

# COVID-19 Weekly Update

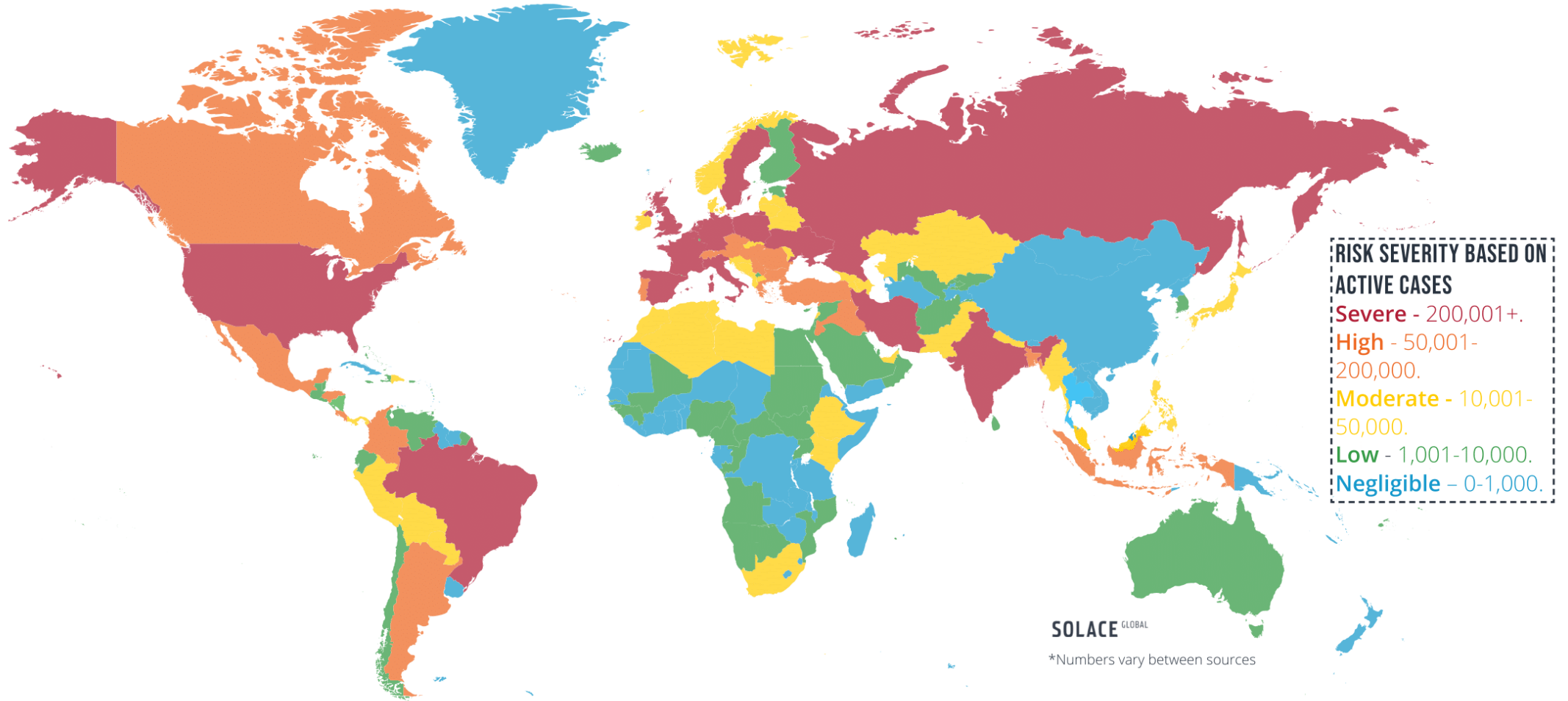
## 26 November



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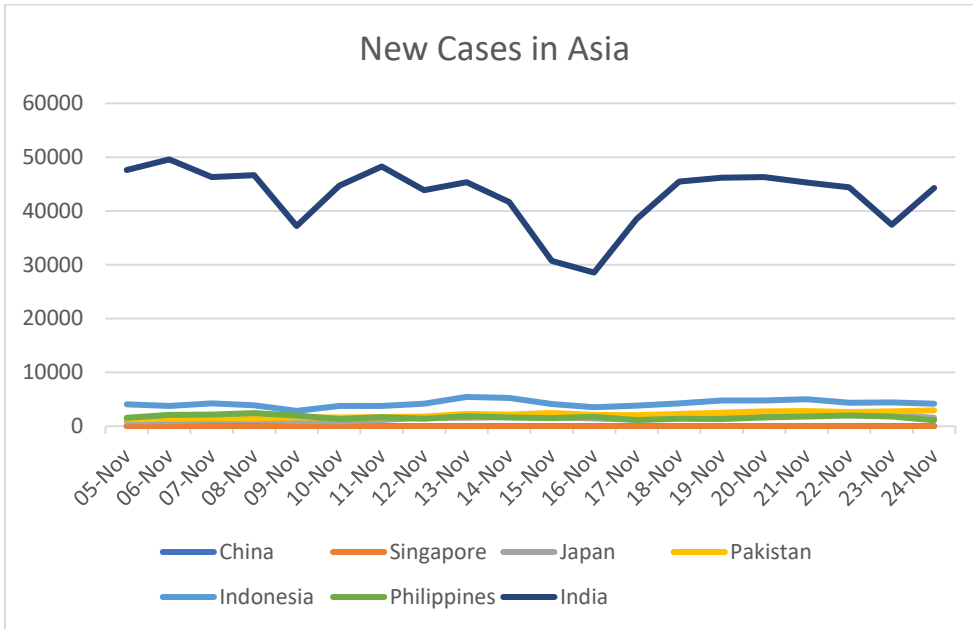


Current Statistics (Numbers vary between sources)							
Total cases	60,712,994	Total Active Cases	17,265,385	Total Confirmed Recoveries	42,021,613	Total Confirmed Deaths	1,425,996





# Asia



This week, a rise in infection has been reported in a number of countries in the continent.

Due to the growing number of cases in Hong Kong, the air travel bubble arrangement between this country and Singapore that was due to start on 21 November, has been postponed until at least 6 December. The so-called travel bubble that allowed quarantine-free flights was announced on 11 November. Travellers will be able to travel between the two nations, but they will be subject to quarantine restrictions.

Singapore Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung stated “I can fully understand the disappointment and frustration of travellers who have planned their trips” and that “this is a sober reminder that the COVID-19 virus is still with us, and even as we fight to regain our normal lives, the journey will be full of ups and downs”.

Over the past week, Hong Kong has experienced a surge in infections. The Secretary for Food and Health Professor Sophia Chan described the situation as severe as the nation has likely entered a new wave of the disease. It is also noted that restrictions will continue to be tightened and testing capacity will be increased. Authorities are also urging residents to avoid unnecessary gatherings.

A resurgence of infection has also been reported in South Korea. Officials warned that if the current infection rate is not curbed, a third wave of the infections will be more serious than the first two. It is reported that a high percentage of new cases is amongst students. Prevention measures will continue to be tightened notably ahead of the annual college entrance exams on 3 December.

Japan has been more successful than other countries in the region at managing the pandemic. Despite this, concerns are rising as, on 20 November, the number of cases in Japan reached a record for the third consecutive day. Authorities are also considering scaling back the “GoTo” campaign, a Government-back scheme that gives citizens access to discounts on domestic travel and hospitality establishments.

In more positive news, according to the International Monetary Fund, Vietnam is on track for a 2.4 percent growth this year. It is reported that the nation avoided the economic fallout of COVID-19 thanks to decisive public health measures.

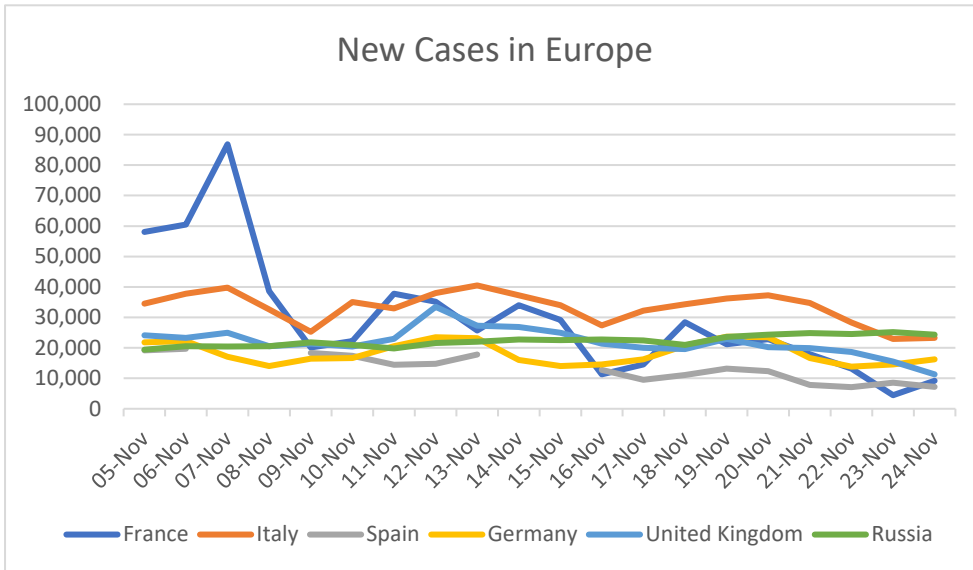
In Australia, the state of New South Wales (NSW) has reopened its border with neighbouring Victoria for the first time since July. The announcement was made after coronavirus cases fell to zero. Australia has relied on harsh early lockdowns alongside widespread testing and aggressive contact tracing. Despite the positives, officials have warned that there remains a risk until there is a substantial and widespread rollout of vaccines globally, a prospect that remains many months off at this time.

South Australia also saw the lifting of its a “circuit breaker” lockdown on 21 November, three days earlier than planned. The early relaxing of the rules was reportedly due to incorrect data issues by an infected individual and his link to a pizza shop where he worked. The individual had stated that he had only visited the shop once, this resulted in officials believing that the strain of the reported outbreak was highly contagious. A task force has since been set up to investigate whether the man had broken the law regarding the misinformation.

Countries	Active Covid Cases	Active Case Number Change	Domestic Lockdown	International Travel Restrictions
India	453,450	Significant Decrease	Moderate	High
Pakistan	42,115	Increase	Moderate	High
China	305	Stable	Light	High
Japan	18,674	Increase	Light	High
Indonesia	65,804	Slight Increase	Moderate	High
Singapore	71	Stable	Light	High
Philippines	27,752	Stable	Moderate	High



# Europe



Much of Europe is now experiencing higher infection levels than in the spring. As cases continue to rise, authorities in Portugal extended the state of emergency until at least 8 December. Researchers of Lisbon’s University noted that they expect the peak of the wave to be reached between mid-November and 6 December.

Sweden has a higher per capita infection rate than France, Spain and Britain. The number of people in intensive care with COVID-19 is reportedly doubling each week. Although hospital wards have not exceeded their capacity limits, concerns are rising that the healthcare system may suffer.

Due to a rise in COVID-19 cases, North Macedonia on Friday, 20 November, declared its first-ever state of emergency after the measures imposed in recent weeks have failed to curb the spread of the infections. The measure will allow the local authorities to use the armed forces and private resources to respond to the health emergency. The state of emergency will be in effect until at least 20 December.

New measures have also been imposed in Greece where authorities are struggling to contain the pandemic. On Friday, 20 November, the government closed its border crossing with Albania in Krystalopigi. Additionally, travellers entering the country via the other land borders at Kakavia, Evzoni and Promachonas will be subject to a COVID-19 test. Additionally, visitors will need to present a negative

PCR test conducted 72 hours prior to their arrival in country.

Although case numbers remain high, Spain continues to see a small decrease in new COVID-19 infections. To stop the transmission in and out of the capital, Madrid will restrict movement and close its borders between 4 and 14 December. This coincides with the national holiday on 8 December, when many Spaniards take holiday and travel.

On Thursday, 19 November, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the vaccines being developed by Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTec could be approved by the end of the year. Many countries have already announced plans, or the beginnings of plans, to carry out mass inoculations of their population, with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announcing that the majority of vulnerable people in the UK could be vaccinated by Easter. PM Johnson added that England would exit its second national lockdown on 2 December, the constituent nations of the UK were also reportedly working on a unified set of rules for travelling over Christmas.

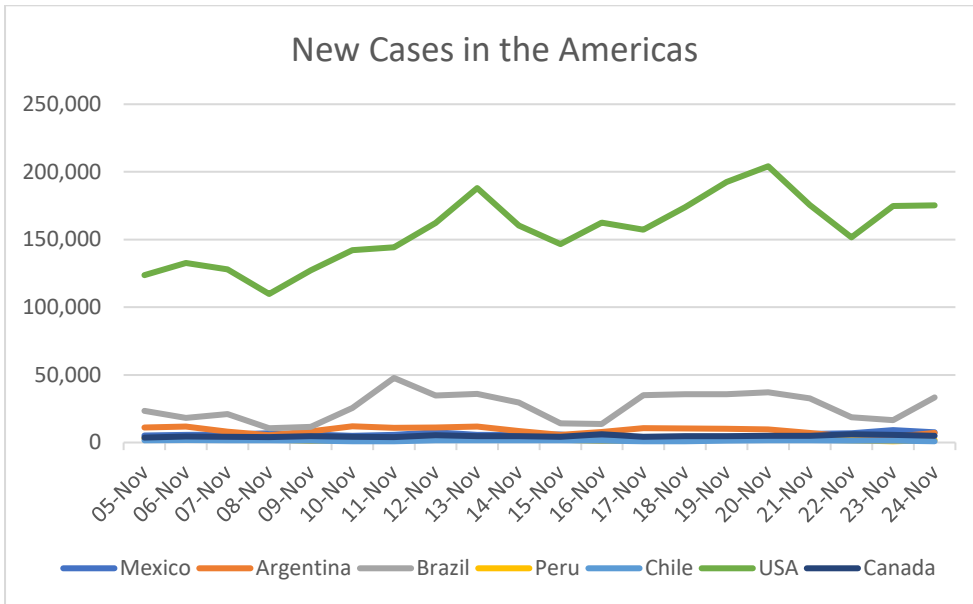
France plans to start rolling out their vaccination campaign against Covid19 as early as mid-January. France has pre-ordered 90 million doses from several suppliers, with a first batch of just under 8 million expected to arrive mid-January. The republic has also budgeted 1.5 billion Euros for the vaccine, including the infrastructure to store some of the vaccines that require special environments; the vaccine created by BioNTech and Pfizer needs to be stored at -80C. As it stands, France continues its second national lockdown.

Despite the positives of the upcoming vaccination, Hans Kluge, the World Health Organisation’s Europe director, has stated that a “tough” six months lies ahead for Europe. Adding that the continent had recorded more than 29,000 new Covid-19 deaths last week and that the pandemic was far from over.

Countries	Active Covid Cases	Active Case Number Change	Domestic Lockdown	International Travel Restrictions
France	1,962,927	Significant Increase	High	Moderate
Italy	791,697	Stable but High	Moderate/High	Moderate
Spain	N/A	Increase	High	Moderate
Germany	311,850	Increase	High	Moderate
UK	N/A	Increase	High	Moderate
Russia	464,546	Stable but High	Moderate	High



# Americas



In hard-hit Latin America, the COVID-19 death tally, according to the US-based Johns Hopkins University, now accounts for 1 in 3 of global coronavirus linked deaths, with over 440,000 fatalities compared to the global total of over 1,200,000. Brazil has the highest number of coronavirus-related deaths in Latin America, followed by Mexico who surpassed 100,000 covid-19 linked fatalities on 20 November. Argentina, Peru and Colombia also have significant numbers of coronavirus linked deaths as well.

Even countries who have managed, relatively, to control the infections, like Uruguay, have started to report a surge in cases. This has prompted fears that the region is likely to continue to see fatalities and heavy case numbers into the new year.

In addition to the real human toll of the pandemic, governments are starting to feel the pressure. The region, which was already facing political instability in 2019 and the beginning of 2020, with unrest and riots in Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Ecuador, has seen Peru’s Interim president resign and the sacking of Guatemala’s congress building. To add to the issues facing the region, large parts of South America are in the grip of a serious drought, the second-worst since 2002.

In the United States, one of the worst-hit countries globally, ahead of India and Brazil, the situation continues to be severe. Hospitals in the rural and small-town America are now close to breaking point.

Most are short on available beds, with equipment all but run out and, crucially, staff, including specialists and nurses, are lacking, many through illness.

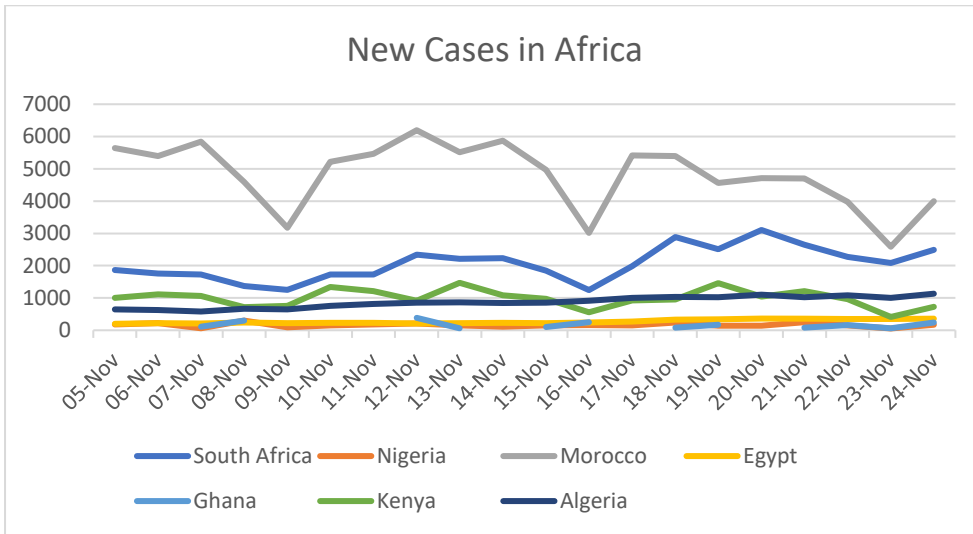
Hospitals in the country’s Midwest have been forced to repurpose wings or put multiple patients in the same room. Staff have also been working longer shifts and are not getting the time off needed. With case numbers increasing and the outgoing administration focusing on increasingly desperate efforts to dispute the election result.

Indeed, in Arkansas, the Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson expressed concerns about the Trump administrations unwillingness to work with the President-elect and his team. At the time of writing, Trump has finally given way for the issuing of the letter of "ascertainment" allowing Biden’s team access to office space, funding to support transition efforts, access to federal agencies and their staff and daily briefings.

Countries	Active Covid Cases	Active Case Number Change	Domestic Lockdown	International Travel Restrictions
Mexico	165,897	Stable	Light	Moderate
Argentina	135,390	Stable	High	High
Brazil	483,252	Decrease	Light	High
Peru	33,985	Decrease	Moderate	High
Chile	8,774	Stable	Light	High
USA	5,064,401	Significant Increase	Moderate	Moderate
Canada	58,524	Slight Increase	Moderate	High



# Africa



The African continent has now exceeded 2 million cases of COVID-19. While a significant milestone, the number is significantly less than Europe and North America, who have both reported over 15 million cases each despite having smaller populations. While part of the explanation for the low number can be attributed to a less rigorous testing capability when compared to the comparatively richer continents of Europe and North America, Africa is also seeing a comparative death rate; 2.5 percent compared to 2.3 percent in Europe and 2.6 percent in North America (which includes Central America).

This has led to many hailing the continent’s response, with medical personnel being afforded time to set up field hospitals, increase oxygen supplies and to purchase ventilators. Additionally, the continent was the last to be impacted by the pandemic, which has given many medical professionals time to research effective measures from China, Europe and other earlier hit regions. Indeed, South Africa implemented a very strict lockdown when it had only reported 400 cases, reacting faster than many European countries that refused to implement strict restrictive measures until too late. This, combined with the fact that Africa’s population is relatively younger than that of North America and Europe, has helped avoid what many feared would be a humanitarian disaster.

Despite the positives, however, there remains fears of underreporting, as well as fears of the economic impacts of the virus being felt. Zambia has become the first African country to default as a result of the economic fallout of the virus. On Wednesday 18 November, Fitch Ratings downgraded a key rating

for Zambia from CC to Restrictive Default after S&P Global Ratings also rated the country at Selective Default. While much of the country’s economic issues predate the pandemic, mainly driven by the collapse in the price of the country’s largest export, copper, the outbreak of COVID-19 has seen the country’s balance become unattainable.

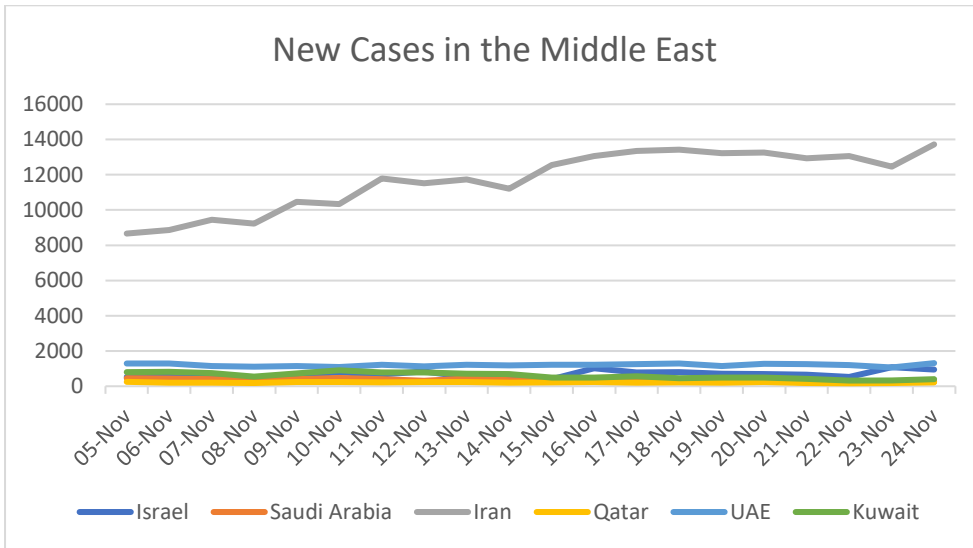
Many of the country’s loans, especially those financing the ambitious infrastructure projects, were financed by China in their wide-ranging Belt & Road Initiative. This has created concerns among the country’s other investors that any bailout package would go to servicing the Chinese debt. The country becomes the sixth, and largest, to default or restructure their debt since the start of the pandemic, after Ecuador, Lebanon, Belize, Suriname and Argentina. For comparisons, there were only three full sovereign defaults throughout the whole of the global financial crisis.

Finally, the head of the football association of the Ivory Coast has reported to have died after contracting coronavirus and there are fears that hospitals throughout the continent are being stretched too thin, heightening the risk of both a surge in deaths from coronavirus and the impact of other diseases on the continent’s population.

Countries	Active Covid Cases	Active Case Number Change	Domestic Lockdown	International Travel Restrictions
South Africa	37,857	Stable	Moderate	High
Nigeria	3,143	Stable	Moderate	High
Morocco	46,471	Stable	Moderate	High
Egypt	5,321	Stable	Moderate	High
Ghana	775	Decrease	Moderate	High
Kenya	24,931	Slight increase	Moderate	High
Algeria	24,984	Stable	Moderate	High



## Middle East



The World Health Organisation has warned Middle Eastern countries that should they not retighten restrictions soon, they will likely be facing a deadly second wave of the pandemic. The director of the World Health Organisation’s eastern Mediterranean region, Ahmed al-Mandhari, stated that fundamental pandemic response measures, such as social distancing and mask wearing, were still not being practised.

The numbers also reflect the director’s comments. Cases in the region are up in Lebanon and Pakistan, Jordan is also seeing a strong spike in the number of cases. Pakistan is considered to have controlled the initial wave of the pandemic with targeted restrictions; however, the country’s officials are now concerned that cases have increased as they lifted restrictions and complacency could hamper any similar efforts through the winter.

Iran, however, is already in the midst of its second wave, accounting for more than half of the region’s new cases. Officially, more than 45,000 people have died of coronavirus in Iran. On 21 November, the country imposed a ban on domestic travel to stem the increase in case numbers. While the ban included more than 100 cities, ministers have been keen to point out that it does not cover producers and suppliers of necessary goods and products.

On 20 November, Deputy Minister of Health for Research and Technology, Reza Malekzadeh, announced his resignation. Additionally, Ali Nobakht-Haghighi, who is the vice chairman of the country’s

COVID-19 Advisory Council, also resigned on the same day. Both stated they were protesting against Health Minister Saeed Namaki’s “mismanagement” of the pandemic, which they say has led to unnecessary deaths.

Turkey is also seeing a sharp increase in the number of coronavirus cases. The country was reporting just over 2,000 cases per day at the beginning of November, on 23 November, the country reported 6,700 cases, even a week ago there was only a reported daily tally of just over 4,000. As such, the country’s health board have recommended concrete measures to the government in an effort to arrest the rapid increase.

In Gaza, officials warn that hospitals are now close to breaking point and risk being overwhelmed in the coming days. According to officials, there is now a critical shortage of ventilators and intensive care units will run out of space in 10 days’ time. The isolated territory had escaped a major outbreak until August; however, a fifth of the regions’ tests are now coming back positive. Israel has stated that it will facilitate humanitarian aid, but will not ease the blockade on Gaza, claiming that it restricts the access of weapons to Hamas.

Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia has managed to keep the number of new cases low. While there still remains fears of a second wave, the country is gearing up to provide vaccines for all citizens and residents for free as soon as possible. The kingdom is set to offer the vaccine for those who have not had coronavirus as of yet. Under-16s will not be inoculated at this stage; however, unless they have underlying health concerns, such as a lung condition.

Countries	Active Covid Cases	Active Case Number Change	Domestic Lockdown	International Travel Restrictions
Israel	9,168	Stable	High	High
Saudi Arabia	5,455	Slight Decrease	Light	Severe
Iran	222,572	Increase	Moderate	High
Qatar	2,664	Stable	Moderate	High
UAE	11,055	Increase	Light	Moderate
Kuwait	6,313	Stable	Moderate	Moderate