

Covid-19 infections slow by nearly half

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The rate of new COVID-19 infections has slowed by nearly half over the past month, according to a specialised AFP database, with the number of new cases dropping again this week.

Here is the state of play worldwide:

44 percent less

Over the past month, the number of new cases around the world has dropped by 44.5 percent, the biggest and most sustained plunge since the pandemic started, according to an AFP tally.

The number of new COVID-19 cases continued the fall last week, with 412,700 recorded on average a day.

That contrasts with the record of 743,000 new daily cases recorded in the week of January 5 to 11. New infections now stand at their lowest level since October.

Epidemiologist Antoine Flahault, director of the University of Geneva's Global Health Institute, said "more or less everywhere in the world there has been a relative decline in the epidemic."

But he told AFP there was a risk of a rebound if governments repeat "past mistakes" pointing to the consequences of lifting lockdowns too early last summer in Europe.

Decline across world

Every region of the world has benefited from the slowdown over last week, the AFP tally up to Thursday found.

The number of new cases decreased by 24 percent in the United States and Canada, by 20 percent in Africa, 18 percent in Asia, 15 percent in Europe, 10 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean and by two percent in the Middle East.

The virus is almost absent in Oceania, where there are just 12 cases a

day.

The number of confirmed cases only reflects a fraction of the actual number of infections, as different countries have different counting practices and levels of testing.

Steepest falls

This week the two biggest falls were in countries living under lockdown. In Portugal new cases plunged by 54 percent and Israel they were down 39 percent.

The Jewish state, which started to wind down its lockdown on Sunday, also boasts the world's fastest vaccination programme—44 percent of its population has already received one dose and 28 percent have received two doses.

Spain had the third biggest drop, with 39 percent less followed by South Africa (down 37 percent), Colombia (35 percent) and Japan (35 percent).

Biggest spikes

The epidemic has picked up most speed in Iraq, with 81 percent more new cases per day ahead of neighbouring Jordan (34 percent more), Greece (29 percent), Ecuador (21 percent) and Hungary (16 percent).

US tops case toll

The US again had again by far the highest number of new cases, with 101,800 per day, which nevertheless represents a drop of almost a quarter over the past week.

Brazil had less than half that followed by France (18,900) and Spain (18,300 cases) and the UK (15,200 cases). All three European countries have seen big decreases.

On a per capita basis, Montenegro recorded the most cases this week with 606 cases per 100,000 people.

The US again registered the most deaths over the past week, with an average of 2,784 per day, before Mexico (1,187), Brazil (1,058), the United Kingdom (754) and Germany (555).

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