

WHO: COVID deaths jump by 40%, but cases falling globally

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Visitors take photos of blooming cherry blossoms through a glass ball at a park on Wednesday, March 30, 2022, in Beijing. China's coronavirus case numbers in its latest infection surge are low compared with other major countries. But the ruling Communist Party is enforcing a "zero tolerance" strategy aimed at isolating every infected person. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

The number of people killed by the coronavirus surged by more than 40% last week, likely due to changes in how COVID-19 deaths were reported across the Americas and by newly adjusted figures from India, according to a World Health Organization report released Wednesday.

In its latest weekly report on the pandemic, the U.N. health agency said the number of new coronavirus cases fell everywhere, including in WHO's Western Pacific region, where they had been rising since December.

About 10 million new COVID-19 infections and more than 45,000 deaths were reported worldwide over the past week, following a 23% drop in fatalities the week before.

The jump in reported deaths, up from 33,000 last week, was due mainly to an accounting change; WHO noted that [countries](#) including Chile and the United States altered how they define COVID-19 deaths.

In addition, more than 4,000 deaths from Maharashtra state in India that initially weren't included among the COVID-19 [death](#) toll were added last week, according to WHO.

WHO has said repeatedly that COVID-19 case counts are likely a vast underestimate of the coronavirus' prevalence. The agency cautioned countries in recent weeks against dropping their comprehensive testing and [other surveillance measures](#), saying that doing so would cripple efforts to accurately track the spread of the virus.



A resident lifts her mask for a swab during a COVID-19 test at a residential community under lock down in Shanghai, China, Wednesday, March 30, 2022. As millions of Shanghai residents line up for coronavirus tests in the closed-down metropolis, authorities are promising tax cuts for shopkeepers and to keep its busy port functioning to limit disruptions to industry and trade. Credit: AP Photo

"Data are becoming progressively less representative, less timely and less robust," WHO said. "This inhibits our collective ability to track where the virus is, how it is spreading and how it is evolving: information and analyses that remain critical to effectively end the acute phase of the pandemic."

The agency warned that less surveillance would particularly harm efforts

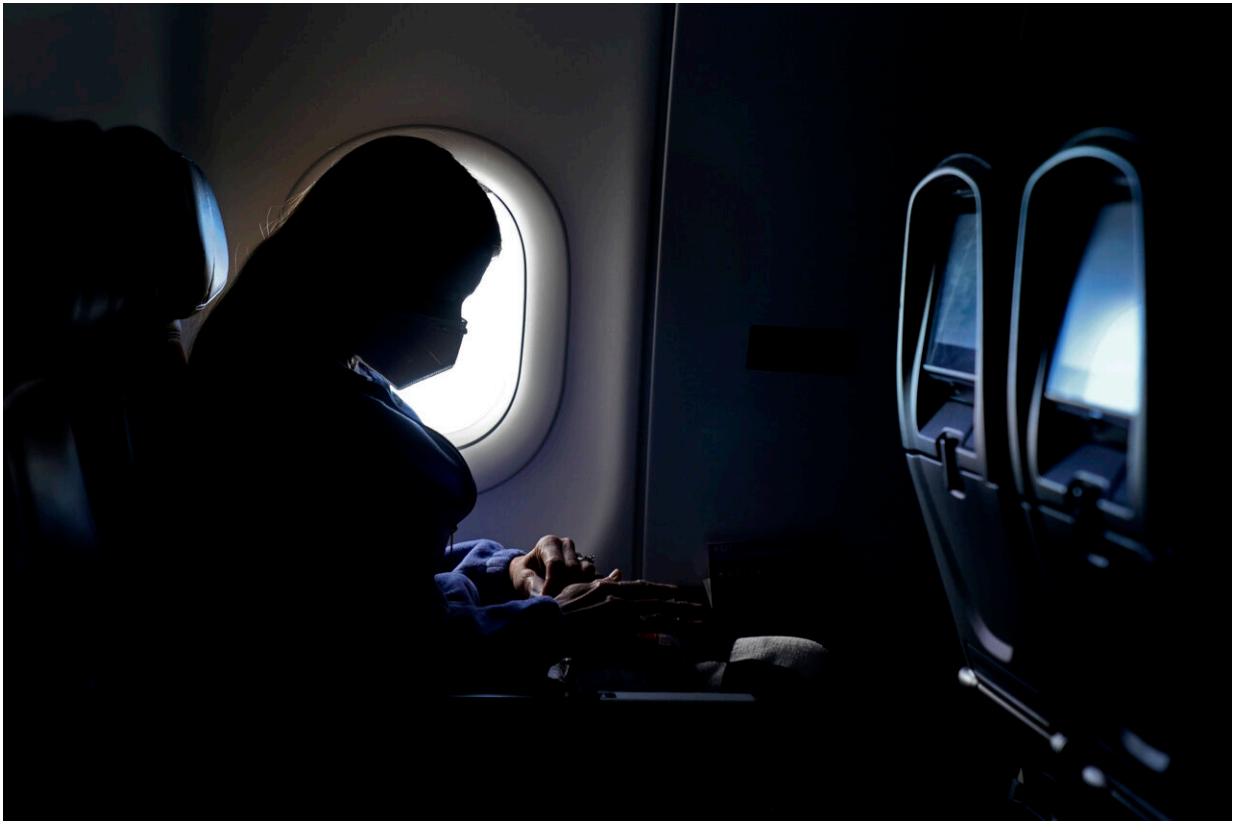
to detect new COVID variants and undermine a potential response.

Numerous countries across Europe, North America and elsewhere recently lifted nearly all their COVID-19 protocols, relying on high levels of vaccination to prevent another infection spike even as the more infectious omicron subvariant BA.2 is causing an uptick in new cases.

British authorities have said that while they expect to see more cases, they have not seen an equivalent rise in hospitalizations and deaths.



A resident prepares to get a COVID-19 tests at a residential community under lock down in Shanghai, China, Wednesday, March 30, 2022. As millions of Shanghai residents line up for coronavirus tests in the closed-down metropolis, authorities are promising tax cuts for shopkeepers and to keep its busy port functioning to limit disruptions to industry and trade. Credit: AP Photo



In this Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, file photo, a passenger wears a face mask she travels on a flight from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta. In a lawsuit filed Tuesday, March 29, 2022, Florida and 20 other states are suing to halt the federal government's pandemic requirement that people wear masks on planes, trains and other public transport. Credit: AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, File



Police in protective gear monitor a line of customers entering a supermarket in Shanghai, China, Wednesday, March 30, 2022. As millions of Shanghai residents line up for coronavirus tests in the closed-down metropolis, authorities are promising tax cuts for shopkeepers and to keep its busy port functioning to limit disruptions to industry and trade. Credit: AP Photo/Chen Si

Despite the global decline in reported cases, China locked down Shanghai this week to try to curb an omicron outbreak that has caused the country's biggest wave of disease since the virus was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2019.

U.S. officials expanded the use of [vaccine boosters](#) Tuesday as regulators said Americans ages 50 and older can get a second booster at least four months after their last vaccination.

An [AP-NORC poll](#), meanwhile found that less than half of Americans now regularly wear face masks, avoid crowds and skip non-essential travel.

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