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Despite Early Start, Russia Says Only 1.5% Population Vaccinated

Around 2.2 million Russians have been partially vaccinated against the coronavirus.

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Russia's Sputnik V vaccine has a 91.6% efficacy, research published in The Lancet early February showed. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Around 2.2 million Russians have been partially vaccinated against the coronavirus so far — or 1.5% of the country's population — the lead scientist behind the development of Russia's homemade Sputnik V vaccine said Wednesday.

The progress update was announced by Denis Logunov, deputy director of research at the state-run Gamaleya Institute, at a meeting with Moscow city officials Wednesday, Interfax reported.

Of those vaccinated, more than 1.7 million Russians have received both components of the two-part adenovirus-based vector vaccine, said Logunov, a lead researcher in the vaccine's

development. The second dose — which is a different formulation from the first — is administered three weeks after the first.

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Some 300 people who have taken the vaccine have since caught the virus, he added.

Russia became the first country in the world to authorize a vaccine to protect against Covid-19 last August, drawing criticism and concern from the international scientific community for approving the jab before the start of large-scale trials.

In results published in The Lancet on Feb. 2, Sputnik V was found to have a 91.6% efficacy in Phase 3 clinical trials, and has so far been approved in more than 25 countries.

Russia was one of the first countries to launch its vaccination program at the beginning of December. However, production issues and a skeptical public have held up the vaccine's rollout.

According to regional statistics compiled by the Gogov website, which analyzes official government data, Russia's daily vaccination rate passed 100,000 for the first time Tuesday, based on a seven-day average.

Russia is not publishing official or regular data on how many people have been vaccinated, citing the confidential nature of a national vaccine register which tracks who has been given a jab. On Jan. 10, the government said it had vaccinated 1.5 million Russians, though independent analysis conducted by summing up regional statistics suggested the number may have been closer to 400,000.

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The claim of 2.2 million partially vaccinated aligns with the latest regional data, but in a post on Telegram, Gogov analysts questioned Logunov's assertion that 1.7 million Russians had received both components. According to the latest regional figures, only 173,000 have received both doses.

"There are only 14 regions where we don't have data regarding the second vaccination," the analysts wrote. "Even if we assume that everybody vaccinated there has also received the second component — which is unlikely — we would have a total nationwide number of 895,000 having received both components."

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