

Russia Posts Record Covid Deaths for Third Day Running

By [AFP](#)

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Yevgeny Sofiychuk / TASS

Russia on Thursday reported 672 coronavirus deaths over the past 24 hours, according to a government tally, setting a pandemic high of fatalities for the third day in a row.

The country is battling a surging outbreak driven by the highly infectious Delta variant and worsened by a lagging jab drive, with President Vladimir Putin urging Russians on national television Wednesday to get vaccinated.

The daily death toll released Thursday topped Wednesday's record of 669 and Tuesday's of 652.

Related article: [Putin Reveals He Took Russia's Sputnik V Coronavirus Vaccine](#)

St. Petersburg, which is due to host the Spain vs. Switzerland Euro 2020 quarter-final on

Friday in front of thousands of spectators, saw the most deaths with 115.

Dozens of Finland supporters were infected in the city, where authorities have introduced minimal restrictions beyond banning food sales at fan zones, after they travelled there earlier this month for their team's loss to Belgium.

In Moscow, where the city's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin has said that the Delta variant — first identified in India — accounts for 90% of cases, authorities have introduced a host of new restrictions.

Businesses have been ordered to send home 30% of unvaccinated employees and restaurants to only serve inside patrons who have been inoculated or infected in the past six months.

Sobyenin also earlier this month required 60% of the city's service industry workers to be fully inoculated by mid-August, with more than a dozen Russian regions since following his lead.

Booster jabs

On Thursday, the Western exclave of Kaliningrad became the latest region to introduce new restrictions, barring unvaccinated tourists from taking bus tours.

Also Thursday, hotels in the Krasnodar region — home to Russia's popular Black Sea resort city Sochi — began accepting only vaccinated guests or those with a negative test.

The Kremlin had set a goal of fully inoculating 60% of Russia's population by September, but conceded earlier this week that it would not be able to meet that target even though free jabs have been available since early December.

Authorities have faced a population highly skeptical of coronavirus vaccines, in particular Russia's homegrown jabs, with independent polling showing that 60% do not plan on getting inoculated.

As of Thursday, just 17.4 million of Russia's population of about 146 million people — or about 12% — had been fully vaccinated, according to the Gogov website, which tallies Covid data from the regions.

But even as Russia struggles to vaccinate its population, Moscow Mayor Sobyenin on Thursday urged the city's residents who had been inoculated more than six months ago to already get a booster jab with the country's homegrown Sputnik V vaccine or the one-dose Sputnik Light.

Russia, with 135,886 deaths from the virus, has the highest official toll from Covid-19 in Europe -- even as authorities have been accused of downplaying the severity of the country's outbreak.

Under a broader definition for deaths linked to coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat at the end of April said that Russia has seen at least 270,000 fatalities.

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