

Outbreak Brief #49: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 22 December 2020

75,723,684 cases and 1,690,778 deaths

Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States

Outbreak Update: Since the last brief (15 December 2020), 4,660,959 new confirmed¹ coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases and 81,815 new deaths have been reported globally. To date, a total of 75,723,684 COVID-19 cases and 1,690,778 related deaths (case fatality rate (CFR): 2.2%) have been reported from 221 countries and territories. The distribution of cumulative cases (proportion of global cases) from the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting regions (excluding Africa) are as follows: Eastern Mediterranean Region 3,896,881 (5%), European Region 23,885,746 (32%), Region of the Americas 32,740,713 (43%), South-East Asia Region 11,646,321 (15%) and Western Pacific Region 1,014,279 (1%). Among the affected locations, the United States has reported more than one million new cases each week for the last six consecutive weeks. For the last seven days, Brazil and the United Kingdom (UK) reported over 200,000 new cases. Since the last brief, a new variant of the SARS-COV-2 virus has been reported from both the UK (501Y) and South Africa (501Y.V2). Preliminary analysis from South Africa and the UK suggests that these variants are significantly more transmissible than previously circulating variants. For more detailed information on cases and deaths being reported outside of Africa, refer to the WHO daily situation reports.²

As of 9 am East African Time (EAT) 22 December 2020, a total of 2,525,332 COVID-19 cases and 59,746 deaths (CFR: 2.4%) have been reported in 55 African Union (AU) Member States. This is 3.3% of all cases reported globally. The majority (84%) of Member States continue to report community transmission. Of the countries actively reporting COVID-19 epidemiologic data, sixteen countries are reporting case fatality rates higher than the global case fatality rate of 2.3%. These include Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (10%), Sudan (6.3%), Egypt (5.6%), Chad (5.4%), Liberia (4.6%), Mali (3.6%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3.6%), Tunisia (3.4%), Gambia (3.2%), Niger (3.2%), Malawi (3%), Sierra Leone (3%), Algeria (2.8%), South Africa (2.7%), Somalia (2.7%) and Zimbabwe (2.6%).

For Epi week 51 (14 December - 20 December), 129,502 new COVID-19 cases have been reported, which is an 11% increase in the number of new cases reported compared to Epi week 50. The majority of new COVID-19 cases being reported for this week are from the Southern region (52%) followed by the Northern (30%), Eastern (9%), Western (7%) and Central (2%) regions. Countries

¹ WHO COVID-19 surveillance guidance and case definition: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-2019-nCoV-surveillanceguidance-2020.7>

² WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard: <https://covid19.who.int/>

reporting the highest incidence (COVID-19 new cases per 100,000 population) this week include South Africa (105), Tunisia (84), Namibia (84), Libya (49), Morocco (48) and Eswatini (47).

Table 1 highlights the reported cases and deaths from COVID-19 in all countries in Africa for Epi week 51. The table reports the current phase of the epidemic for each country. Figure 1 shows the trend of new COVID-19 cases reported by day and region from 15 February to date. A second wave of the pandemic is now affecting Africa as cases have continued to increase over the last two months. To date, 18 Member States are currently or have experienced a second wave of cases. This week, four countries account for about 73% of the new COVID-19 cases reported: South Africa (47%), Morocco (14%), Tunisia (8%), Nigeria (4%).

In the face of both the second wave and presence of the new SARS-COV-2 501Y.V2 variant, adherence to public health and social measures this holiday season will be paramount in preventing the further spread of COVID-19

Table 1. Confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths and recoveries³ reported in Africa for Epi week 51 (14 December - 20 December 2020)

| Country | Number of cases (new) | Percent change in new cases since the previous Epi week (50) | Number of deaths (new) | Percent change in new deaths since the previous Epi week (50) | Epidemic phase ⁴ |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Central Region | 70,823 (2,148) | 20% | 1,442 (213) | 45% | |
| Burundi | 761 (32) | -9% | 2 (1) | -64% | 3 |
| Cameroon | 25,724 (581) | 49% | 445 (2) | -91% | 3 |
| Central African Republic | 4,936 (0) | -100% | 63 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Chad | 1,890 (119) | 159% | 102 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Congo | 6,200 (151) | -45% | 100 (1) | -96% | 3 |

³ Data is continuously verified for accuracy and reliability however it may change based on retrospective updates from Member States.

⁴ Phases defined according to Africa CDC’s Recommendations for a stepwise COVID-19 response - <https://africacdc.org/download/recommendations-for-stepwise-response-to-covid-19/>: **Phase 0 (No COVID-19 case)**: no reported case in-country; **Phase 1 (Early stage outbreak)**: one or more imported cases, limited local transmission related to imported cases; **Phase 2 (Expanding outbreak)**: increasing number of imported cases, increased local spread but all cases linked to known transmission chains, outbreak clusters with a known common exposure; **Phase 3 (Advancing outbreak)**: localized outbreaks start to merge, one or more cases or deaths occur outside known transmission, multiple generations in transmission chains, cases are detected among severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) case with no known exposure; **Phase 4 (Large outbreak with nationwide transmission)**: widespread sustained community transmission, multiple generation transmission chains can be identified but most cases occurring outside of chains, community-wide transmission throughout all or nearly all of the country.

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---|
| Democratic Republic of Congo | 15,669 (1,156) | 26% | 564 (208) | 1460% | 3 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 5,231 (36) | No change | 85 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Gabon | 9,400 (70) | -8% | 64 (1) | -97% | 3 |
| Sao Tome and Principe | 1,012 (3) | -70% | 17 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Eastern Region | 310,406 (11,806) | -16% | 5,806 (237) | -55% | |
| Comoros | 660 (32) | 167% | 7 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Djibouti | 5,781 (53) | 96% | 61 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Eritrea | 754 (43) | -46% | (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Ethiopia | 119,951 (3,182) | -8% | 1,853 (47) | 63% | 3 |
| Kenya | 94,500 (2,608) | -26% | 1,639 (52) | 4% | 3 |
| Madagascar | 17,633 (46) | NA* | 260 (1) | -41% | 3 |
| Mauritius | 524 (9) | -10% | 10 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Rwanda | 7,293 (634) | 20% | 63 (7) | -86% | 3 |
| Seychelles | 205 (18) | 500% | (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Somalia | 4,662 (83) | 54% | 124 (3) | No change | 3 |
| South Sudan | 3,234 (28) | 12% | 62 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Sudan | 23,316 (1,452) | -18% | 1,468 (113) | 231% | 3 |
| Tanzania ⁵ | 509 (0) | NA* | 21 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Uganda | 31,384 (3,618) | -21% | 238 (14) | -82% | 3 |
| Northern Region | 866,609 (39,209) | -2% | 22,528 (989) | -56% | |
| Algeria | 95,203 (3,101) | -19% | 2,666 (70) | -4% | 3 |
| Egypt | 125,555 (3,980) | 27% | 7,069 (171) | 335% | 3 |
| Libya | 94,560 (3,203) | -25% | 1,353 (39) | -92% | 3 |
| Mauritania | 12,418 (1,447) | -1% | 281 (56) | -82% | 3 |
| Morocco | 417,125 (17,516) | -12% | 6,957 (368) | -23% | 3 |

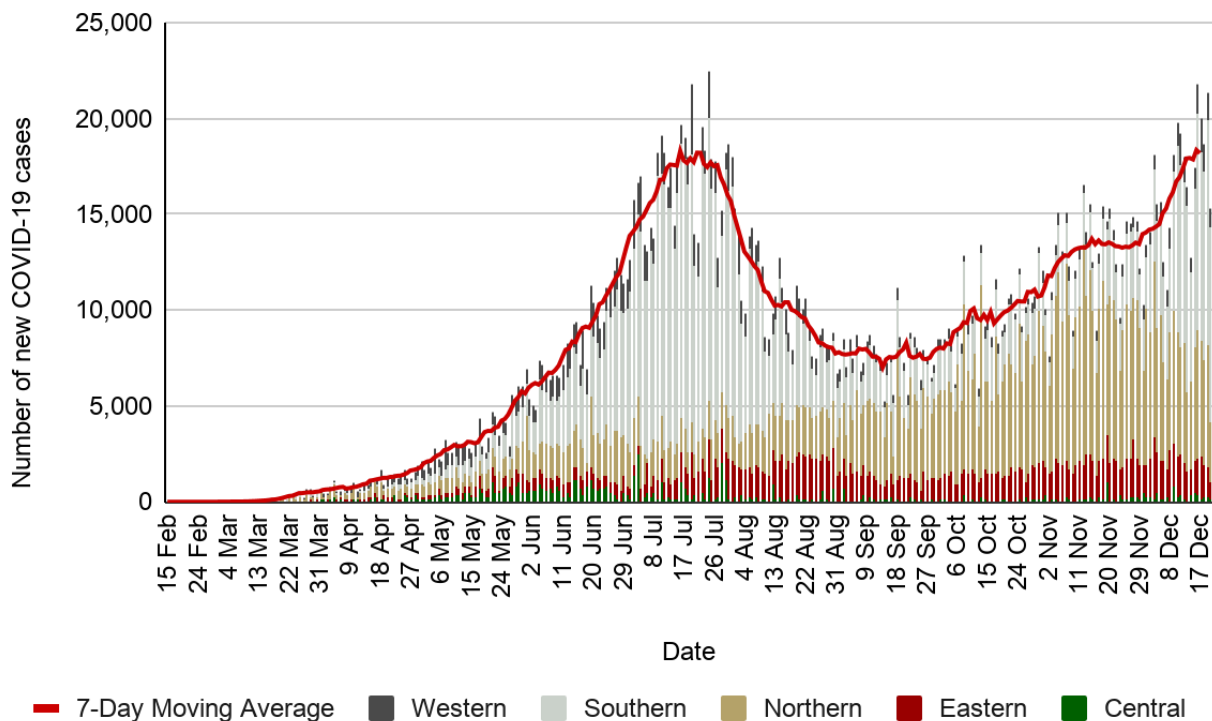
⁵ Last report received 7-May-2020.

| | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Tunisia | 121,718 (9,960) | 34% | 4,199 (284) | -66% | 3 |
| Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic | 30 (2) | NA* | 3 (1) | -70% | 3 |
| Southern Region | 1,034,896 (67,122) | 27% | 26,509 (1,490) | -46% | |
| Angola | 16,644 (456) | -30% | 387 (16) | 12% | 3 |
| Botswana | 12,873 (372) | -85% | 38 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Eswatini | 7,427 (659) | 147% | 140 (13) | -97% | 3 |
| Lesotho | 2,546 (269) | 112% | 48 (4) | -97% | 3 |
| Malawi | 6,161 (95) | 533% | 187 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Mozambique | 17,568 (614) | -14% | 148 (6) | -69% | 3 |
| Namibia | 18,714 (2,178) | 49% | 177 (17) | -98% | 3 |
| South Africa | 921,922 (60,958) | 31% | 24,691 (1,415) | 35% | 3 |
| Zambia | 18,716 (442) | 23% | 373 (6) | -75% | 3 |
| Zimbabwe | 12,325 (1,079) | 104% | 320 (13) | -79% | 3 |
| Western Region | 228,211 (9,217) | 15% | 3,063 (86) | -86% | |
| Benin | 3,167 (77) | 353% | 44 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Burkina Faso | 5,160 (1,130) | 38% | 76 (5) | -90% | 3 |
| Cape Verde | 11,579 (222) | -24% | 111 (1) | -100% | 3 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 21,918 (238) | 22% | 133 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Gambia | 3,788 (6) | -60% | 123 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Ghana | 53,856 (365) | -52% | 333 (4) | -67% | 3 |
| Guinea | 13,550 (119) | -36% | 80 (1) | -89% | 2 |
| Guinea-Bissau | 2,447 (3) | No change | 44 (0) | -100% | 2 |
| Liberia | 1,779 (103) | NA* | 83 (0) | -100% | 2 |
| Mali | 6,191 (377) | -44% | 222 (28) | 46% | 2 |
| Niger | 2,659 (401) | 0% | 87 (7) | -60% | 2 |
| Nigeria | 78,434 (5,259) | 34% | 1,221 (24) | -8% | 1 |
| Senegal | 17,758 (683) | 14% | 365 (16) | -61% | 1 |
| Sierra Leone | 2,509 (69) | 393% | 75 (0) | -100% | 1 |

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|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Togo | 3,416 (165) | 6% | 66 (0) | -100% | 1 |
| Total | 2,510,945 (129,502) | 11% | 59,348 (3,015) | -52% | |

*No new cases/deaths reported in the previous week.

Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported by day and AU region, 15 February - 22 December 2020



NEW Africa CDC Response Activities:

General:

1. In response to the new SARS-COV-2 501.Y.V2 variant report from South Africa, Africa CDC convened an emergency meeting of the Africa Taskforce on Coronavirus Response (AFTCOR) and the Network for Genomics Surveillance in South Africa, led by Prof. Tulio de Olivera and Prof. Salim Abdool Karim, on 21 December to discuss what is known, what is not known, and what needs to be done about this new variant. Further, Africa CDC released an [Alert Notification](#) to Member States regarding this variant.
2. With the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic affecting Africa, now more than ever, it is important that we all adhere to following public health and social measures to protect our health and the health of our friends, family, and loved ones this holiday season. Please access Africa CDC's guidance on Keeping safe and healthy through the holiday guidance to learn more: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>

3. Last week, Dr. Nkengasong hosted Africa CDC's weekly press briefing on Thursday, 17 December 2020 at 11 am EAT. The guest speaker was Prof. Heidi Larson, Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). During this brief, the presentation of preliminary findings from the vaccine perception survey was conducted by Africa CDC in selected African Union Member States. The recording for the press brief is available on the Africa CDC [Facebook page](#).
4. Africa CDC in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Vaccine (Gavi) held a briefing on CONVAX progress to date, on Friday, 18 December 2020 at 4 pm EAT. Link: <https://gavi.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/gavi/recording/f8c60b9ade43461ba28037cefe920447/playback>

Healthcare Preparedness and Medical Countermeasures:

Case Management

1. The Africa CDC Case Management Technical Working Group (TWG) held its 35th clinical webinar series titled "Preparedness for COVID-19 in the Oncology community in Africa" on Thursday, 17 December 2020 for over 150 participants. The recording can be accessed here: [CCOP | Africa CDC Institute](#)

Laboratory:

1. Today, Africa CDC received a donation of COVID-19 test kits and associated laboratory equipment from the U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Africa CDC will deliver the provided equipment to laboratories in Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Eswatini, and Lesotho.
2. This week, over 24.5 million tests for COVID-19 have been conducted to date with a positivity rate of 10% and test per case ratio of 10, which is a 3.4% increase from last week.
3. Africa CDC and partners released a new Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen Tests for COVID-19 Response, as part of a strategy to quickly expand antigen testing for COVID-19 in Africa. On Thursday, 17 December 2020. Link: <https://africacdc.org/news-item/new-guidance-to-expand-rapid-antigen-testing-for-covid-19-response-in-africa-released/>

Surveillance

1. Africa CDC continues to support 17 Member States with the implementation of serosurveys. Currently Zambia and Zimbabwe are actively implementing, while project teams for the other 15 countries are still in the planning phase.

Sciences, Standards and Regulations:

1. Access the weekly COVID-19 Scientific and Public Health Policy Update which is published every other week on Tuesdays at <https://africacdc.org/resources/> or the

WHO AFRO link:

https://afrolib.afro.who.int/pmb/opac_css/doc_num.php?explnum_id=7728

2. Access the Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) products on both the [PERC](#) and [Africa CDC website](#).

Recommendations for the Member States:

1. All Member States should continue to enhance their surveillance⁶ to include COVID-19⁷ and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI)⁸. Examples of enhanced surveillance include:
 - a. Adding questions about travel, contact history, and testing for coronaviruses to existing influenza surveillance systems;
 - b. Notifying healthcare facilities to immediately inform local public health officials about persons who meet the case definition for COVID-19, SARI and/or have recent travel to a country with local transmission or history of contact with a case.
2. Member States should perform contact tracing of confirmed cases based on transmission type and country capacity.⁹
3. Member states should notify and routinely share with WHO and Africa CDC data regarding suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, recoveries, tests conducted and healthcare workers infected to continually inform these and other updates. Notify Africa CDC by emailing: AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org.
4. Member states should continue to guide the general public about seeking immediate medical care and informing healthcare providers about recent travel or contact history in anyone who develops symptoms of severe respiratory illness.

Resources for more information:

Africa CDC Resources

- Africa CDC COVID-19 updates: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>
- Multimedia: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19-multimedia/>
- Resources, policy guidelines, and infographics: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

Other Resources

⁶Africa CDC Protocol for enhanced surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa: <https://africacdc.org/download/protocol-for-enhanced-severe-acute-respiratory-illness-and-influenza-like-illness-surveillance-for-covid-19-in-africa/>

⁷WHO COVID-19 surveillance guidance and case definition: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-2019-nCoV-surveillanceguidance-2020.7>

⁸WHO SARI case definition: anyone with an acute respiratory infection with a history of fever (or measured fever of $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) and cough with symptom onset within the last 10 days that requires hospitalization.

https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/ili_sari_surveillance_case_definition/en/

⁹Africa CDC Guidance on Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://africacdc.org/download/guidance-on-contact-tracing-for-covid-19-pandemic/>

- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china>
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- WHO. Technical Guidance. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>