

## COVID-19 in Kampala, Uganda

### Update 6/29/21

- As number of cases rise in Uganda, hospital beds get more expensive (for patients to stay in)
  - Private hospitals are being accused of demanding upfront fees, raising prices, etc. (profiteering)
  - Meanwhile, people don't trust government-run hospitals because of "decay" and lack of supplies
  - Some hospital bills up to \$15,000 (annual per capita income less than \$1,000)
- Only a few samples (tests) tested daily, so the 75,537 cases as of three days ago is a huge underestimate
- Lockdown is having drastic economic effects
  - Because of travel restrictions, (only essential employees can come into Kampala), street vendors don't have any business. They also often have to sleep in the marketplace.
  - Shops not selling food ordered closed
  - Government not providing any food this time
  - "On a recent June night, every one of the 30 Covid-19 patients in the intensive-care unit of Uganda's largest hospital died as the oxygen supplies ran out."
  - Delta variant spreading across Africa
    - Many people who were thought to be immune because of past infections may not be immune to the new variant
  - Uganda lockdown is getting more serious
    - Workers at construction sites, factories, and markets have to sleep at work to avoid transmission
    - Some districts have banned death announcements to discourage congregations
    - The lockdown still hasn't really slowed the surge of cases

#### Sources:

1. <https://apnews.com/article/uganda-africa-business-coronavirus-pandemic-health-b002e15800a13ed995864078db0797fe>
2. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/ugandan-traders-strive-stay-afloat-amid-new-covid-lockdown>
3. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/delta-variant-of-covid-19-surges-across-unvaccinated-africa-11624896315>

June 21, 2021

The long and short of this is that, as the doctor you talked with said, things are bad in Uganda.

Here are some of the raw numbers:

- o There are 56,949 confirmed cases in Uganda (as of June 10)
- o The current official death count is 402 (as of June 10)
- o There was a 137% increase in cases this week, which is the second week in a row with a triple digit increase
- o Less than 2% of the population in Uganda is vaccinated

Of course, as you mentioned, the case and death counts are hugely inaccurate. In Africa as a whole, there have been 5 million cases recorded, but health experts believe that the real number could be many times higher. The same is true in just Uganda and the Kampala area. There have been low testing rates (not to mention limited access to healthcare and probably government cover-ups), which means that not nearly the true number of cases have been counted. One way to understand this is to look at the estimates for accurate numbers in the U.S. Depending on the model used; the U.S. is estimated to have between three and six times as many cases as officially recorded. Given everything working against the recording of cases in Kenya, this discrepancy is probably much larger there.

The second wave in Kampala is worse than the first wave. Intensive care units are filling up—many have been at maximum capacity for the last two weeks and are turning dozens of people away every day. In Africa as a whole, it is estimated that there is only one ICU bed for every 100,000 people (for comparison, there are 25 in the U.S.), which means that hospitals are reaching maximum capacity way too quickly. There is also a shortage on oxygen and ventilators to use for patients in critical conditions.

There are some new restrictions as of this week, including school closures and an inter-district travel ban. The lockdown is set to last for 42 days, and schoolchildren have resumed listening to lessons over the radio. However, it sounds like restrictions are being very selectively enforced by the police. Downtown Kampala is still very crowded during the day because vendors (and other people who work there and rely on other people to make a living) cannot move their jobs to a virtual format. As a result, and because only 2% of the population is vaccinated, the government estimated that each unvaccinated person could potentially infect 80-100 other people.

There is a lot of concern, as well, about the economy in Kampala. Many people are being pushed over the poverty line because of the pandemic.

I would recommend watching this video—

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2021/06/10/uganda-covid-kampala-vaccines-madowo-pkg-intl-ldn-vpx.cnn>— which talks more in depth about the crisis in Kampala. It shows the inside of an ICU which has been functioning at over capacity for the last two weeks. The average age of the COVID-19 patients in the video is 40, meaning that this strain of the virus is particularly aggressive, and that young people are quite vulnerable. The video also shows a stadium which has been repurposed to function as an emergency medical center. We also see footage of a packed downtown Kampala, which may give you a sense of how unsafe it is in Uganda right now.

Finally, you might be interested in reading the article

<https://www.theelephant.info/features/2021/05/15/some-countries-are-more-equal-than-others-inequality-in-the-age-of-covid/>. I don't know how reliable it is, since *The Elephant* newspaper seems very political (of course, every newspaper is to some degree, and I am at least more inclined to believe a left-leaning newspaper than right), but it describes how police have been enforcing COVID restrictions and paints a pretty dismal picture of the situation in Uganda.

Other articles that I did not mention already:

<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-models>

<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/kenya> (has nice charts)

<https://www.theelephant.info/mapping-the-coronavirus-pandemic-in-africa/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/07/third-wave-sweeps-across-africa-as-covid-vaccine-imports-dry-up>

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/07/africa/uganda-reimposes-covid-restriction-intl/index.html>

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/uganda/>

### Update 6/21/21

Some of the new numbers:

- Confirmed cases: 51,543
- Cumulative recoveries: 49,532
- Total vaccinated: 821,659
- All of the above comments about numbers still apply, of course.

Other info:

- On Friday, there were 1,564 new cases recorded for the previous 24 hours (and 42 new deaths, so the total *recorded* deaths is 584)
- All intradistrict movement is prohibited (as part of the 42-day lockdown)
- Kampala is one of the 20 districts that has been most severely affected
- Museveni (president) is basically blaming the pandemic on Ugandans for not listening to the curfew that has been in place for months—his critics say that some of his policies (or lack thereof) are making the pandemic worse
- There is an increasing number of critically ill patients, which is really putting stress on the oxygen supply. Museveni said that, if this trend continues, in one month there will be a 9x increase in the nation's oxygen requirement
- No distribution of food this time (there was during the first quarantine, although apparently it was pretty unsuccessful)
- Local defense units (LDUs), which enforce these protocols, don't treat people well
- Run out of COVID vaccines
- Most hospitals in Kampala no longer able to admit patients
- Most of 21.9 million high-risk people still unvaccinated; programs have been suspended
- A 2,300% increase in cases from May 13 to June 13
- There have also been some thefts of vaccines and oxygen in Kampala

Sources:

1. <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/uganda-imposes-42-day-covid-19-lockdown>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/15/vaccines-and-oxygen-run-out-as-third-wave-of-covid-hits-uganda>
3. <https://www.health.go.ug/covid/>