

Outbreak Brief #71: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 25 May 2021

Global case count: 166,869,922 cases and 3,460,428 deaths

Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States

Outbreak Update: Since the last brief (18 May 2021), 4,087,197 new confirmed¹ coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases and 84,475 new deaths have been reported globally. To date, a total of 166,869,922 COVID-19 cases and 3,460,428 related deaths (case fatality ratio (CFR): 2.1%) 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 8,541,482 (5%), European Region 54,147,639 (32%), Region of the Americas 66,158,798 (40%), South-East Asia Region 30,332,591 (18%) and Western Pacific Region 2,877,254 (2%). Over the last seven days, India reported more than 1,700,000 new cases and the number of new cases being reported by day have been declining since 7 May 2021. During the same period Brazil reported more than 400,000 new cases, Argentina has reported more than 200,000 new cases while the United States and Colombia have each reported more than 100,000 new cases. For more detailed information on cases and deaths being reported outside of Africa, refer to the WHO COVID-19 dashboard.²

As of 9 am East African Time (EAT) 25 May 2021, a total of 4,768,416 COVID-19 cases and 128,718 deaths (CFR: 2.7%) have been reported in 55 African Union (AU) Member States. This represents 3% of all cases reported globally. The 21 AU Member States reporting case fatality ratios higher than the global case fatality ratio of 2.1% are Sudan (7.2%), Sahrawi Republic (6.1%), Egypt (5.8%), Somalia (5.2%), Zimbabwe (4.1%), Liberia (4.0%), Comoros (3.7%), Tunisia (3.6%), Eswatini (3.6%), Mali (3.6%), Niger (3.6%), Chad (3.5%), South Africa (3.4%), Malawi (3.4%), Lesotho (3.0%), Gambia (3.0%), Algeria (2.8%), Senegal (2.8%), Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo (2.5%), Mauritania (2.4%) and Angola (2.2%).

For Epi week 20 (17 - 23 May 2021), 68,615 new COVID-19 cases have been reported, which is a 22% increase in the number of new cases reported when compared to Epi week 19. The majority of new COVID-19 cases reported for this week are from the Southern region (42%), followed by the Northern (33%), Eastern (14%), Central (6%) regions and Western (5%). This week, eight countries account for about 75% of the new COVID-19 cases reported: South Africa (32%), Tunisia (13%), Egypt (12%), Kenya (4%), Ethiopia (4%), Cameroon (4%), Botswana (3%) and Morocco (3%). The countries reporting the highest incidence (COVID-19 new cases per 100,000 population) this week are Seychelles (1,249), Cabo Verde (231), Botswana (87), Tunisia (76), Namibia (69),

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/>

Equatorial Guinea (53) and South Africa (37). Figure 1 shows the trend of new COVID-19 cases reported per day from 15 February 2020 to 25 May 2021. The number of daily new cases registered has been steadily increasing over the last week.

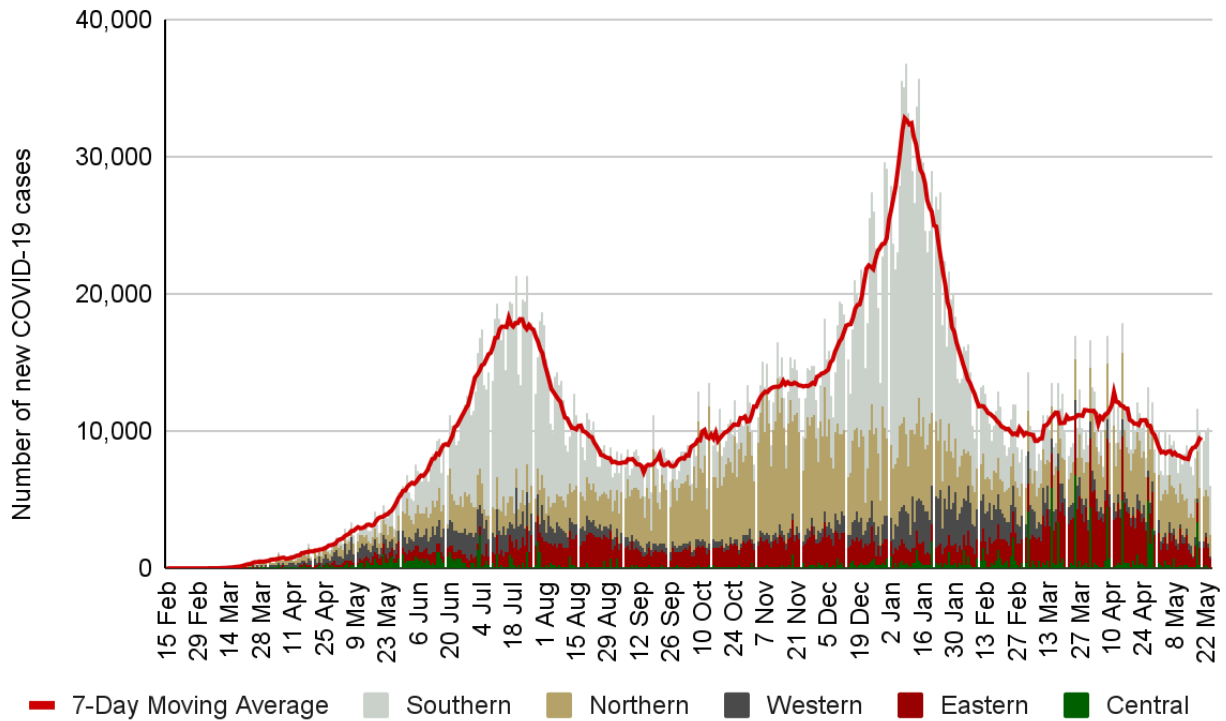


Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported by day in Africa by African Union region, 15 February 2020 - 25 May 2021.

The Pathogen Genomics Dashboard provides a breakdown of variant types reported by Member State. More information on SARS-COV-2 sequencing in Africa is available on the [Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative Dashboard](#).

Table 1 shows the breakdown of three reported COVID-19 variants of concern in circulation by Member States in Africa as of this week.

Table 1: SARS-COV 2 Variants of Concern reported in African Union Member States, as of 25 May 2021

Variant	Number of MS	Member States
B.1.1.7	26	Algeria, Angola, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, DR Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Libya,

		Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, and Tunisia
B.1.351	25	Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gambia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe
B.1.617	10	Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Fifty-three (96%) of the 55 AU Member States are experiencing community transmission of the SARS-COV 2 virus. Table 2 lists the cumulative COVID-19 cases and deaths reported by Member State and Region in Africa and the new COVID-19 cases and deaths reported during Epi week 20. The table also provides the current epidemic phase for each country.

Table 2: Confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths³ and current epidemic phases reported in Africa for Epi week 20 (17 - 23 May 2021)

Country	Number of cases (new)	Percent change in new cases since previous brief	Number of deaths (new)	Percent change in new deaths since previous brief	Epidemic phase ⁴
Central Region	171,333 (4,257)	322%	2,690 (47)	422%	

³ Data is continuously verified for accuracy and reliability, thus 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.

Burundi	4,494 (165)	9%	6 (0)	NA*	3
Cameroon	77,429 (2,483)	NA*	1,189 (37)	NA*	3
Central African Republic	7,079 (87)	43%	97 (1)	No change	3
Chad	4,924 (20)	-26%	173 (0)	-100%	3
Congo	11,476 (0)	-100%	150 (0)	-100%	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	31,052 (443)	71%	779 (3)	-25%	3
Equatorial Guinea	8,436 (742)	NA*	112 (0)	NA*	3
Gabon	24,107 (308)	-16%	147 (4)	NA*	3
Sao Tome and Principe	2,336 (9)	No change	37 (2)	NA*	3
Eastern Region	640,981 (9,767)	-12%	12,434 (279)	0%	
Comoros	3,940 (10)	25%	146 (0)	NA*	3
Djibouti	11,493 (59)	-40%	153 (2)	No change	3
Eritrea	3,932 (88)	-14%	14 (2)	NA*	3
Ethiopia	269,194 (2,930)	-18%	4,076 (80)	-26%	3
Kenya	168,432 (2,967)	55%	3,059 (56)	-48%	3
Madagascar	40,954 (750)	-28%	807 (37)	-10%	3
Mauritius	1,296 (14)	-48%	17 (0)	NA*	3
Rwanda	26,688 (547)	12%	349 (5)	-17%	3
Seychelles	10,433 (1,249)	-56%	38 (6)	50%	3
Somalia	14,632 (146)	106%	767 (14)	133%	3
South Sudan	10,670 (18)	64%	115 (0)	NA*	3
Sudan	34,889 (0)	-100%	2,515 (69)	NA*	3
Tanzania	509 (0)	NA*	21 (0)	NA*	Unknown
Uganda	43,919 (989)	97%	357 (8)	167%	3
Northern Region	1,437,610 (22,887)	28%	43,280 (991)	5%	
Algeria	126,860 (1,549)	28%	3,549 (175)	280%	3
Egypt	253,835 (8,114)	-2%	14,721 (394)	-7%	3
Libya	183,592 (1,878)	26%	3,112 (20)	No change	3
Mauritania	19,149 (321)	99%	458 (1)	No change	3
Morocco	517,023 (2,079)	93%	9,122 (24)	-8%	3
Tunisia	336,414 (8,941)	59%	12,273 (374)	-13%	3

Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	737 (5)	-55%	45 (3)	200%	1
Southern Region	2,042,384 (28,521)	24%	63,937 (763)	34%	
Angola	32,441 (1,804)	-17%	725 (66)	136%	3
Botswana	55,402 (2,084)	17%	809 (35)	52%	3
Eswatini	18,551 (31)	-23%	672 (0)	-100%	3
Lesotho	10,822 (32)	88%	326 (6)	500%	3
Malawi	34,284 (70)	63%	1,153 (0)	NA*	3
Mozambique	70,590 (148)	-36%	831 (5)	67%	3
Namibia	52,946 (1,728)	51%	765 (47)	62%	3
South Africa	1,635,465 (21,737)	27%	55,802 (592)	25%	3
Zambia	93,201 (765)	122%	1,268 (8)	167%	3
Zimbabwe	38,682 (122)	-13%	1,586 (4)	-33%	3
Western Region	470,647 (3,183)	5%	6,203 (35)	-20%	
Benin	8,025 (41)	-59%	101 (0)	-100%	3
Burkina Faso	13,415 (18)	No change	165 (1)	-50%	3
Cape Verde	29,334 (1,383)	-8%	256 (10)	-29%	3
Côte d'Ivoire	47,007 (351)	64%	298 (0)	-100%	3
Gambia	5,978 (21)	-25%	178 (3)	NA*	3
Ghana	93,644 (188)	-43%	783 (0)	NA*	3
Guinea	23,052 (306)	171%	159 (8)	700%	3
Guinea-Bissau	3,751 (5)	No change	68 (1)	NA*	3
Liberia	2,161 (30)	76%	86 (1)	NA*	3
Mali	14,241 (51)	-38%	514 (3)	-73%	3
Niger	5,383 (50)	317%	192 (0)	NA*	3
Nigeria	166,019 (317)	-1%	2,067 (1)	No change	3
Senegal	41,142 (292)	85%	1,132 (7)	17%	3
Sierra Leone	4,121 (31)	933%	79 (0)	NA*	3
Togo	13,374 (99)	-18%	125 (0)	-100%	3
Total	4,762,955 (68,615)	22%	128,544 (2,115)	14%	

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

NEW Africa CDC Response Activities

General:

1. During the African Union Ministerial level virtual meeting for Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on Saturday, May 22, 2021, Dr. John Nkengasong briefed the Ministers on the challenges of COVID-19 to human security in Africa. He advocated on the African Union's Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) to consider the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as other public health emergencies, as threats to continental peace and security.
2. Last week, Dr. Nkengasong hosted Africa CDC's weekly press briefing with guest speakers Dr. Justin Maeda, Principal RCC Coordinator and Africa CDC Representatives of AU member states (Malawi, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) who shared their seroprevalence survey data on Thursday 20 May 2021 at 12pm EAT. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Zoom platform](#). Access Passcode: **Qu9.g6EY**
3. Africa CDC Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) and COVID-19 Management held their weekly PHEOC webinar series on Thursday, 20 May 2021. The recording can be accessed on the [Africa CDC Twitter page](#).
4. As of 24 May 2021, 48 out of 55 African Union Member States have started their COVID-19 vaccination programs targeting priority populations. Cumulatively, over 27.9 million doses have been administered and 22.1 million persons have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in these countries. More information on COVID-19 vaccination can be found on the [Africa CDC COVID-19 vaccine dashboard](#).

Laboratory:

1. Over 46.9 million tests for COVID-19 have been conducted in Africa since February 2020. The cumulative positivity ratio and test per case ratio are 10.2% and 9.8 respectively. For Epi week 20, a total of 930,026 new tests were conducted, a 20% increase compared to Epi week 19 when 774,076 tests were conducted.

Healthcare Preparedness and Medical Countermeasures:

Case Management

1. Africa CDC Case Management TWG continued partnering with Project HOPE and Brown University to provide training of trainers on COVID-19 vaccines for 70 frontline health care workers from Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Saharawi Republic and Mauritania). The training was held on Wednesday, 20 May 2021. The objective of the training is to increase knowledge among frontline healthcare workers on the types of COVID-19 vaccines, mechanism of action, side effects, administration of the vaccines, cold chain management, supply chain, and risk communication. Cumulatively, Africa CDC has trained 704 healthcare workers in 33 Member States on the COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination.

Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC)

1. Africa CDC and partners will hold the third session of the seventh IPC webinar series titled “Ebola and COVID-19 vaccination roll-out: understanding the IPC measures” on Wednesday 26 May 2021, at 1 pm EAT for the English session. [Register here](#)
2. The second French session for the seventh IPC webinar series on “monitoring and evaluation of IPC committee’s activities” will be held on Thursday 27 May 2021, at 2 pm EAT. [Register here](#).

Surveillance:

1. This week’s surveillance webinar titled “Event-based Surveillance and the rapidly changing dynamics of COVID-19: Discussion on EBS and its role in identifying and tracing cases and contacts” will be held on Wednesday 26 May 2021, at 4 pm EAT. Register [here](#).

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. Member States should continue to enhance their COVID-19⁵ surveillance efforts to include:
 - a. Syndromic surveillance for influenza like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI).⁶
 - b. Rapid mortality surveillance that includes the collection, analysis and use of all-cause mortality data collected through the facility- or community-based surveillance.⁷
 - c. Genomic surveillance⁸ to monitor variant presence and spread as well as the continued evolution of the virus.

⁵ [WHO COVID-19 Case definition](#)

⁶ Africa CDC Protocol for enhanced surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa: [Protocol for Enhanced Severe Acute Respiratory Illness and Influenza-Like Illness Surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa – Africa CDC](#)

⁷ Revealing the toll of COVID-19: A technical package for Member States – Africa CDC

⁸ Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2: a guide to implementation for maximum impact on public health

2. Member States should continue to perform contact tracing⁹ of confirmed cases based on transmission type and country capacity and enhance diagnostic screening efforts with the use of rapid antigen tests¹⁰.
3. All Member States should notify and routinely share data with WHO and Africa CDC regarding 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 for those who develop severe symptoms (e.g. difficulty breathing).
5. Member States should put in place or strengthen existing public health and social measures if COVID-19 incidence starts to rise.¹¹

Resources for more information

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

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

¹⁰ [Interim Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen tests for COVID-19 Response – Africa CDC](#)

¹¹ [Recommendations for Stepwise response to COVID-19 – Africa CDC](#), [COVID-19 guidance for educational settings – Africa CDC](#), [COVID-19 guidance for the transportation sector – Africa CDC](#)