

WHO: Vaccine hesitancy persists among Africa health workers

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Africa is seeing a rise in deliveries of vaccine doses to the continent, but only one in four of its health workers has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the World Health Organization regional office said on

Thursday.

The most common reasons for the low vaccination rate among health workers on the continent of about 1.3 billion people include [vaccine hesitancy](#) and the unavailability of vaccine services, especially in [rural areas](#), Matshidiso Moeti, WHO's Africa director, told an online press briefing.

It's a striking contrast to the more [developed countries](#) where more than 80% of health and [care workers](#) in 22 mostly high-income countries have been fully vaccinated, according to a recent WHO study.

The low vaccination rate among health workers in Africa "puts at risk not only their own health and well-being but also that of the patients that they look after," Moeti warned, calling on African countries to "urgently speed up the rollout of vaccines to those on the frontlines."

Africa has an acute shortage of health workers, with only one country in the region having the recommended number of health workers to provide essential health services.

"Any loss of these essential workers to COVID-19 due to illness or death therefore heavily impacts on service provision capacity," WHO's Nigeria office said in a statement.

Many of Africa's health workers, including those working in rural communities, still have "concerns over vaccine safety and adverse side effects," the WHO regional director Moeti said.

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, only 300,000—or 18%—of its 1.6 million health workers have been fully vaccinated.

A recent study also found that only 40% of health workers intended to

receive the vaccine while less than 50% hope to get their shot in Ethiopia, WHO said.

To increase the vaccination rate among [health workers](#) in Nigeria, nurses and midwives need to be more involved in the vaccination process, according to the president of the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives. With that and through [health](#) education, "many people will be convinced" to take the vaccine, Michael Nnachi said. "When the nurses are directly involved, we can achieve more."

Just about 7% of Africa's population has been fully vaccinated, mainly because of delays in vaccine supplies and vaccine hesitancy, Moeti said. But after challenging months in getting needed supplies, Africa is now seeing "an acceleration in the availability of vaccines."

As more doses are arriving on the continent, more countries are introducing mandates—often targeting government workers and public places—to increase the vaccination rate.

"It will be good to balance the approaches of persuasion, [information sharing](#), expansion of capacity to deliver, intensification of the campaigns as well as using that additional tool of further motivating people to be vaccinated because they need to get services that they need," Moeti said.

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