.