

## Premature or due End of COVID-19

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### Abstract

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has been a part of our daily lives since its inception towards the latter part of 2019. The global journey throughout the pandemic has been one of numerous steps in progression and steps in regression and can be described as a roller-coaster like ride. The majority of the global populous is currently in phase 4 of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Phase 4 involves preparing and investing in further research and development of infrastructures to prevent such pandemics and outbreaks in future. The continued global COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and the booster doses offered therein are the greatest weapon being wielded to control and now ultimately end the global pandemic. According to the WHO the total weekly COVID cases have been decreasing on a constant scale with the latest (19 of September 2022) reported weekly update depicting a deficit of 281745 cases (an 8.3% reduction from the previous weekly statistics). In contrast to the positive direction of movement of COVID cases on a generalized basis, The United Kingdom's cases seem to be regressing. Although the global COVID picture is showing very positive signs, the global populous must not be lulled into a false sense of security as the globe experienced first-hand what the discovery of a new variant can do to both the infection rates as well as global financial and fiscal markets, as with the Omicron variant in December of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic is in its final stages; however, a continued and orchestrated global effort is pertinent to ensuring that the pandemic is truly ended and that no unexpected flare ups occur. A continued global vaccination effort will be key to not only ending this pandemic, but to also preventing such future occurrences. The single greatest threat to truly ending this current pandemic is the premature declaration that it is over.

### Introduction

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has been a part of our daily lives since its inception towards the latter part of 2019. The global journey throughout the pandemic has been one of numerous steps in progression and steps in regression and can be described as a roller-coaster like ride. According to the WHO Globally, as of the 7th of October 2022, there have been a total of 617,597,680 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a total of 6,532,705 deaths attributed thereto. Most importantly as of the 3rd of October 2022 a total of 12 723 216 322 vaccine doses have been administered. It is the mammoth task of global vaccination and immunization against this novel virus which is catalysing the end of the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

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## Phases of the COVID-19 pandemic

### Phase 1:

Phase 1 of the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in march of 2020, when the pandemic was new and still in its earliest stages with cases rapidly rising on a daily basis. The goal of the health authorities during this period was to control and contain the spread through decreasing contact and via the implementation of lockdowns and undertaking contact tracing exercises. 2,3

### Phase 2:

The objectives of phase 2 of the pandemic was to initiate partial deconfinement on a regional basis and could only be intimated if a reduction in cases occurred for 15 days, if testing capabilities to test all individuals with symptoms were feasible, hospitals were able to safely treat all cases in a non-crisis management style and the ability to undertake contact tracing exercises of positive cases. Phase 2 aimed to restart the economy via allowing the majority of business to open and to re-open schools. During this stage of the pandemic the global medical fraternity mobilized en masse to develop therapeutic agents against the novel virus. 2,4

### Phase 3:

Phase 3 of the pandemic involved further downregulation of social distancing and strict COVID-19 sanitary protocols thanks to the combination of the advent of a viable effective preventative measure (the COVID-19 vaccine) as well naturally acquired immunity. 2,5

### Phase 4:

The majority of the global populous is currently in phase 4 of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Phase 4 involves preparing and investing in further research and development of infrastructures to prevent such pandemics and outbreaks in future. The continued global COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and the booster doses offered therein are the greatest weapon being wielded to control and now ultimately end the global pandemic. 2,6

Phase 4 has allowed global markets, international travel and life to return to its near pre-COVID normality and for many individuals COVID is simply an infection and a pandemic of the past.

Mauritius is one such nation which has returned to an almost pre-pandemic lifestyle. As of the 1st of July 2022, Mauritius eased the last of its strict COVID protocols with night clubs and discotheques being allowed to re-open and facemasks no longer being a mandatory necessity in public spaces. The Wearing of face masks is now only compulsory in hospitals and across all other health services, in public transport and in certain closed spaces. No restrictions on mass gatherings are longer enforced. The island has opened its doors and welcomed hundreds of thousands of tourists since easing its restrictions all whilst controlling the spread of COVID within its borders, with no major outbreak till date. 7

## Current global COVID situation

According to the WHO Globally, as of the 7th of October 2022, there have been a total of 617,597,680 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a total of 6,532,705 deaths attributed thereto. The total weekly COVID cases have been decreasing on a constant scale with the latest (19 of September 2022) reported weekly update depicting a deficit of 281745 cases (an 8.3% reduction from the previous weekly statistics). 8

In the United States of America, the (CDC) Centre for disease control has reported that as of September 21, 2022 that over a 10% reduction in weekly averages have been noted as to the prior weekly

averages. A total of 95,700,347 COVID-19 cases have been reported in the United States as of September 21, 2022. 7 The president of the United States of America, Joe Biden concluded in an interview in late September 2022 that the pandemic is over. This statement however has received severe backlash from both health officials within the USA and those from abroad. 9

In contrast to the positive direction of movement of COVID cases on a generalized basis, The United Kingdom seems to be regressing with more than thirty thousand cases being recorded on a weekly basis despite a decreased testing drive. It is noted that England and Wales in particular have depicted rises whilst Northern Ireland and Scotland have shown a decrease in cases. It has been hypothesized that the situation will further deteriorate due to the combination of rapid rising inflation as well as the onset of winter in the United Kingdom.10

## “Finish line in sight”

The WHO has reported that the number of deaths reported on a weekly basis is now the lowest it has been since March of 2022. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director general of the WHO has stated that the “finish line is in sight”. The Director general has however warned nations to not drop their guard and to continue with their protocols and anti-COVID policies.11

## Expert opinion

Numerous countries and regions were both upgraded and subsequently downgraded through the various phases as the pandemic progressed. Although the global COVID picture is showing very positive signs, the global populous must not be lulled into a false sense of security as the globe experienced first-hand what the discovery of a new variant can do to both the infection rates as well as global financial and fiscal markets, as with theOMICRON variant in December of 2021.12

The most effective tool in controlling and preventing future pandemics of COVID-19 is and will continue to be mass immunization. The current global control of COVID-19 is almost solely an achievement of the massive undertaking and success of the immunization program and as of the 3rd of October 2022 a total of 12 723 216 322 vaccine doses have been administered. It is evident that vaccination is the epidemiological marvel which has aided the global medical fraternity in taking control of the virus. 1,13

There is no doubt that the end of the pandemic is nigh, however false and unscientific claims thereof can easily cause the backsliding and up flaring of cases. It is now more pertinent than ever that every possible effort is made from a political to an individual level to curb and end the pandemic. COVID-19 will not just cease to exist and will most likely be around for generations to come, however through continued vaccination programs and scientific developments to produce newer vaccines, the virus can be controlled and will most likely be no more serious than the seasonal influenzae.14

A critical yardstick to identify our true distance from the end of the pandemic will be the global COVID statistics which are reported from the Northern Hemispheres as they enter their coming winter season. The performance of the various health systems as well as the level and effectiveness of the established herd immunity within the Northern Hemispheres will act as a true indicator. It is recommended that the Southern Hemisphere increase their vaccine efforts and rollout programs and capitalize on the summer months in preparation for the following winter.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is in its final stages, however a continued and orchestrated global effort is pertinent to ensuring that the pandemic is truly ended and that no unexpected flare ups occur. A continued global vaccination effort will be key to not only ending this pandemic, but to also preventing such future occurrences. The single greatest threat to truly ending this current pandemic is the premature declaration that it is over.

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