

Outbreak Brief #1: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 22 March 2023

Global count: 760,360,956 cases and 6,873,477 deaths

Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States

Outbreak Update: As of 21 March 2023, a total of 760,360,956 COVID-19 cases and 6,873,477 deaths (case fatality ratio [CFR]: 1%) have been reported globally by 232 countries and territories to the World Health Organization (WHO). The distribution of cumulative cases (percentage of global cases) from the WHO regions (excluding Africa) are as follows: **Eastern Mediterranean Region** 23,276,221 (3%), **European Region** 274,095,113 (41%), **Region of the Americas** 190,933,060 (28%), **South-East Asia Region** 60,777,224 (9%) and **Western Pacific Region** 201,769,109 (17%). In the past seven days, the five countries reporting the highest number of new cases are the United States of America (170,593), Russia (66,377), the Republic of Korea (57,042), China (53,283), and Japan (48,515). As of 21 March 2023, over 5 billion people (63% of the global population) have been fully vaccinated. For more detailed information on cases and deaths reported outside of Africa, refer to the [WHO COVID-19 dashboard](#).

As of 6 p.m. East African Time (EAT) 21 March 2023, a total of **12,272,323** COVID-19 cases and **256,557** deaths (CFR: **2.1%**) have been reported by the 55 African Union (AU) Member States (MS). This represents 2% of all cases and 4% of all deaths reported globally. Forty-three (78%) AU MS are reporting CFRs higher than the global CFR. Since the detection of COVID-19 on the African continent (in February 2020), 53 (96%) AU MS has experienced three distinct COVID-19 waves, 48 (87%) MS have experienced four waves, 28 MS have experienced five waves, 6 MS have experienced a sixth wave and one MS (Kenya) has experienced a seventh wave.

Fifty-three MS have reported COVID-19 cases infected with the Alpha (50 MS), Beta (45), Delta (52), Gamma (3), and Omicron (51) variants of concern (VOC). Additionally, 32 MS have detected the Omicron BA.2 sub-variant, while 23 MS detected the Omicron BA.4, 20 MS detected the Omicron BA.5, 9 MS detected the Omicron BA.2.75, 11 MS detected the Omicron BF.7 and 7 MS detected the Omicron XBB sub-variants. More information on SARS-COV-2 sequencing and the breakdown of variants reported by AU MS is available on the [Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative Dashboard](#).

Fifty-four (98%) MS are currently providing COVID-19 vaccination to the general population. Cumulatively, 979 million doses have been administered on the continent. Of these doses

administered, 480.4 million people have been partially vaccinated, 415.6 million have been fully vaccinated, and 45%¹ of the target population on the continent is fully vaccinated. Eritrea is the only AU MS yet to start the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. More information on COVID-19 vaccination can be found on the [Africa CDC COVID-19 vaccine dashboard](#).

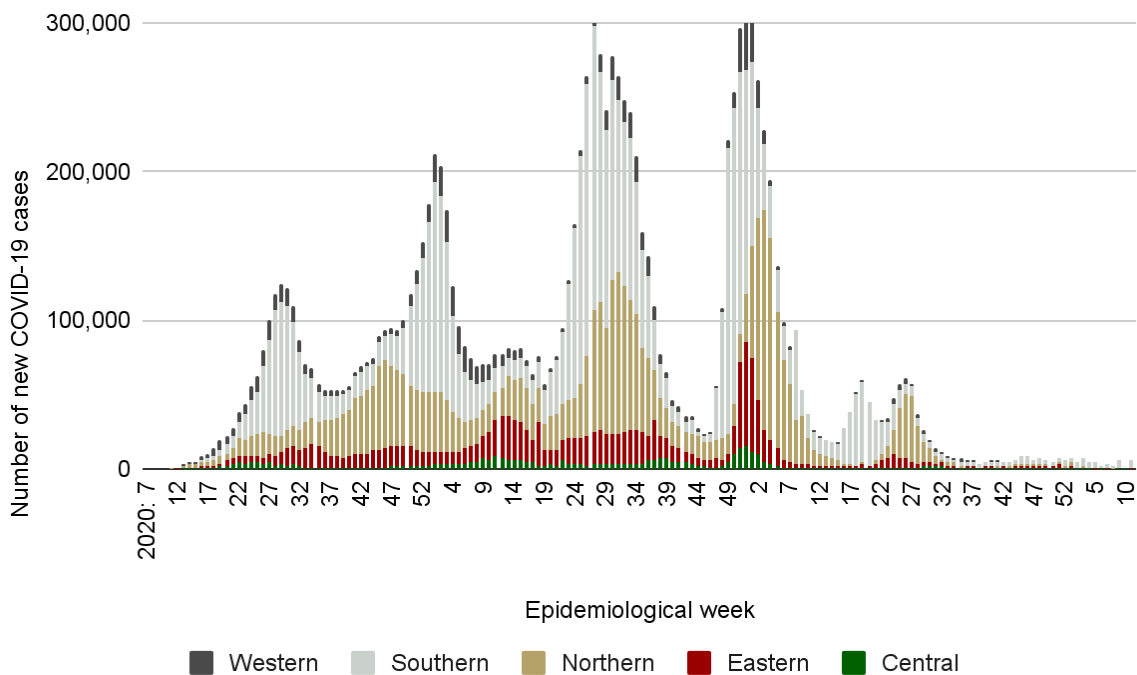


Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported in Africa by African Union region and epidemiological week, 15 February 2020 – 26 February 2023.

For Epi weeks 1 - 8² (1 January – 26 February 2023),³ 45,087 new COVID-19 cases were reported. (Figure 1). The Southern region accounted for 71% of the new COVID-19 cases reported this week, followed by the Eastern (11%), Northern (11%), Central (5%) and Western (2%) regions. Seychelles (103) had the highest number of new daily COVID-19 cases per 1 million population among all MS.

Also, for **epi weeks 1 - 8, 2023**, 205 new COVID-19 deaths were reported in Africa. Approximately 53% of these deaths were reported from the Southern region. The remaining deaths were reported from the Northern (32%), Western (7%), Eastern (6%) and Central (2%) regions. Cumulative COVID-19 case and death totals and new COVID-19 cases and deaths reported from epi weeks 1 – 8, 2023 by AU Member States are summarized in Table 1.

¹ From 21 December 2022, the % fully vaccinated in Africa is now being calculated using the population 12 years old and above as the denominator for each country. The population was obtained from the latest UN population estimates and from the Member States.

² This is a special Covid-19 outbreak brief report for the last two months. Subsequently, monthly report will be published.

³ The number of new cases and deaths are updated as Africa CDC receives this information and may not be reflective of the total new cases and deaths as per the date of the outbreak brief report.

More than 966,000 tests were conducted during the past eight weeks. Since February 2020, over 126 million COVID-19 tests have been conducted in Africa. **For more information on the COVID-19 situation in Africa**, please see the Africa CDC [daily dashboard](#) and [hotspot dashboard](#).

Table 1: Number of confirmed and new COVID-19 cases and deaths reported in Africa since February 2020 and for Epidemiological Weeks 1 - 8 (1 January – 26 February 2023) by African Union Member States.

Country by AU Region	Cumulative number of cases (New cases)	Cumulative number of deaths (new deaths)
Central Region	394,205 (2,354)	4,703 (5)
Burundi	53,609 (1,558)	15 (0)
Cameroon	124,328 (133)	1,965 (0)
Central African Republic	15,377 (17)	113 (0)
Chad	7,661 (11)	194 (0)
Congo	25,077 (3)	386 (0)
Democratic Republic of Congo	95,769 (595)	1,464 (5)
Equatorial Guinea	17,123 (34)	183 (0)
Gabon	48,981 (2)	306 (0)
Sao Tome and Principe	6,280 (1)	77 (0)
Eastern Region	1,493,712 (4,999)	27,687 (12)
Comoros	8,977 (18)	161 (2)
Djibouti	15,960 (0)	189 (0)
Eritrea	10,189 (0)	103 (0)
Ethiopia	499,738 (2,254)	7,572 (0)
Kenya	342,874 (397)	5,688 (0)
Madagascar	67,849 (165)	1,419 (4)
Mauritius	41,642 (157)	1,032 (5)
Rwanda	133,170 (250)	1,468 (1)
Seychelles	50,665 (310)	172 (0)
Somalia	27,324 (24)	1,361 (0)

Country by AU Region	Cumulative number of cases (New cases)	Cumulative number of deaths (new deaths)
South Sudan	18,368 (0)	138 (0)
Sudan	63,778 (92)	3,909 (0)
Tanzania	42,775 (664)	845 (0)
Uganda	170,383 (668)	3,630 (0)
Northern Region	3,783,102 (4,711)	84,655 (65)
Algeria	271,440 (240)	6,881 (0)
Egypt	515,667 (0)	24,624 (0)
Libya	507,171 (18)	6,437 (0)
Mauritania	63,438 (14)	997 (0)
Morocco	1,272,445 (1,170)	16,296 (2)
Tunisia	1,150,793 (2,369)	29,330 (63)
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	2,148 (0)	90 (0)
Southern Region	5,702,215	128,173 (108)
Angola	104,973 (0)	1,928 (0)
Botswana	328,190 (719)	2,787 (1)
Eswatini	74,199 (178)	1,423 (1)
Lesotho	35,487 (314)	709 (0)
Malawi	88,565 (268)	2,686 (1)
Mozambique	233,198 (2,153)	2,242 (12)
Namibia	170,724 (3,704)	4,088 (11)
South Africa	4,061,383 (12,933)	102,595 (20)
Zambia	342,933 (8,926)	4,057 (32)
Zimbabwe	262,563 (2,935)	5,658 (30)
Western Region	885,779 (893)	11,511 (15)
Benin	27,982 (0)	163 (0)

Country by AU Region	Cumulative number of cases (New cases)	Cumulative number of deaths (new deaths)
Burkina Faso	22,006 (0)	395 (8)
Cape Verde	63,243 (53)	413 (0)
Côte d'Ivoire	88,182 (245)	834 (5)
Gambia	12,586 (0)	372 (0)
Ghana	171,172 (124)	1,462 (1)
Guinea	38,321 (68)	805 (0)
Guinea-Bissau	8,848 (0)	176 (0)
Liberia	8,043 (0)	294 (0)
Mali	32,998 (238)	743 (0)
Niger	9,504 (31)	315 (1)
Nigeria	266,463 (82)	3,155 (0)
Senegal	88,919 (19)	1,968 (0)
Sierra Leone	7,760 (0)	126 (0)
Togo	39,374 (33)	290 (0)
Total	12,258,635 (45,087)	256,729 (205)

New Africa CDC Response Activities

Sciences, Standards and Regulations

1. Access the Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) update and all other products, or visit the [PERC](#) and [Africa CDC websites](#).
2. Access the latest PERC report on “Responding to COVID-19 in Africa: Finding the Balance (Part IV) and Calls to Action” [here](#).

Recommendations for the Member States

1. AU Member States should continue to organize and implement COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, with a focus on increasing [eligibility](#)⁴ and demand needed to achieve 70% vaccine coverage. Member States should also address vaccine misinformation with effective community-based risk communication and vaccine promotion activities.
2. AU Member States are encouraged to implement a tiered public health and social measures (PHSM) approach. This approach will ensure that measures are targeted and informed by the current COVID-19 situation.
3. AU Member States should continue to **enhance COVID-19**⁵ **surveillance** efforts to include:
 - a. [Community-based surveillance](#)⁶ to detect symptomatic cases early and minimize viral transmission. Where feasible, [rapid antigen tests](#)⁷ and [self-testing](#)⁸ can be used to enhance diagnostic screening efforts.
 - b. [Rapid mortality surveillance](#)⁹ that focuses on collection, analysis and use of all-cause mortality data captured from facility and/or community-based surveillance activities to improve knowledge of COVID-19 related outcomes.
 - c. [Genomic surveillance](#)¹⁰ to monitor the presence of variants and the spread and continuous evolution of the virus.
 - d. [Syndromic surveillance](#) for influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI)¹¹ to monitor COVID-19 trends in comparison to other respiratory pathogens.
4. AU Member States are encouraged to
 - a. Continue contact tracing activities where feasible based on the current epidemiological situation and country capacity.
 - b. Inform the general public about the importance of seeking immediate medical care for individuals who develop severe symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., difficulty breathing).

⁴ [Vaccination Advocacy Infographics – Africa CDC](#)

⁵ [WHO COVID-19 Case definition](#)

⁶ [Enhanced COVID-19 Surveillance at the Community Level in Africa](#)

⁷ [Interim Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen tests for COVID-19 Response – Africa CDC](#)

⁸ [Interim guidance on COVID-19 Rapid Antigen self-testing to African Union Member States – Africa CDC](#)

⁹ [Revealing the toll of COVID-19: A technical package for AU Member States – Africa CDC](#)

¹⁰ [Interim operational guidance on SARS-CoV-2 genomic surveillance in Africa: An updated guide](#)

¹¹ [Protocol for Enhanced Severe Acute Respiratory Illness and Influenza-Like Illness Surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa – Africa CDC](#)

- c. Engage social scientists to help inform and enhance vaccination campaigns and PHSM implementation.
5. All AU Member States should notify and routinely share data with Africa CDC and WHO on confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, recoveries, tests conducted and infected healthcare workers to support data for action. Notify Africa CDC by emailing: AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org.

Resources for more information

- Africa CDC COVID-19 updates <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>
- Adapted Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://africacdc.org/download/adapted-africa-joint-continental-strategy-for-covid-19-pandemic/>
- Africa CDC Resources, policy guidelines, and infographics: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>
- Africa CDC Hotspot and PHSM Tiers dashboards: <https://africadccovid.org/>
- Africa CDC vaccination dashboard: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19-vaccination/>
- Africa CDC pathogen genomics dashboard: <https://africacdc.org/institutes/africa-pathogen-genomics-initiative/>
- Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) <https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/perc/>
- WHO Technical Guidance. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>