

WHO: Europe the only region with rise in COVID-19 last week

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People wear face masks as they sit on a bus, in London, Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021. Many scientists are pressing the British government to re-impose social restrictions and speed up booster vaccinations as coronavirus infection rates, already Europe's highest, rise once more. The U.K. recorded 49,156 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, Oct. 18, the largest number since mid-July. New infections averaged 43,000 a day over the past week, a 15% increase on the week before. Credit: AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali

The World Health Organization said there was a 7% rise in new coronavirus cases across Europe last week, the only region in the world where cases increased, and said uneven vaccine uptake posed a threat to the continent.

In its weekly assessment of the pandemic, the U.N. health agency said there were about 2.7 million new COVID-19 cases and more than 46,000 deaths last week worldwide, similar to the numbers reported the previous week.

WHO said the two regions with the highest rates of COVID-19 incidence were Europe and the Americas. Globally, the U.S. reported the biggest number of new cases, more than 580,000, which still represented a 11% decline.

Britain, Russia and Turkey accounted for the most cases in Europe.

The biggest drop in COVID-19 cases were seen in Africa and the Western Pacific, where infections fell by about 18% and 16%, respectively. The number of deaths in Africa also declined by about a quarter, despite the dire shortage of vaccines on the continent.

But for the third consecutive week, coronavirus cases have jumped in Europe, with about 1.3 million new cases. More than half of countries in the region reported a rise in their COVID-19 numbers, WHO said. Britain and Russia each reported about a 15% increase in new cases.



Medics wearing special suits to protect against coronavirus make a briefing as they come to treat a patient with coronavirus at an ICU at the Moscow City Clinical Hospital 52, in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021. Russia hit another daily record of coronavirus deaths Tuesday as rapidly surging infection rates raised pressure on the country's health care system and prompted the government to suggest declaring a nonworking week. Credit: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko

In a statement Wednesday, WHO's Europe office said 1 billion coronavirus vaccines have now been administered across the continent and described uneven vaccine uptake as "the region's biggest enemy in the fight against COVID-19."

In the past week, [Russia has repeatedly broken new daily records for](#)

[COVID-19 cases](#) and the number of infections in the U.K. has surged to levels not seen since mid-July.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday backed a Cabinet proposal to keep Russian workers home for a week in an effort to stem the spread of the virus.

Russian officials have struggled to vaccinate the population but due to vaccine skepticism, only about 32% of people have been immunized despite the availability of its Sputnik V vaccine. It has by far the largest virus death toll in Europe, with more than 225,000 deaths.

Although the head of Britain's National Health Service has urged the government to introduce stricter COVID-19 protocols including mask-wearing and the faster vaccination of children, [politicians have so far demurred](#).

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