

Russia Reports Record Covid-19 Cases as Omicron Gains Momentum

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Officials have warned daily cases could pass 100,000. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia reported a record number of new coronavirus infections Friday as the Omicron variant continued its rapid spread across the country.

A total of 49,513 new infections were recorded over the last 24 hours, the government's coronavirus task force reported Friday morning — a 27% rise in a single day.

Officials have been [warning](#) of a surge in cases since the start of the year, with health leaders saying the country's daily case tally could pass 100,000 in the coming weeks.

The previous record number of daily infections was 41,335, set in early November.

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The latest data also shows that cases have more than doubled over the last seven days, with the rate of transmission increasing fast, particularly in Moscow, the epicenter of the

coronavirus pandemic within Russia.

The capital reported a record number of infections for the [second](#) day running with 15,987 confirmed cases. Daily case numbers there have doubled in just a five-day span. St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, also saw another record high number of infections Friday.

Under half the Russian population has been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Amid widespread vaccine skepticism, the number of people coming forward for a vaccine is close to its lowest level since the nationwide jab campaign was first launched in December 2020.

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The Kremlin has been reluctant to impose fresh restrictions despite the surge in cases, pointing to the lower severity of the Omicron variant and the need to keep the country's economy open.

Several regions have scrapped their temporary mandates requiring coronavirus health passes — QR codes — for access to public spaces in recent weeks, and Russia's parliament, the State Duma, has also [pulled](#) draft legislation that would have mandated the passes for access to trains and flights.

Russia has the highest number of official deaths from Covid-19 in Europe, but authorities continue to face accusations of downplaying the severity of the outbreak. Analysts of excess fatalities data — seen by demographers as the most reliable indicator of the human toll of the pandemic — shows Russia has recorded [at least 929,000](#) more deaths since the start of the pandemic than would be expected in non-pandemic times. That is the second-highest number in the world, behind only India.

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