

Outbreak Brief #55: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 2 February 2021

102,603,826 cases and 2,223,216 deaths

Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States

Outbreak Update: Since the last brief (26 January 2021), 3,792,402 new confirmed¹ coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases and 98,417 new deaths have been reported globally. To date, a total of 102,603,826 COVID-19 cases and 2,223,216 related deaths (case fatality rate (CFR): 2.2%) have been reported from 225 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 4,694,035 (5%), European Region 34,316,553 (33%), Region of the Americas 45,555,879 (44%), South-East Asia Region 13,008,965 (13%) and Western Pacific Region 1,430,799 (1%). Among the affected locations, the United States has reported more than one million new cases each week for the last 12 consecutive weeks, while for the last seven days, Brazil reported over 300,000 new cases. 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) 2 February 2021, a total of 3,579,368 COVID-19 cases and 91,524 deaths (CFR: 2.6%) have been reported in 55 African Union (AU) Member States. This is 3.5% of all cases reported globally. The majority (86%) of Member States continue to report community transmission. There are seven Member States who have reported the presence of the 501Y.V2 variant: Botswana, Comoros, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zambia. Last week, the Institute for Health Research, Epidemiological Surveillance and Training (IRESSEF) confirmed the presence of the 501Y.V1 variant (B.1.1.7 lineage) of SARS COV-2 in Senegal³. Of the countries actively reporting COVID-19 epidemiologic data, 20 countries are reporting case fatality rates higher than the global case fatality rate of 2.2%. These include Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (15%), Sudan (6.6%), Egypt (5.6%), Liberia (4.3%), Mali (4.1%), Zimbabwe (3.7%), Eswatini (3.6%), Chad (3.5%), Niger (3.5%), Comoros (3.4%), Tunisia (3.2%), Gambia (3.1%), South Africa (3%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3%), Malawi (2.9%), Somalia (2.7%), Mauritania (2.7%), Algeria (2.7%), Senegal (2.4%), Angola (2.4%).

For Epi week 4 (25 January 2021 - 31 January 2021), 124,334 new COVID-19 cases have been reported, which is a 27% decrease in the number of new cases reported compared to Epi week 3. The decrease is largely due to the decrease in new cases being reported from South Africa over

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/>

³ [Genotyping of a 2nd wave of SARS - CoV-2 strains in Senegal](#)

the last three weeks. The majority of new COVID-19 cases being reported for this week are from the Southern region (54%) followed by the Northern (21%), Western (16%), Eastern (7%) and Central (2%) regions. The countries reporting the highest incidence (COVID-19 new cases per 100,000 population) this week include Seychelles (333), Botswana (151), Cape Verde (138), Tunisia (138), Eswatini (125), Libya (108), and South Africa (100).

Table 1 highlights the reported cases and deaths from COVID-19 in all countries in Africa for epi week 4. The table reports the current phase of the epidemic for each country. Figure 1 shows the trend of new COVID-19 cases reported by epi week from 16 February 2020 to 31 January 2021. The curve has been trending steadily downward over the past three weeks; however, this trend is primarily due to the reduced number of new cases being reported from South Africa as you can see when comparing the left graph (with South Africa) to the right graph (South Africa removed). This week, seven countries account for about 68% of the new COVID-19 cases reported: South Africa (32%), Tunisia (9%), Nigeria (8%), Zambia (7%), Mozambique (5%), Libya (4%), Morocco (4%).

Table 1. Confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths⁴ reported in Africa for epi week 4 (25 January 2021 - 31 January 2021)

| Country | Number of cases (new) | Percent change in new cases since the previous Epi week (3) | Number of deaths (new) | Percent change in new deaths since the previous Epi week (3) | Epidemic phase ⁵ |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Central Region | 88,577 (1,958) | -55% | 1,619 (16) | -70% | |
| Burundi | 1,632 (160) | -32% | 2 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Cameroon | 30,313 (0) | -100% | 474 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Central African Republic | 4,989 (5) | -50% | 63 (0) | NA* | 3 |

⁴ Data is continuously verified for accuracy and reliability however it may change based on retrospective updates from Member States.

⁵ 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.

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|---|
| Chad | 3,376 (194) | -26% | 118 (2) | -33% | 3 |
| Congo | 7,887 (93) | 9% | 118 (1) | -67% | 3 |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | 22,841 (887) | -1% | 673 (12) | -56% | 3 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 5,534 (80) | -10% | 86 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Gabon | 10,748 (470) | 24% | 68 (1) | No change | 3 |
| Sao Tome and Principe | 1,257 (69) | 50% | 17 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Eastern Region | 361,460 (9,341) | 4% | 6,862 (175) | 21% | |
| Comoros | 2,726 (458) | -32% | 93 (22) | -15% | 3 |
| Djibouti | 5,932 (13) | -7% | 63 (2) | NA* | 3 |
| Eritrea | 2,135 (195) | 210% | 7 (1) | NA* | 3 |
| Ethiopia | 137,650 (3,974) | 60% | 2,093 (27) | -25% | 3 |
| Kenya | 100,773 (790) | -4% | 1,763 (19) | 46% | 2 |
| Madagascar | 19,065 (0) | -100% | 281 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Mauritius | 569 (13) | 44% | 10 (0) | NA* | 2 |
| Rwanda | 15,304 (2,329) | 20% | 196 (22) | -31% | 3 |
| Seychelles | 1,205 (233) | -13% | 4 (1) | No change | 1 |
| Somalia | 4,784 (30) | 200% | 130 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| South Sudan | 3,929 (141) | 19% | 64 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Sudan | 27,273 (747) | -53% | 1,812 (74) | 252% | 3 |
| Tanzania ⁶ | 509 (0) | NA* | 21 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Uganda | 39,606 (418) | -36% | 325 (7) | -46% | 3 |
| Northern Region | 1,090,477 (27,377) | -23% | 29,624 (1,161) | -7% | |
| Algeria | 107,247 (1,754) | 6% | 2,893 (30) | 11% | 3 |
| Egypt | 165,951 (4,134) | -24% | 9,316 (357) | -5% | 3 |
| Libya | 119,402 (4,973) | 9% | 1,883 (101) | 20% | 3 |

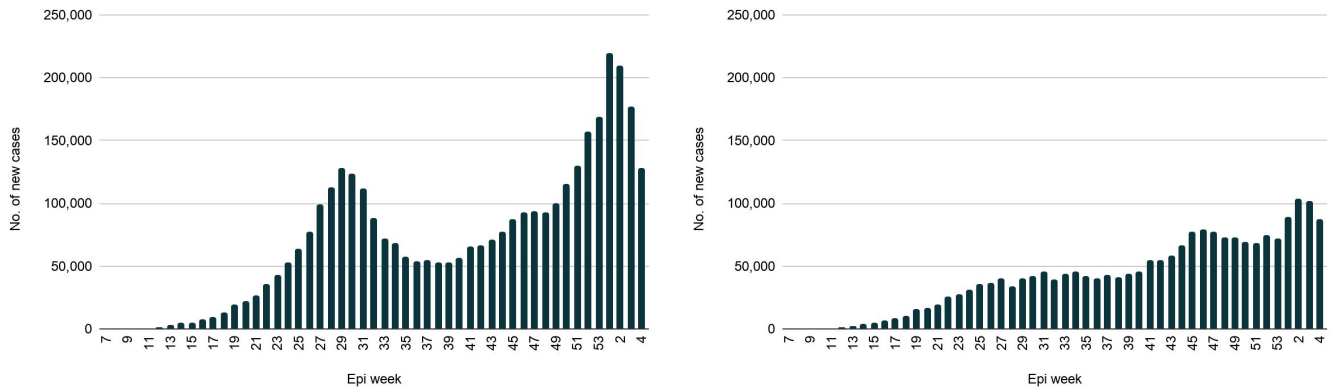
⁶ Last report received 7-May-2020.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Mauritania | 16,635 (238) | -34% | 449 (33) | 136% | 3 |
| Morocco | 471,157 (4,868) | -26% | 8,275 (125) | -40% | 3 |
| Tunisia | 210,045 (11,409) | -32% | 6,802 (515) | -4% | 3 |
| Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic | 40 (1) | -80% | 6 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Southern Region | 1,703,391 (69,456) | -35% | 48,916 (4,081) | -12% | |
| Angola | 19,796 (397) | -24% | 466 (7) | -70% | 3 |
| Botswana | 21,293 (2,778) | 45% | 148 (24) | -33% | 3 |
| Eswatini | 15,711 (1,227) | -20% | 565 (86) | -17% | 3 |
| Lesotho | 8,664 (1,008) | -22% | 172 (49) | 63% | 2 |
| Malawi | 23,963 (4,568) | -34% | 702 (194) | No change | 2 |
| Mozambique | 38,654 (6,236) | 6% | 367 (62) | -3% | 3 |
| Namibia | 33,944 (1,519) | -26% | 352 (33) | -3% | 3 |
| South Africa | 1,453,761 (40,775) | -46% | 44,164 (3,290) | -13% | 3 |
| Zambia | 54,217 (8,880) | 15% | 763 (124) | 33% | 3 |
| Zimbabwe | 33,388 (2,068) | -50% | 1,217 (212) | -27% | 2 |
| Western Region | 326,297 (20,299) | -3% | 4,074 (227) | 16% | |
| Benin | 3,893 (250) | 191% | 52 (4) | 100% | 1 |
| Burkina Faso | 10,682 (644) | -24% | 120 (8) | -20% | 3 |
| Cape Verde | 14,070 (581) | 17% | 134 (7) | -13% | 3 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 28,399 (1,549) | -4% | 154 (8) | 60% | 1 |
| Gambia | 4,090 (118) | 90% | 128 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Ghana | 67,010 (4,259) | 8% | 416 (39) | 105% | 1 |
| Guinea | 14,546 (167) | -22% | 82 (0) | -100% | 3 |
| Guinea-Bissau | 2,623 (91) | 296% | 45 (0) | NA* | 3 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Liberia | 1,944 (30) | 67% | 84 (0) | NA* | 3 |
| Mali | 8,091 (108) | -25% | 330 (7) | -46% | 3 |
| Niger | 4,517 (164) | -17% | 159 (8) | -27% | 3 |
| Nigeria | 131,242 (9,676) | -13% | 1,586 (89) | 44% | 3 |
| Senegal | 26,523 (1,796) | 6% | 628 (53) | -12% | 3 |
| Sierra Leone | 3,593 (454) | 790% | 79 (2) | 100% | 3 |
| Togo | 5,074 (412) | 14% | 77 (2) | No change | 3 |
| Total | 3,570,202 (128,431) | -27% | 91,095 (5,660) | -10% | |

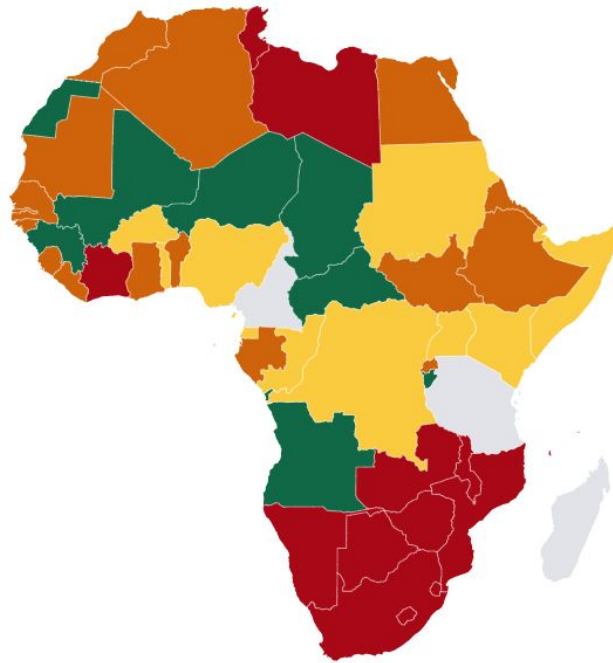
*No new cases/deaths reported in the previous week.

Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported in Africa by epi week with (left graph) and without South Africa (right graph), 16 February 2020 - 31 January 2021.



Public Health and Social Measure (PHSM) Highlights

Figure 3. Map of AU Member States by hotspot level⁷ on the PERC [dashboard](#). This system is intended to highlight AU Member States in need of attention due to an increasing or widespread outbreak. For specifics on calculations, refer to the dashboard [methodology](#).



The table below highlights changes in PHSMs by PERC hotspot warning level based on data from [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#). An up arrow indicates new PHSMs announced. The horizontal arrow indicates PHSMs extended. The down arrow indicates PHSMs loosened/expired.

| Country | PHSM Trend | PHSM Change |
|---|------------|--|
| Warning Level 4: Red - A very widespread or fast-growing outbreak. | | |
| Botswana | ↑ | Botswana extended a nighttime curfew and prohibited the sale/consumption of alcohol until 28 February. |
| Lesotho | → | Lesotho extended COVID-19 restrictions, including a nightly curfew and limits on public gatherings, until 3 February. |
| Seychelles | ↑ | Seychelles extended COVID-19 restrictions, including a nightly curfew, a ban on social gatherings, and school closures until 15 February. |
| Zimbabwe | ↑ | Zimbabwe announced a two-week extension of nationwide lockdown measures until 15 February. |
| Warning Level 3: Orange - A widespread or growing outbreak. | | |
| Gabon | ↑ | Gabon has adjusted the nighttime curfew to begin two hours earlier, from 8pm-5am. |

⁷ The delineation of the international and other boundaries used on this map don't imply official endorsement or acceptance by the African Union or Africa CDC.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ghana | ↑ | Ghana reimposed a ban on social gatherings on 31 January. Schools, which reopened in January after a 10-month closure, will remain open for now. |
| Guinea-Bissau | ↑ | Guinea-Bissau reimposed a state of calamity until 22 February, which includes mandatory use of masks in public, a ban on gatherings of more than 20 people (except funerals, which can have up to 50 people). It also closed down schools and cancelled Carnival, the nation's largest festival. |
| Rwanda | ↑ | Rwanda expanded a free testing campaign in the capital city of Kigali to all persons 25 years and older. |
| Senegal | → | Senegal extended a state of emergency in the Dakar and Thies regions until 20 February. Continued restrictions include a nightly curfew, mandatory mask wearing, and a ban on public gatherings. |
| Warning Level 2: Yellow - A moderate outbreak or the possible start of a growing outbreak. | | |
| Nigeria | → | Nigeria extended Phase 3 COVID-19 restrictions until 23 February. President Buhari also signed the COVID-19 Health Protection Regulations 2021 policy, which established national laws for combating COVID-19 (e.g. mandatory mask use in public) and outlined fines/punishment for violating guidelines and restrictions. |
| Warning Level 1: Green - Relatively low spread and no evidence of a growing outbreak. | | |
| Chad | ↑ | Chad extended a nightly curfew in the capital city of N'Djamena and surrounding provinces after an uptick of cases in the area. |
| Mali | ↓ | Mali reopened schools on 25 January after several delays. A new health awareness lesson will be incorporated into all students' curriculum. |

NEW Africa CDC Response Activities

General:

1. Last week, Dr. Nkengasong hosted Africa CDC's weekly press briefing on Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 11 am EAT. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Facebook page](#).
2. Last week, the Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) and COVID-19 Management webinar series addressed 'Learning Lessons from Public Health Emergencies'. The webinar was held on Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 3 pm EAT. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Facebook page](#).
3. This week, Africa CDC will conduct a special webinar session addressing 'Expanding COVID-19 Testing to Reopen Economies'. The webinar will be held on Monday, 2 February 2021 at 4 pm EAT. Register [here](#)
4. Last week, Africa CDC conducted COVID-19 a vaccine live chat via social media on 27 January. Africa CDC experts provided answers for COVID-19 vaccine questions. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Facebook page](#).
5. Last week, MTN Group, the South Africa-based mobile telecommunication network, announced its donation of USD 25 million to secure up to seven million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in the coming months for health workers across Africa.

Laboratory:

1. To date, over 31 million tests for COVID-19 have been conducted across the continent with a positivity rate of 11.3% and test per case ratio of 8.9. For epi week 4, 1,006,475 new tests were conducted, which is an 18% decrease when compared to the previous week (1,232,450 tests).
2. A total of 13 million antigen tests have been committed for Africa. Of these, 8.3 million have been procured and are being distributed to Member States.
3. Last week, 488 laboratories from 44 Member States participated in the Africa CDC external quality assessment programme.
4. The Africa CDC recently released a diagnostic communique regarding the "[New SARS-CoV-2 variants in Africa](#)"

Healthcare Preparedness and Medical Countermeasures:

Case Management

1. Last week, Africa CDC's Case Management TWG held the 39th clinical webinar titled "Equitable access to COVID-19 vaccine in Africa" on Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 2 pm EAT. There were 120+ participants on the webinar and IWD Facebook page. The recording can be accessed here: <https://www.africacdc.training/courses/ccop>

Infection and Prevention Control (IPC)

1. Last week, the IPC TWG had its fifth webinar session titled "Hand Hygiene and behaviour change" for 463 participants in the English session and 120 participants for the French.
2. This week, the IPC TWG will hold the 3rd session on "Ventilation and Airborne pathogens in the context of COVID-19 and TB "Hand Hygiene and behaviour change" in English on Wednesday 03 February 2021 at 1 pm EAT. For the English session,

register [here](#). The French session will be on Friday, 5 February 2021 at 2 pm EAT. For French session, register [here](#)

Surveillance

1. Kenya has officially adopted the Africa CDC Trusted Travel portal for verifying COVID-19 laboratory tests for passengers

Sciences, Standards and Regulations:

1. Access the biweekly 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](#).
2. Subscribe [here](#) to receive the weekly Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) update and all other products or visit the [PERC](#) and [Africa CDC website](#).

Recommendations for the Member States

1. All Member States should continue to enhance their surveillance⁸ to include COVID-19⁹ and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI)¹⁰. 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.¹¹
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.

⁸Africa 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/>

⁹WHO COVID-19 surveillance guidance and case definition:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-2019-nCoV-surveillanceguidance-2020.7>

¹⁰WHO SARI case definition: anyone with an acute respiratory infection with a history of fever (or measured fever of $\geq 38\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) 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/

¹¹Africa CDC Guidance on Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Pandemic:

<https://africacdc.org/download/guidance-on-contact-tracing-for-covid-19-pandemic/>

5. Member states should put in place or strengthen existing public health and social measures as cases start to rise especially through the holiday.

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

- 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>
- Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) <https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/perc/>