



“African Miracle”: Experts “Mystified” by Continent’s Low COVID Rate

While “civilized” Western countries try to tame yet another surge of COVID infections by enacting [lockdowns](#), mask mandates, vaccine mandates, and now booster shots for ever-expanding “eligible” populations such as young children, the African continent has not employed any such measures and remains largely unaffected by the pandemic.

At the onset of the pandemic, medical “experts” at the World Health Organization (WHO) [predicted](#) that it would catastrophically hit Africa, arguing the continent would be vulnerable because of poverty, unsanitary living conditions, and weak healthcare systems. Instead, Africa has repeatedly been observed to be “one of the least affected [by COVID] regions in the world,” leaving scientists “mystified” and “wary,” as [Associate Press](#) put it.



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While arguably the cases have been [undercounted](#) in Africa, where fewer tests for SARS-CoV-2 have been conducted than on any continent other than Antarctica, AP notes,

there is something “mysterious” going on in Africa that is puzzling scientists, said Wafaa El-Sadr, chair of global health at Columbia University. “Africa doesn’t have the vaccines and the resources to fight COVID-19 that they have in Europe and the U.S., but somehow they seem to be doing better,” she said.

The [Our World in Data](#) website shows Africa has had two waves of infections, yet its seven-day rolling average in January 2021 peaked at just 0.65 deaths per million people, and then 0.72 in August. As of November 20, the continent’s weekly death toll was 0.07 per million.

How could the continent, where fewer than six percent of its population has received a COVID shot, per the AP report, avoid a “COVID disaster?”

Doctors have a few theories to explain that phenomenon.

First, many Africans are not in a high-risk demographic for COVID. The average age in Africa is 20, compared about 43 for Western Europe and [38.4](#) in the United States. The age demographic structure of sub-Saharan Africa is even younger — the median age there is just 18. Of course, it is worth noting that the life expectancy in Africa is just [63.53](#) years compared to [78.99](#) in the United States.

In addition to that, there is a much lower urbanization rate, which makes Africans spend more time outdoors, where it is harder to catch the virus.



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on November 22, 2021

Also, people in Africa suffer a relatively low burden of noncommunicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and cancer, which significantly increase the risk of dying from COVID.

According to another explanation, African COVID patients with high rates of exposure to malaria were less likely to suffer severe symptoms or death than people with little history of the disease, per AP. Researchers working in Uganda believe that past infection with malaria could “blunt” the tendency of people’s immune systems to go into overdrive when they are infected with COVID.

Local authorities in Africa are also being praised for “acting quickly” in closing their national borders “even before COVID arrived” — a tactic that the Biden administration could certainly implement at the U.S. southern border.

Australian media outlet [The Conversation](#) reports on other factors that could contribute to Africa’s low COVID rate.

Among them is a lack of long-term health facilities, in which COVID spread rampantly in the West.

At the onset of the pandemic, nursing-home COVID deaths accounted for the majority of all COVID-related deaths. For example, in New York, nearly 16,000 people died in nursing homes due to COVID. The deaths occurred largely in the first months of the pandemic following the order of Governor Cuomo to send patients recovering from COVID to nursing homes. As of April 2020, it was [reported](#) that 85 percent of the state’s confirmed deaths were recorded in people over 60, with nearly a quarter of all fatalities coming in nursing or adult-care facilities. Similarly, in Pennsylvania, [65 percent](#) of coronavirus deaths were nursing-home residents, as of May 2020. In Canada, about 81 percent of COVID-associated deaths occurred in those facilities when SARS-CoV-2 first arrived.

In South Africa, which is considered the most “civilized” African country, more than a third of COVID deaths were in nursing homes.

Many on the continent could also have already contracted other coronaviruses and developed a natural immunity. The outlet cited a [study](#) that demonstrated that prior exposure to endemic coronaviruses resulted in lower chance of death and lower disease severity compared to those who were not previously exposed.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), however, [says](#) that COVID vaccines offer higher protection than a previous infection.

Another factor is that in contrast to high-income countries, which focus on non-communicable diseases, health organizations in most of Africa focus on infectious diseases and have developed effective infrastructure and protocols in dealing with them. At the same time, those sub-Saharan countries that followed the Western path and imposed lockdowns on their citizens were reported to have observed increased food insecurity, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and disruptions in treatment of malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV, per the outlet.

Perhaps the rest of the world could have the same results in dealing with COVID as Africa if they would drop their obsession with lockdowns, masking, vaccines, and now boosters, and instead focus on widely available and effective early treatments while letting the virus run its course.



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