

Japan passes 50% vaccination rate, may ease limits in Nov.

September 12 2021



People wearing face masks wait for a train as it approaches a station in Tokyo, Thursday, Sept. 9, 2021. Japan announced Thursday it is extending a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and 18 other areas until the end of September as health care systems remain under severe strain, although new infections have slowed slightly. Credit: AP Photo/Hiro Komae

Japan's government says more than 50% of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Japan's vaccine rollouts began in mid-February, months behind many wealthy countries due to its lengthy clinical testing requirement and approval process. Inoculations for [elderly patients](#), which started in April, were also slowed by supply shortages of imported vaccines, but the pace picked up in late May and has since achieved 1 million doses per day.

Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who is in charge of COVID-19 measures, told NHK public television's weekly talk show Sunday that about 60% of the [population](#) is expected to be fully vaccinated by the end of September, on par with current levels in Europe.

The government is studying a roadmap for easing restrictions around November when a large majority of the population is expected to be fully vaccinated. That would allow fully vaccinated people and those who test negative to travel, gather for parties or attend mass events.

The progress of vaccinations has helped reduce serious cases and deaths among [older people](#), but infections from virus variants spread explosively in August among [younger generations](#) still largely unvaccinated, severely straining health care systems.



In this Sept. 11, 2019, file photo, newly appointed Economy and Fiscal Policy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura speaks during a press conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. Nishimura, who is in charge of COVID-19 measures, told NHK public television's weekly talk show Sunday, Sept. 12, 2021 that about 60% of the population is expected to be fully vaccinated by the end of September, on par with current levels in Europe. Credit: AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko, File



People wearing face masks walk along the Kanda River as a train passes by near a station in Tokyo, Thursday, Sept. 9, 2021. Japan announced Thursday it is extending a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and 18 other areas until the end of September as health care systems remain under severe strain, although new infections have slowed slightly. Credit: AP Photo/Hiro Komae

Japan last Friday extended the ongoing state of emergency in Tokyo and 18 other areas until Sept. 30. It had been scheduled to end Sunday. The measures focus on requests for eateries to close early and not serve alcohol.

Japan has done much better than other developed countries in curbing illnesses and deaths without a lockdown. It has counted more than 1.65 million cases and 16,700 deaths.

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