

Hong Kong's COVID infections exceed 1 million amid outbreak

March 18 2022



Medical workers wearing protective gear move an elderly patient from an ambulance to a hospital in Hong Kong, Friday, March 4, 2022. Hong Kong's total coronavirus infections exceeded 1 million on Friday, March 18, 2022, amid a widespread outbreak and thousands of deaths in recent weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File

Hong Kong's cumulative coronavirus infections have exceeded 1 million as the city grapples with a widespread outbreak that has killed more people than the reported COVID-19 deaths in all of mainland China.

Health officials reported 20,079 confirmed infections on Friday, taking the total since the start of the pandemic to 1,016,944.

Nearly 97% of those came from Hong Kong's current wave, which began in December. Since Feb. 9, nearly 5,200 people have died from the virus.

The total number of deaths in Hong Kong—5,401—has exceeded the 4,636 fatalities recorded in [mainland China](#). Mainland authorities have reported 126,234 confirmed cases, but unlike most countries, China does not include asymptomatic cases in its confirmed total.

The city of 7.4 million is in the grip of an omicron surge that has strained its [health care system](#) as hospitals reached maximum capacity. Coffins are running out and mortuaries are so full that bodies have to be temporarily stored in refrigerated containers.

Most of the deceased were [elderly patients](#), a majority of whom are not fully vaccinated.



Health workers transfer corpses from refrigerated containers to a hearse in an empty lot near a funeral home in Hong Kong Monday, March 7, 2022. Hong Kong's total coronavirus infections exceeded 1 million on Friday, March 18, 2022, amid a widespread outbreak and thousands of deaths in recent weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Yu, File



A woman stands on an empty street usually packed with shoppers in Causeway Bay, a famous shopping district in Hong Kong Thursday, March 10, 2022. Hong Kong's total coronavirus infections exceeded 1 million on Friday, March 18, 2022, amid a widespread outbreak and thousands of deaths in recent weeks. Health officials reported 20,079 infections on Friday, taking the city's total tally of coronavirus infections to 1,016,944. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Yu, File



An aerial view shows a construction site for coronavirus isolation facilities and a temporary bridge linked China's Shenzhen and Hong Kong's Lok Ma Chau cities in Hong Kong, Friday, March 11, 2022. Hong Kong's total coronavirus infections exceeded 1 million on Friday, MARCH 18, 2022, amid a widespread outbreak and thousands of deaths in recent weeks. Health officials reported 20,079 infections on Friday, taking the city's total tally of coronavirus infections to 1,016,944. Credit: AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File

For most of the pandemic, Hong Kong was able to stamp out earlier outbreaks with tough "zero COVID" restrictions that temporarily shuttered businesses, limited public gatherings and imposed entry curbs such as lengthy quarantines for arrivals and flight bans from countries deemed high-risk.

That changed with the highly transmissible omicron variant. Officials have sought assistance from mainland China, which has sent experts and medical resources to help Hong Kong combat the pandemic.

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