

China fully vaccinates more than 1 billion people

September 16 2021, by Laurie Chen



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Thursday.

The country where the virus was first detected has mostly curbed the virus within its borders, but is racing to get the vast majority of its population vaccinated as a new outbreak flickers in the southeast.

"As of September 15, 2.16 billion [vaccine doses](#) have been administered nationwide," said National Health Commission spokesman Mi Feng at a press briefing.

Chinese health authorities said late last month that 890 million people in China had been fully vaccinated and two billion doses administered.

The government has not publicly announced a target for vaccination coverage, but top virologist Zhong Nanshan said last month that the country is likely to have 80 percent of its population inoculated by the end of the year, reaching herd immunity.

China is currently battling an outbreak of the Delta variant in the southeastern province of Fujian that has infected almost 200 people so far in three cities, dozens of whom are schoolchildren.

The Fujian cluster is the biggest rebound in weeks and comes after the country declared the Delta variant under control, in a test of China's "zero-case" approach to the pandemic.

China reported 49 new domestic transmissions on Thursday, the vast majority in Fujian.

Authorities said the cluster's suspected patient zero was a man who had recently returned from Singapore to the city of Putian, and developed symptoms after completing a 14-day quarantine and initially testing negative for the virus.

The man's 12-year-old son and a classmate were among the first patients detected in the cluster last week, shortly after the new school term began.

The variant then raced through classrooms, infecting more than 36 children including 8 kindergartners, city authorities said Tuesday, in the first major school-linked spread the country has seen since the start of the pandemic.

Despite rolling out its vaccine campaign to include minors aged 12-17 in July, most young children remain unvaccinated in China, sparking fears that the latest Fujian outbreak could hit the most vulnerable people in the country disproportionately.

Authorities have rushed to quash the outbreak with targeted lockdowns, [travel restrictions](#), mass testing and school closures before the upcoming October 1 public holiday, a week-long tourism peak.

Chinese vaccines have nearly 60 percent efficacy against the Delta strain, with antibodies rising with a booster shot, Zhong previously said.

The country is also racing to produce its own mRNA vaccine—whose technology is believed to be more effective against the Delta variant—with candidates by state-owned Sinopharm and domestic firm Walvax Biotechnology currently in development.

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