

New Zealand dispenses record number of jabs at 'Vaxathon'

October 16 2021, by Nick Perry



Jason Waitoa waits for his vaccination in Rotorua, New Zealand, Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021. New Zealand health care workers have administered a record number of vaccine jabs as the nation holds a festival aimed at getting more people inoculated against the coronavirus. Credit: Andrew Warner/NZME via AP

New Zealand health care workers administered a record number of

vaccine jabs Saturday as the nation held a festival aimed at getting more people inoculated against the coronavirus.

Musicians, sports stars and celebrities pitched in for the "Vaxathon" event which was broadcast on television and online for eight hours straight. By late afternoon, more than 120,000 people had gotten shots, eclipsing the daily record of 93,000 set in August. The event stretched into the evening.

A throwback to TV fundraising "telethon" events that were popular from the 1970s through the 1990s, it comes as New Zealand faces its biggest threat since the pandemic began, with an outbreak of the delta variant spreading through the largest city of Auckland and beyond.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who chatted with motorists at a drive-through vaccination center in Wellington, initially set a target of 100,000 jabs for the day but upped that to 150,000 after the first target was met.

She also set a target of 25,000 shots for Indigenous Maori, whose vaccination numbers have been lagging and who have been hit hard by the [latest outbreak](#).

National carrier Air New Zealand converted a Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane into a vaccination clinic for the day, issuing people boarding passes on "Flight NZVAX."



Heather Lang stands at a vaccination center in Rotorua, New Zealand, Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021. New Zealand health care workers have administered a record number of vaccine jabs as the nation holds a festival aimed at getting more people inoculated against the coronavirus. Credit: Andrew Warner/NZME via AP



Whangarei Mayor Sheryl Mai, left, and Kirk Milner at the Ngati Hine Health Trust hold up placards advertising a vaccination center in Whangarei, New Zealand, Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021. New Zealand health care workers have administered a record number of vaccine jabs as the nation holds a festival aimed at getting more people inoculated against the coronavirus. Credit: Michael Cunningham/NZME via AP



Wairere Castle shows her gift card after receiving her vaccination in Rotorua, New Zealand, Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021. New Zealand health care workers have administered a record number of vaccine jabs as the nation holds a festival aimed at getting more people inoculated against the coronavirus. Credit: Andrew Warner/NZME via AP

Singer Lorde beamed in from abroad, saying she couldn't wait to come back home to play a concert and have everyone get sweaty and dance.

"I am the first person to admit that I find getting injections really icky, but ever since I was a kid, I have treated myself by going to the bakery after an injection, normally for a custard tart," she said. "So you could do that."

New Zealand has so far used only the Pfizer vaccine.

For much of the pandemic, New Zealanders have lived completely free from the virus after the government successfully eliminated each outbreak through strict lockdowns and contact tracing.

That zero-tolerance strategy failed for the first time after the [outbreak](#) of the more contagious delta variant began in August. Until then, New Zealand was slow to immunize its population. It since has been making up for lost ground.

Before the Vaxathon, about 72% of New Zealanders had received at least one dose and 54% were fully vaccinated. Among those aged 12 and over, the proportion was about 83% and 62% respectively.

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