

# New Zealand sets 90% vaccine target to end lockdown

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New Zealand set a 90-percent vaccination target Friday for scrapping lockdowns as Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern unveiled a plan to open up despite the stubborn grip of the Delta variant.

Ardern said her goal had shifted from eliminating COVID-19 to minimising its spread in the community by ramping up vaccinations.

She said the change meant New Zealanders would not be subject to stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns, provided they were fully inoculated.

"We cannot ask vaccinated people to stay home forever," she told reporters.

Around 86 percent of eligible New Zealanders have had their first vaccine dose and 68 percent are double jabbed.

Ardern won widespread praise for her initial coronavirus response, which involved strict lockdowns, rigorous contact-tracing and tight border restrictions.

The "COVID Zero" policy resulted in just 28 deaths in a population of five million and domestic life was near normal for long periods.

But Ardern said it was no longer viable due to an outbreak of the highly transmissible Delta variant detected in Auckland in August.

"Its tentacles have reached into our communities and made it hard to shake, even using the best public health measures and the toughest restrictions we had available to us," she said.

Ardern said the new policy would give hope to almost two million Auckland residents who have been in hard [lockdown](#) for nine weeks.

"If you want summer, if you want to go to bars and restaurants, get vaccinated," she said.

"If you're vaccinated, you'll get to enjoy the things you love, secure in the knowledge that the people around you and the environment you're in are as safe as possible in the COVID world."

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