

Coronavirus deaths in Latin America hit global high

August 8 2020



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Latin America and the Caribbean surpassed Europe on Friday to become the region hardest-hit with coronavirus deaths, as India passed the milestone of two million infections.

The world's worst-affected region has reported 213,120 fatalities, 460 more than Europe, according to an AFP tally based on official data.

Worldwide there have been more than 19 million cases of coronavirus and over 715,000 deaths from the illness since it was first reported in China at the end of last year.

The virus has flared up again in areas where it appeared to have been curbed and has steadily spread across India and Africa.

India's cases have doubled in three weeks, reaching two million on Friday following a record daily jump of more than 60,000 new infections.

It is only the third country after the United States and Brazil to surpass two million cases. Official figures show the world's second most populous nation has also recorded 41,500 deaths.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government imposed one of the world's strictest lockdowns in late March, with tens of millions of migrant workers losing their jobs almost overnight.

But with the economy in tatters, restrictions have been steadily eased.

Experts say the true numbers of cases and fatalities are grossly under-reported as causes of [death](#) in the country of 1.3 billion people are rarely properly recorded.

The stigmatization of those infected has put off many from getting tested.

"There's both the fear of the disease as well as of isolation and quarantine," Rajib Kumar, who heads the Centre of Social Medicine and

Community Health at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, told AFP.

However, there have been some positive indicators in Africa, where [health authorities](#) warned against complacency amid hopes that the pandemic is peaking in some parts of the continent.

"African countries are doing their best, despite... limitations" such as weak health systems, Mary Stephen of the World Health Organization's Africa office, told AFP.

Some countries have seen declines of around 20 percent in cases but there remain fears of a second wave.

"Because we don't see many people like we used to see in Italy, like 1,000 people dying (a day), people tend to relax, they think the risk is not so much in Africa," said Stephen.

Mexico deaths rise

Much of the world is placing its hopes on an effective vaccine becoming available sooner rather than later.

Up to 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses could be made available for poorer countries by 2021, announced Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

These vaccines, priced at a maximum of \$3 per dose, would be produced at the Serum Institute of India.

In Latin America, which is already the region with the largest number of infections at 5.3 million, deaths continue to soar.

Over the last week, 44 percent of global fatalities from COVID-19—18,300 out of 41,500—occurred in the region.

More than half the region's infections, some 2.9 million, are in Brazil, which has also recorded 98,500 deaths among its 212 million people.

Only the United States has been worse hit than Brazil. It added 1,062 new deaths on Friday to bring its toll to just over 161,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

The second worst-affected country in Latin America, Mexico, passed 50,000 deaths on Thursday.

In the United States, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said schools could reopen this fall if they meet certain criteria.

Schools in several US states have reopened for in-person classes—but some have already been hit by large quarantines of students and staff following fresh outbreaks.

The US economy regained 1.8 million jobs in July, according to government data, and the unemployment rate fell to 10.2 percent, but with COVID-19 cases spiking in several states economists raised concerns that the labor market could take a turn for the worse.

Cycling at risk

International sport continues to be affected by the virus despite many professional events restarting.

Organizers of the world cycling championships, set to be held in Switzerland next month, warned the event may be called off because of local health rules.

And two more top 10 women tennis players—Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens—withdraw from the US Open over virus concerns, joining

women's world number one Ashleigh Barty of Australia and Spain's reigning men's champion Rafael Nadal.

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Citation: Coronavirus deaths in Latin America hit global high (2020, August 8) retrieved 19 September 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-coronavirus-deaths-latin-america-global.html>

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