

## COVID-19 Results Briefing

### European Union

May 20, 2021

This document contains summary information on the latest projections from the IHME model on COVID-19 in the European Union. The model was run on May 19, 2021, with data through May 17, 2021.

The epidemic continues to decline steadily in the EU. The combination of rising vaccination, declining seasonality, and sustained high mask use and reduced mobility is bringing transmission down throughout the EU, with the exception of Denmark. The reference scenario suggests that this progress will continue at least until September 1. The risk of rising transmission as captured in the worse scenario, however, is real. Increasing transmission would be driven by the spread of escape variants, particularly B.1.617, which may already be in the EU through spread from the United Kingdom or directly from India. In countries where transmission is increasing or begins to increase, governments should continue to stress mask use – even in the vaccinated – and consider maintaining or expanding social distancing mandates. Differences in vaccine confidence across the EU Member States will likely translate into different trajectories later in the summer and throughout the fall. B.1.1.7 appeared to inhibit the spread of P.1 or B.1.351 in most parts of the EU up until now, with perhaps the exception of Greece in recent weeks. Data from England suggest that B.1.617 appears capable of displacing B.1.1.7 and thus poses a real threat to the expected relatively quiet summer that is forecasted in the reference scenario.

### Current situation

- Daily reported cases in the last week decreased to 63,800 per day on average, compared to 83,500 the week before (Figure 1).
- In the last week, daily deaths – corrected for under-reporting – decreased to 2,100 per day on average compared to 2,800 the week before (Figure 2). **This makes COVID-19 the number 2 cause of death in the European Union this week** (Table 1).
- The daily death rate is greater than 4 per million in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia (Figure 3).
- We estimated that 25% of people in the European Union have been infected as of May 17 (Figure 5).
- Effective R, computed using cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, is greater than 1 in Denmark (Figure 6).
- The infection-detection rate in the European Union was close to 40% on May 17 (Figure 7).

- Based on the GISAID and various national databases combined with our variant spread model, we estimate the current prevalence of variants of concern (Figure 8). B.1.1.7 is still dominant in most Member States, but B.1.617 may be spreading into the EU, although this conclusion is based on limited sequencing.

## Trends in drivers of transmission

- Last week, mobility was 21% lower than the pre-COVID-19 baseline (Figure 10). Mobility was near baseline (within 10%) in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Mobility was lower than 30% of baseline in France and Ireland.
- As of May 17, according to Facebook surveys, 68% of people in the EU self-report that they always wore a mask when leaving their home (Figure 12). Mask use was lower than 50% in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden.
- There were 381 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people on May 17 (Figure 14).
- In the European Union, 79.9% of people say they would accept or would probably accept a vaccine for COVID-19. The fraction of the population open to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine ranges from 42% in Bulgaria to 92% in Spain (Figure 18).
- In our current reference scenario, we expect that a total of 437 million people in the EU will be vaccinated by September 1 (Figure 19). This number includes vaccination that has already occurred.

## Projections

- In our **reference scenario**, which represents what we think is most likely to happen, our model projects 1,207,000 cumulative deaths on September 1, 2021. This represents 61,000 additional deaths from May 17 to September 1 (Figure 20). Daily deaths are expected to decline steadily until September 1 (Figure 21).
- If **universal mask coverage (95%)** were attained in the next week, our model projects 12,000 fewer cumulative deaths compared to the reference scenario on September 1, 2021 (Figure 20).
- Under our **worse scenario**, in which escape variants spread into the EU faster, our model projects 1,248,000 cumulative deaths on September 1, 2021, an additional 41,000 deaths compared to our reference scenario (Figure 20). Daily deaths drop below 1,000 in July but then increase above this level in August.
- By September 1, we project that 59,600 lives will be saved by the projected vaccine rollout. This figure does not include lives saved through vaccination that has already been delivered.
- Daily infections in the reference scenario decline steadily until September 1. In the worse scenario, spread of B.1.617 and other escape variants leads to increases in daily infections beginning in mid-June (Figure 22).

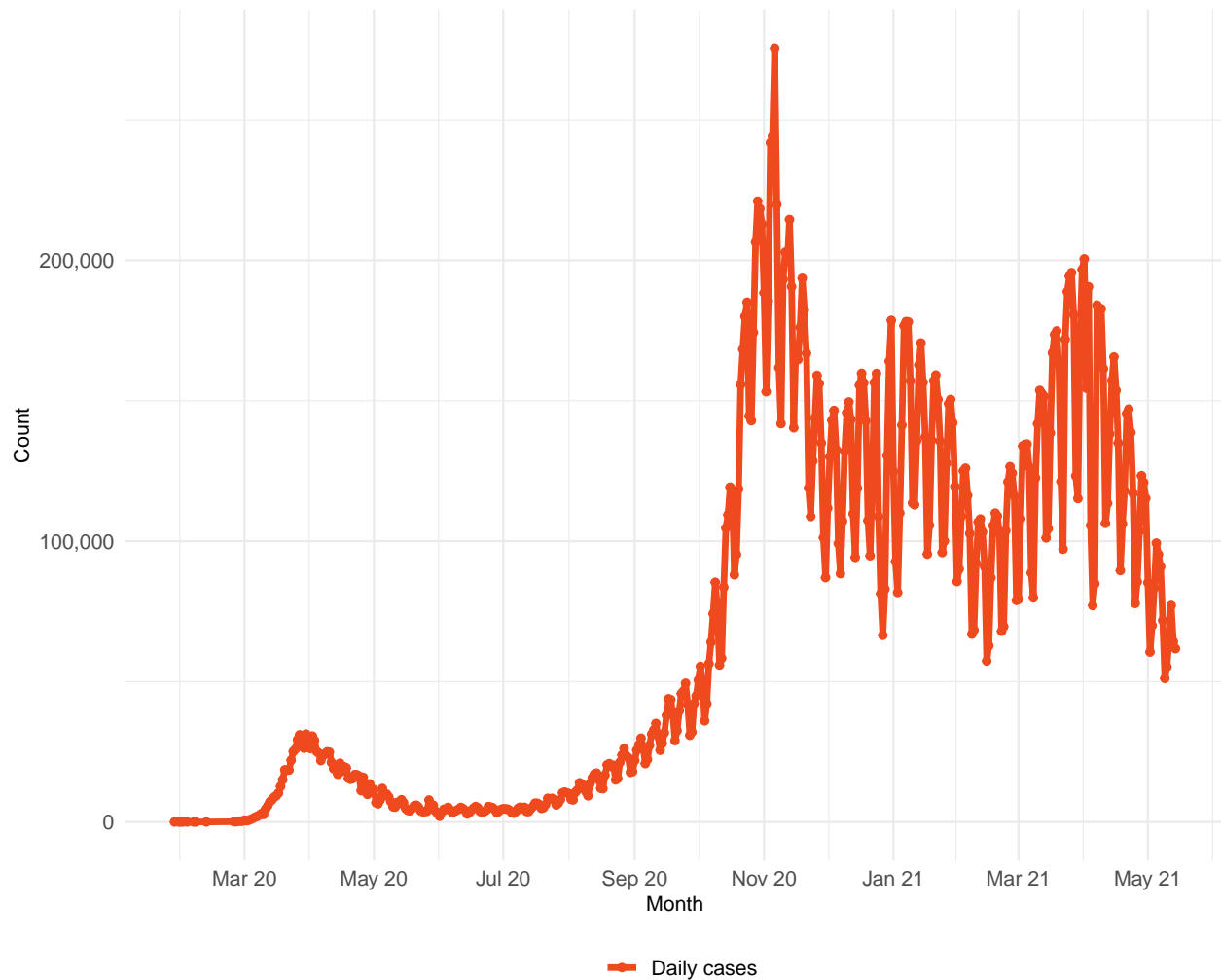
- Figure 23 compares our reference scenario forecasts to other publicly archived models. All models, except for Los Alamos National Labs, suggest steady declines in daily deaths through until late August.
- At some point from May through September 1, four Member States will have high or extreme stress on hospital beds (Figure 24). At some point from May through September 1, 17 Member States will have high or extreme stress on ICU capacity (Figure 25).

## Model updates

In the IHME estimation of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths to date, we have used officially reported COVID-19 deaths for nearly all locations. As of the week of May 3rd, we have switched to a new approach that relies on the estimation of total mortality due to COVID-19. There are several reasons that have led us to adopt this new approach. These reasons include the fact that testing capacity varies markedly across countries and within countries over time, which means that the reported COVID-19 deaths as a proportion of all deaths due to COVID-19 also vary markedly across countries and within countries over time. In addition, in many high-income countries, deaths from COVID-19 in older individuals, especially in long-term care facilities, went unrecorded in the first few months of the pandemic. In other countries, such as Ecuador, Peru, and the Russian Federation, the discrepancy between reported deaths and analyses of death rates compared to expected death rates, sometimes referred to as “excess mortality,” suggests that the total COVID-19 death rate is many multiples larger than official reports. Estimating the total COVID-19 death rate is important both for modeling the transmission dynamics of the disease to make better forecasts, and also for understanding the drivers of larger and smaller epidemics across different countries.

Our approach to estimating the total COVID-19 death rate is based on measurement of the excess death rate during the pandemic week by week compared to what would have been expected based on past trends and seasonality. However, the excess death rate does not equal the total COVID-19 death rate. Excess mortality is influenced by six drivers of all-cause mortality that relate to the pandemic and the social distancing mandates that came with the pandemic. These six drivers are: a) the total COVID-19 death rate, that is, all deaths directly related to COVID-19 infection; b) the increase in mortality due to needed health care being delayed or deferred during the pandemic; c) the increase in mortality due to increases in mental health disorders including depression, increased alcohol use, and increased opioid use; d) the reduction in mortality due to decreases in injuries because of general reductions in mobility associated with social distancing mandates; e) the reductions in mortality due to reduced transmission of other viruses, most notably influenza, respiratory syncytial virus, and measles; and f) the reductions in mortality due to some chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory disease, that occur when frail individuals who would have died from these conditions died earlier from COVID-19 instead. To correctly estimate the total COVID-19 mortality, we need to take into account all six of these drivers of change in mortality that have happened since the onset of the pandemic.

Our analysis follows four key steps. First, for all locations where weekly or monthly all-cause mortality has been reported since the start of the pandemic, we estimate how much mortality increased compared to the expected death rate. In other words, we estimate excess mortality in all locations with sufficient data. Second, based on a range of studies and consideration of other evidence, we estimate the fraction of excess mortality that is from total COVID-19 deaths as opposed to the five other drivers that influence excess mortality. Third, we build a statistical model that predicts the weekly ratio of total COVID-19 deaths to reported COVID-19 deaths based on covariates and spatial effects. Fourth, we use this statistical relationship to predict the ratio of total to reported COVID-19 deaths in places without data on total COVID-19 deaths and then multiply the reported COVID-19 deaths by this ratio to generate estimates of total COVID-19 deaths for all locations.

**Figure 1.** Reported daily COVID-19 cases

**Table 1.** Ranking of COVID-19 among the leading causes of mortality this week, assuming uniform deaths of non-COVID causes throughout the year

Cause name	Weekly deaths	Ranking
Ischemic heart disease	18,714	1
COVID-19	14,936	2
Stroke	10,303	3
Tracheal, bronchus, and lung cancer	6,216	4
Alzheimer's disease and other dementias	5,827	5
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	4,608	6
Colon and rectum cancer	4,100	7
Lower respiratory infections	3,503	8
Hypertensive heart disease	2,797	9
Chronic kidney disease	2,430	10

**Figure 2.** Smoothed trend estimate of reported daily COVID-19 deaths (blue) and total daily COVID-19 deaths (orange).

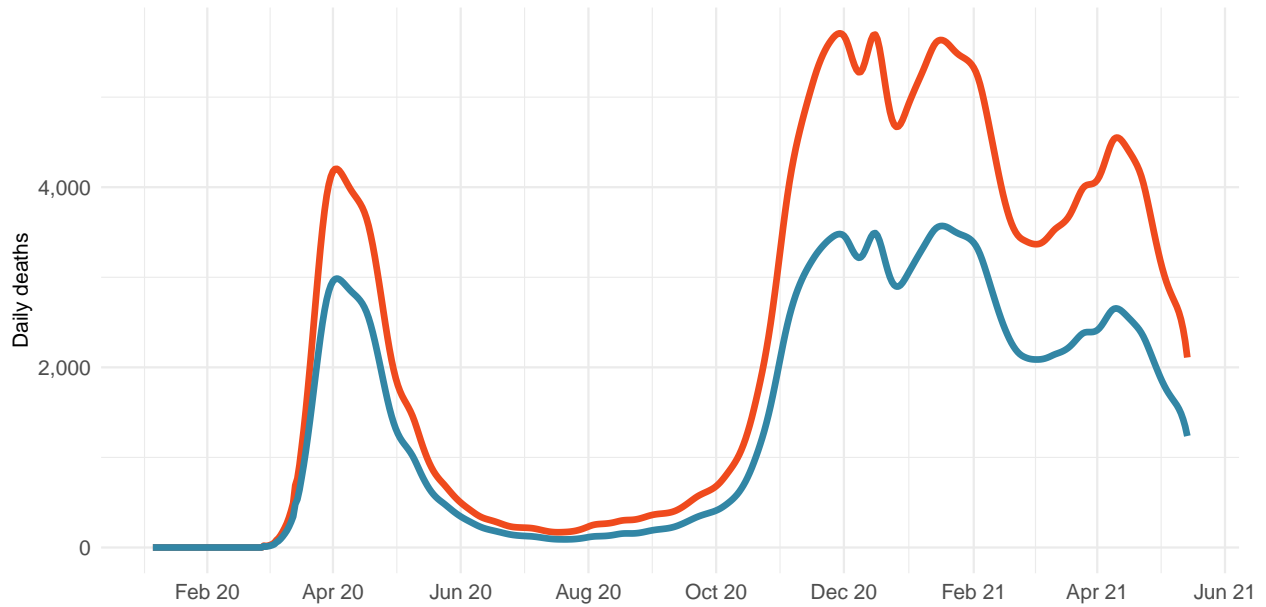


Figure 3. Daily COVID-19 death rate per 1 million on May 17, 2021

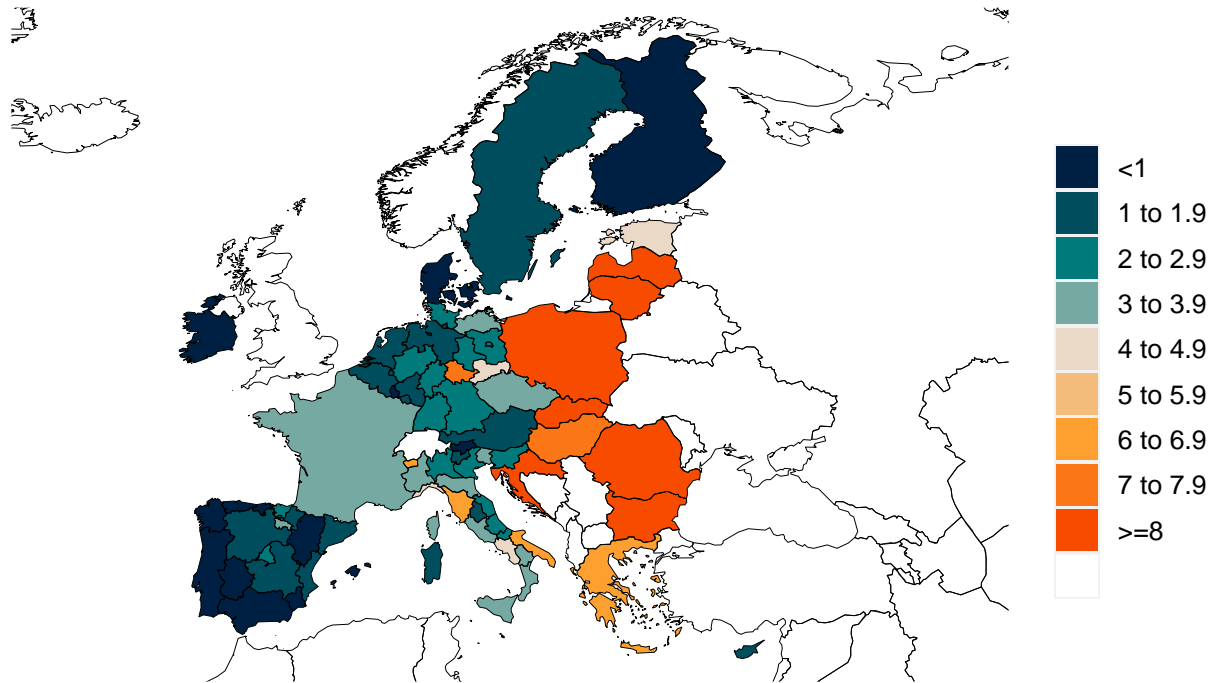
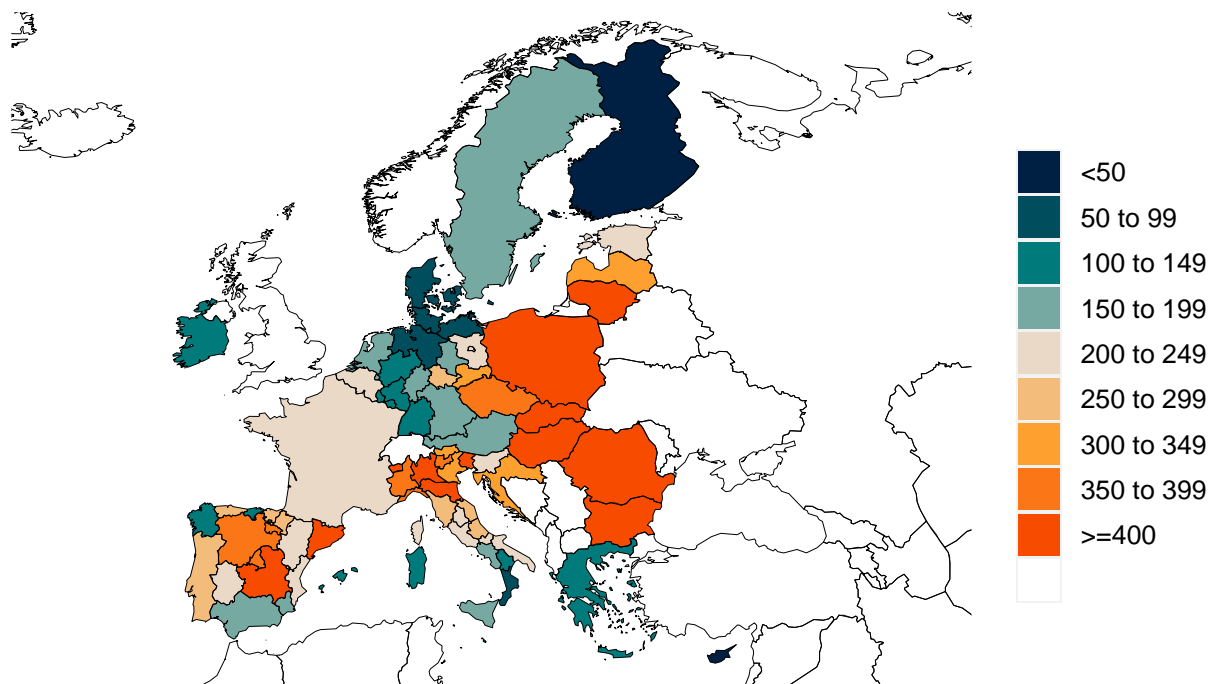
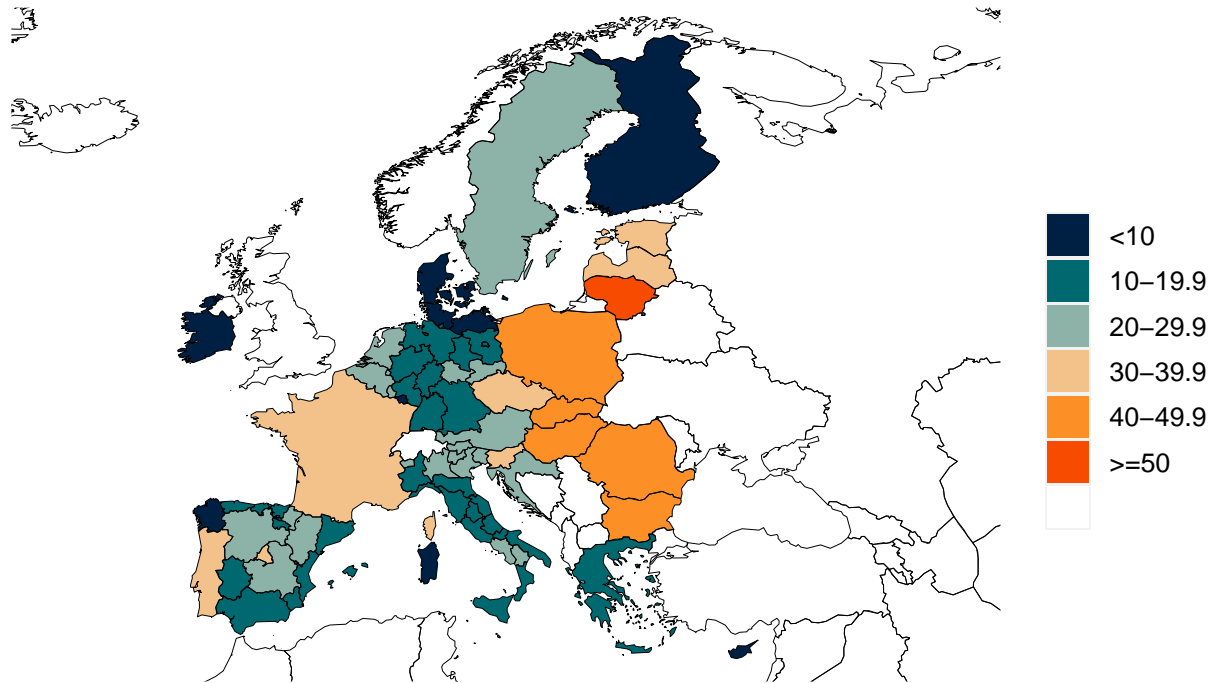


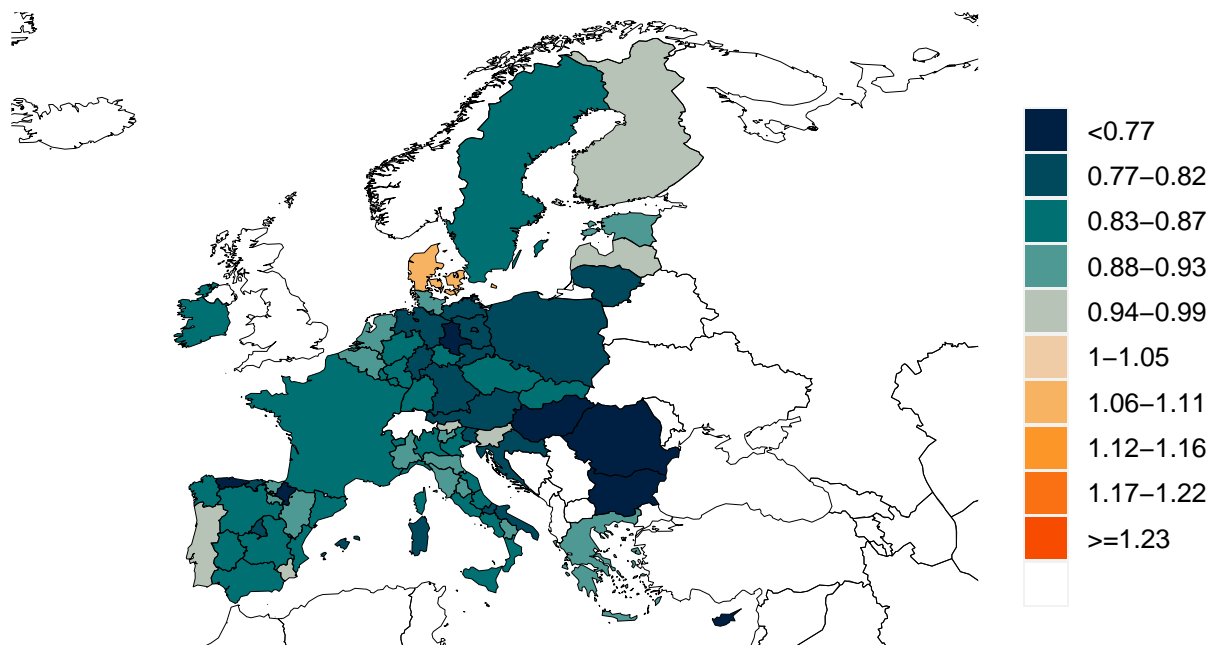
Figure 4. Cumulative COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 on May 17, 2021



**Figure 5.** Estimated percent of the population infected with COVID-19 on May 17, 2021

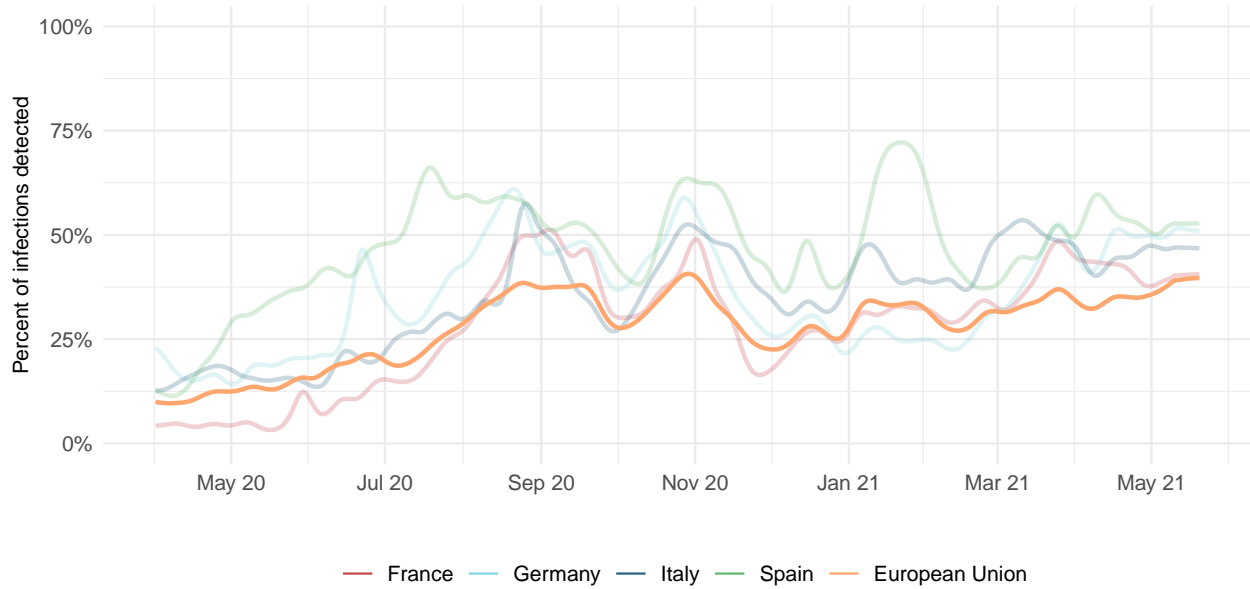


**Figure 6.** Mean effective R on May 06, 2021. The estimate of effective R is based on the combined analysis of deaths, case reporting, and hospitalizations where available. Current reported cases reflect infections 11-13 days prior, so estimates of effective R can only be made for the recent past. Effective R less than 1 means that transmission should decline, all other things being held the same.





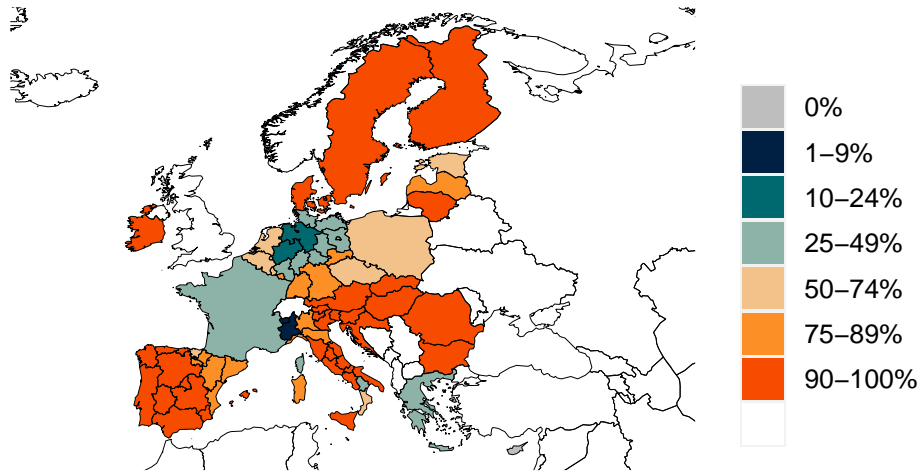
**Figure 7.** Percent of COVID-19 infections detected. This is estimated as the ratio of reported daily COVID-19 cases to estimated daily COVID-19 infections based on the SEIR disease transmission model.



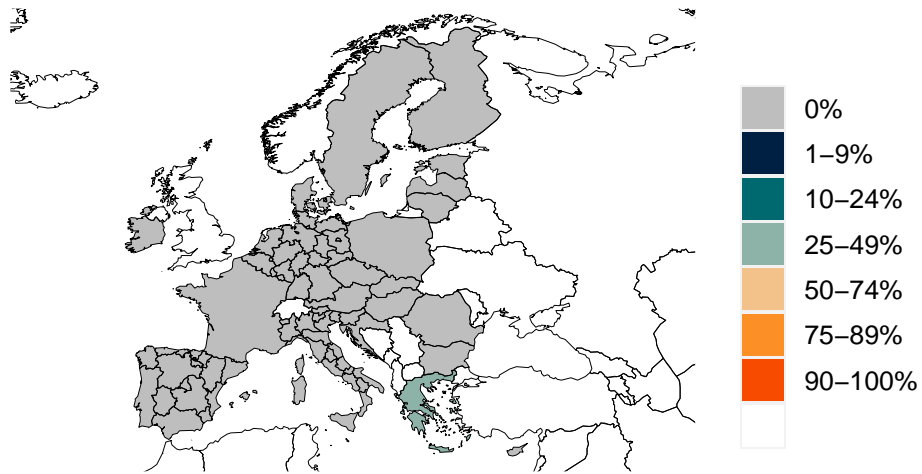
\*Due to measurement errors in cases and testing rates, the infection to detection rate (IDR) can exceed 100% at particular points in time.

**Figure 8.** Estimated percent of circulating SARS-CoV-2 for 3 primary variants on May 17, 2021.

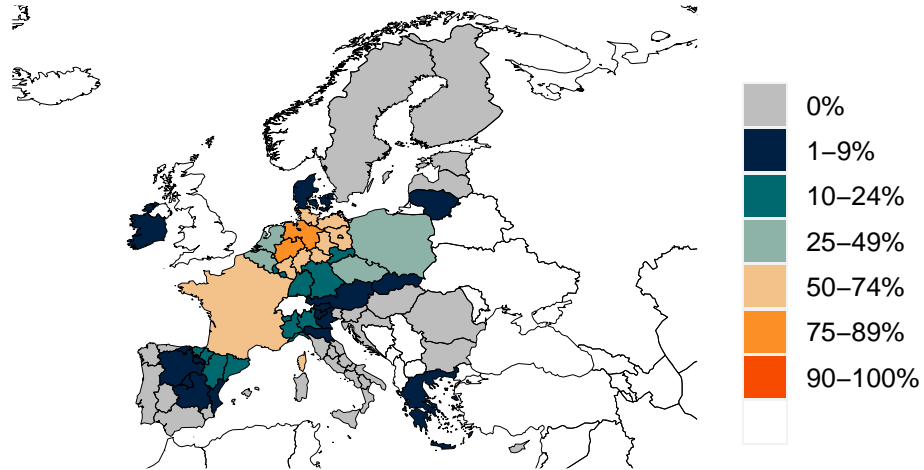
**A. Estimated percent B.1.1.7 variant**



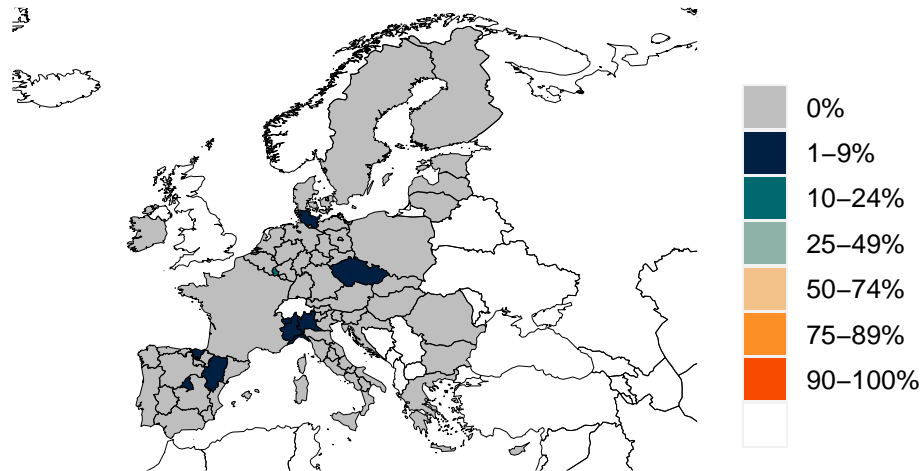
**B. Estimated percent B.1.351 variant**



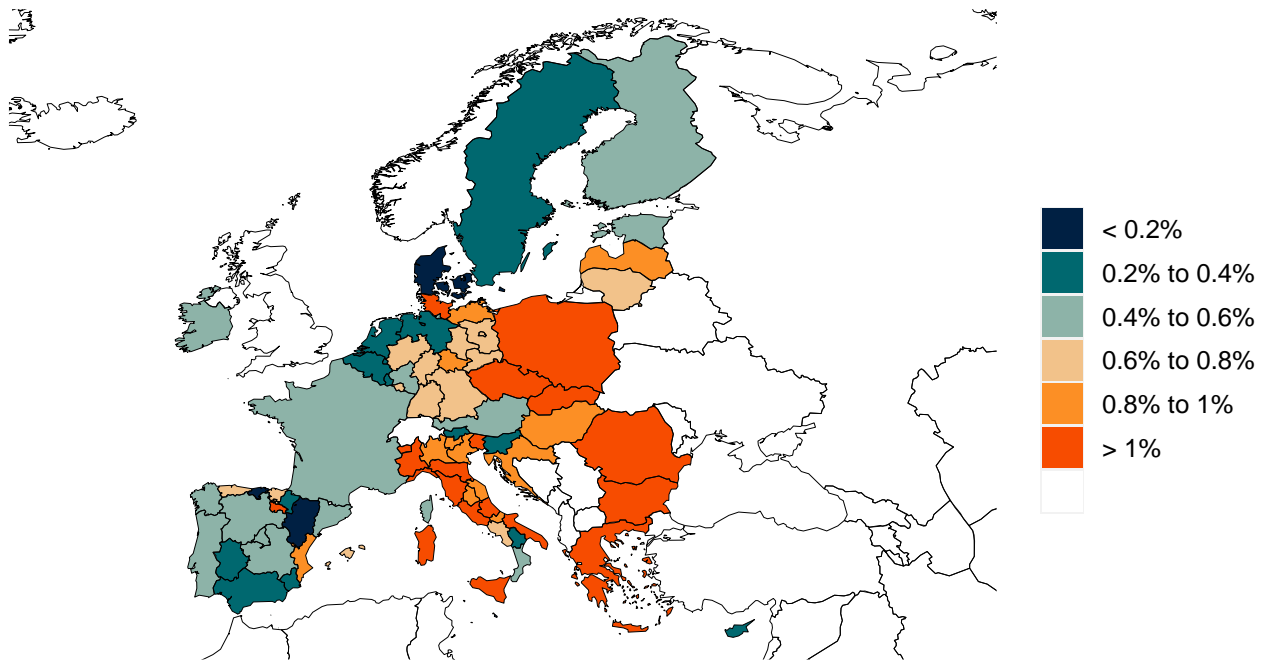
C. Estimated percent B.1.617 variant



D. Estimated percent P.1 or P.3 variant

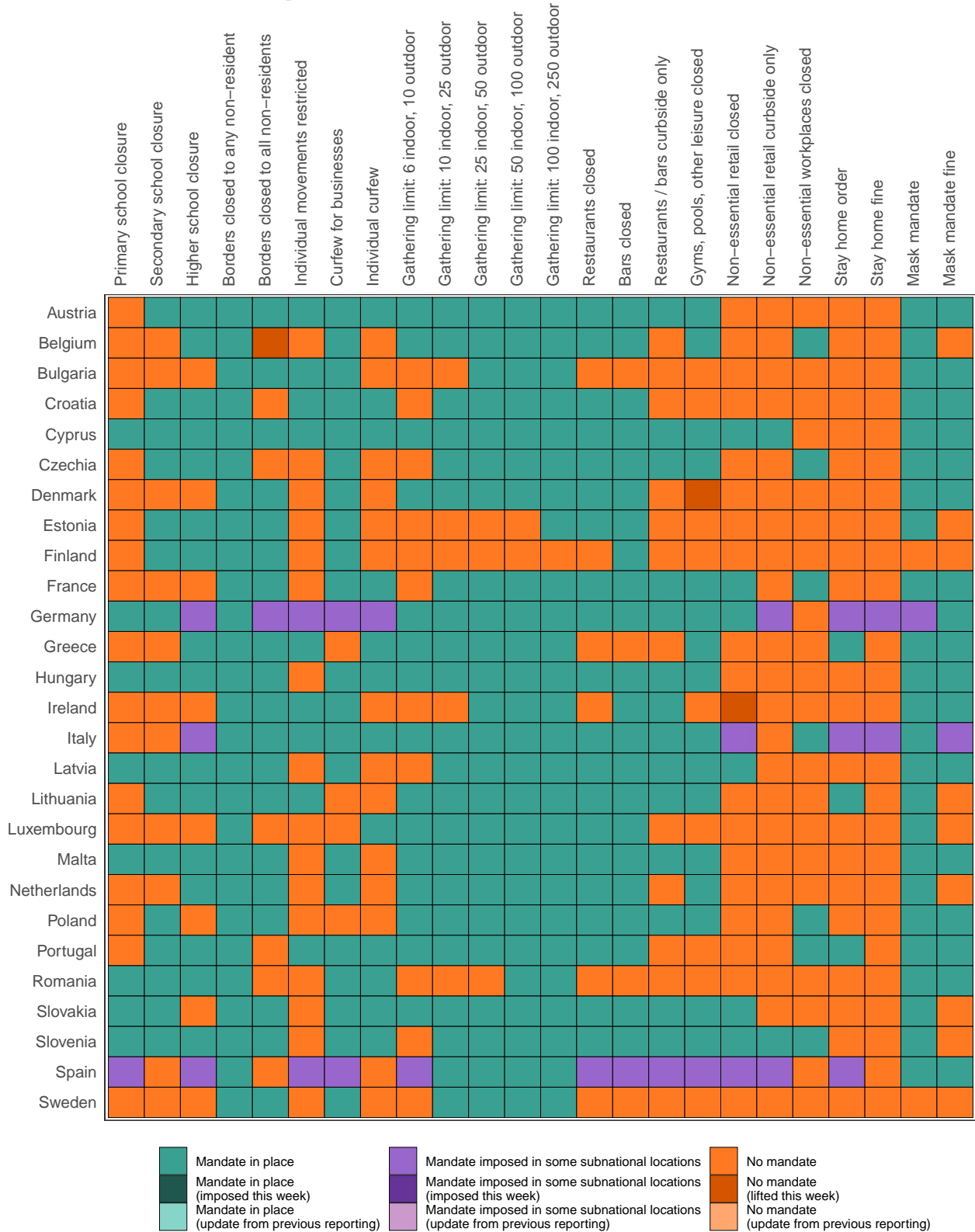


**Figure 9.** Infection fatality ratio on May 17, 2021. This is estimated as the ratio of COVID-19 deaths to infections based on the SEIR disease transmission model.



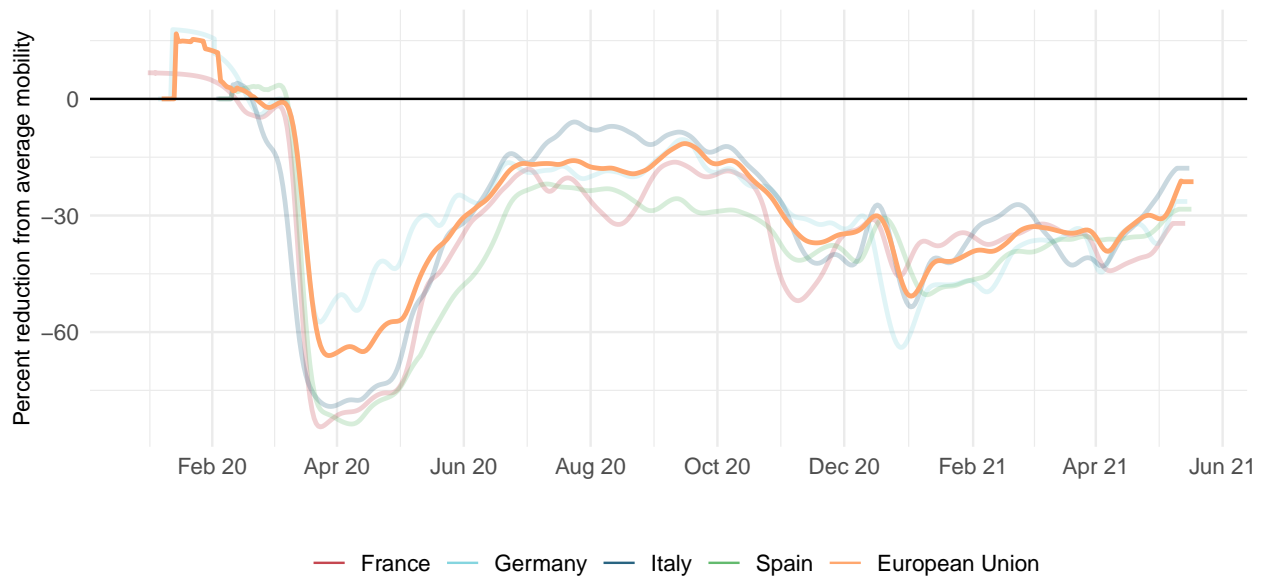
### Critical drivers

Table 2. Current mandate implementation

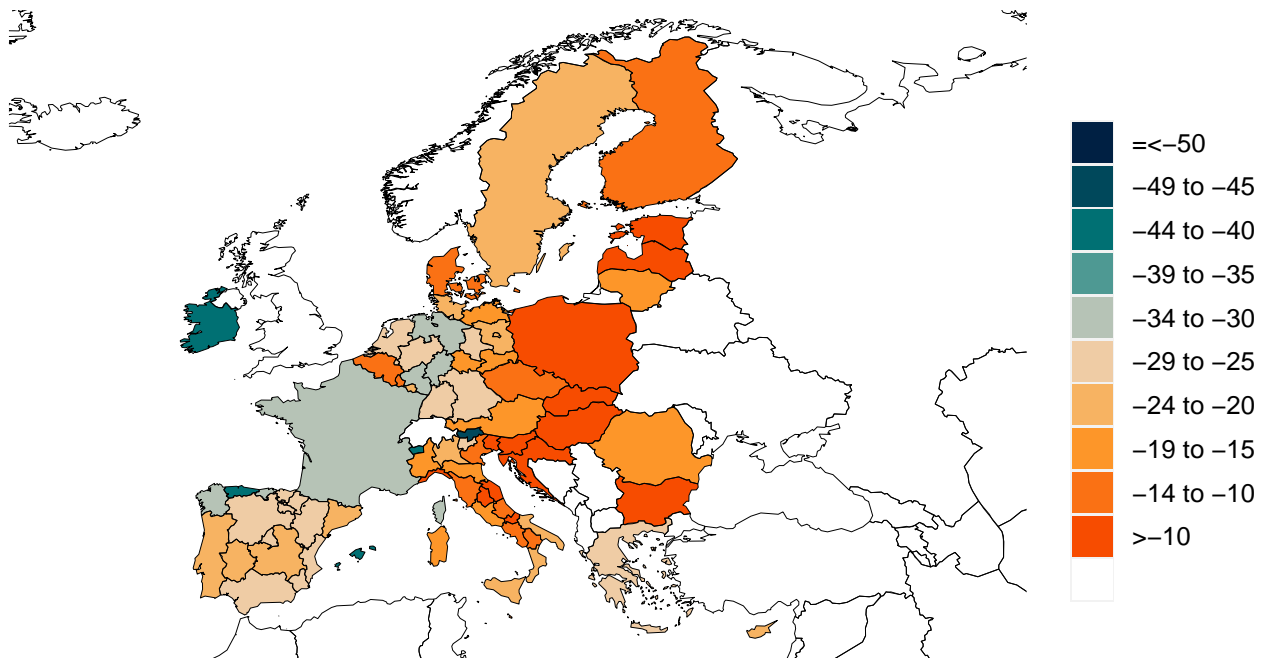


\*Not all locations are measured at the subnational level.

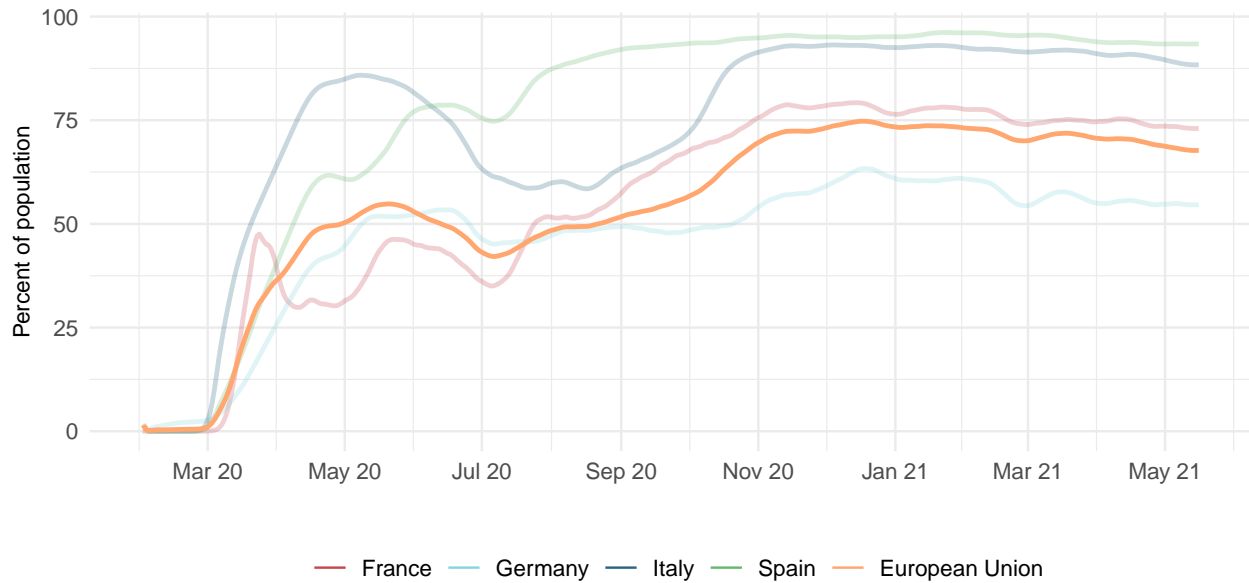
**Figure 10.** Trend in mobility as measured through smartphone app use compared to January 2020 baseline



**Figure 11.** Mobility level as measured through smartphone app use compared to January 2020 baseline (percent) on May 17, 2021



**Figure 12.** Trend in the proportion of the population reporting always wearing a mask when leaving home



**Figure 13.** Proportion of the population reporting always wearing a mask when leaving home on May 17, 2021

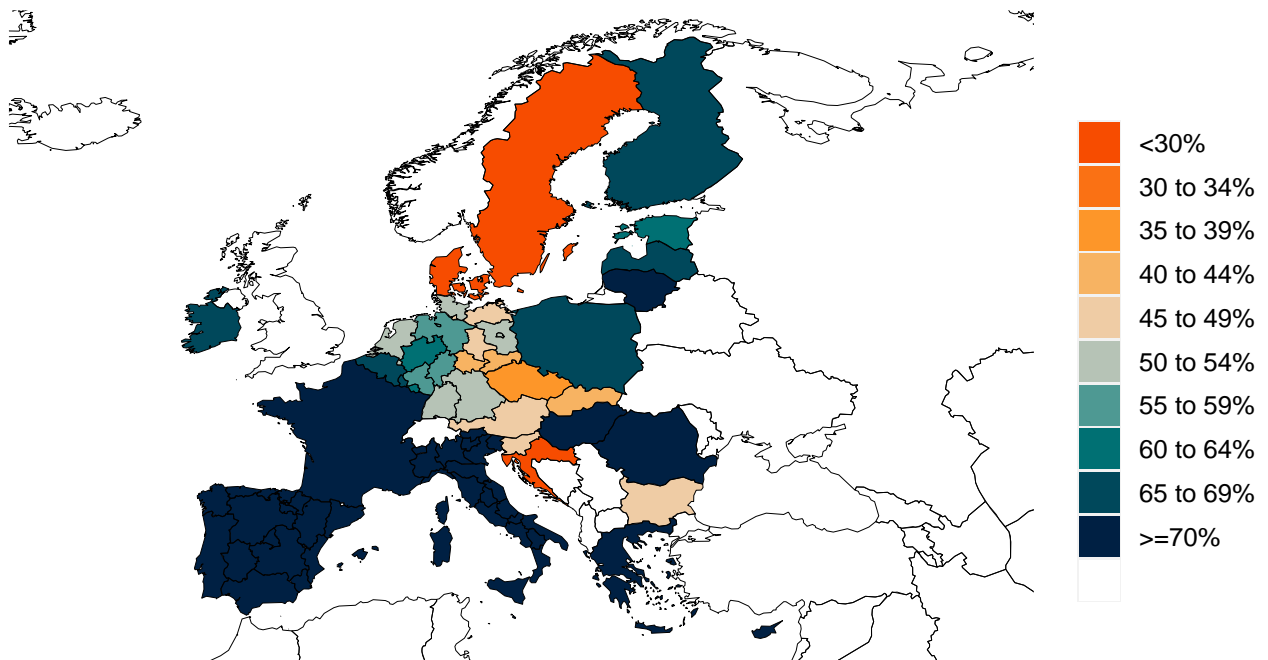


Figure 14. Trend in COVID-19 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people

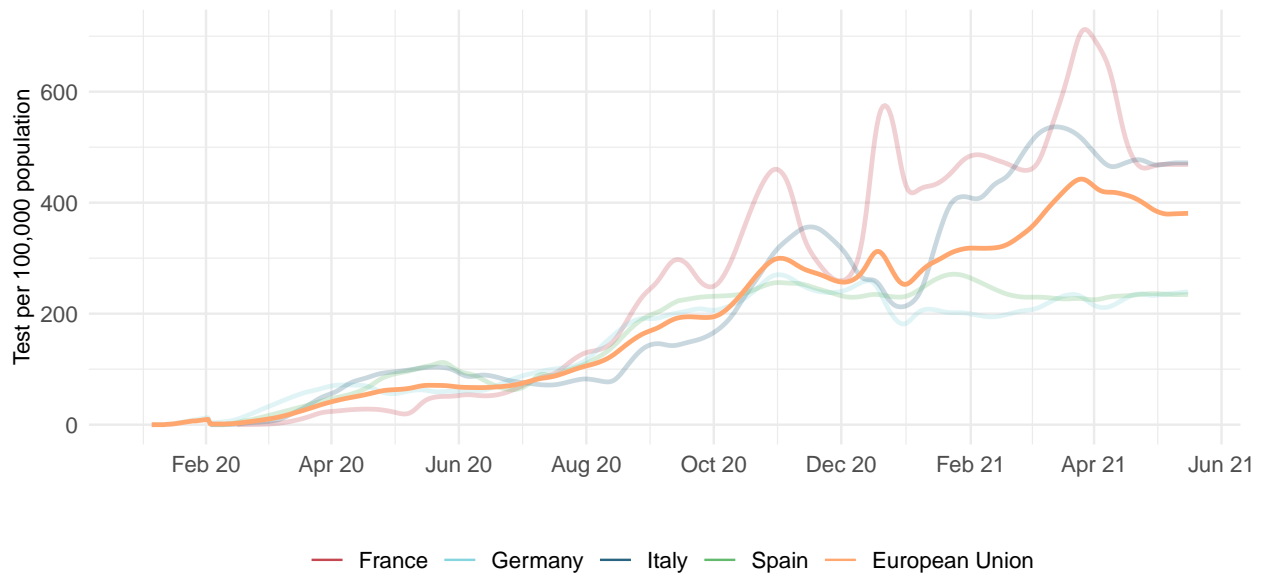
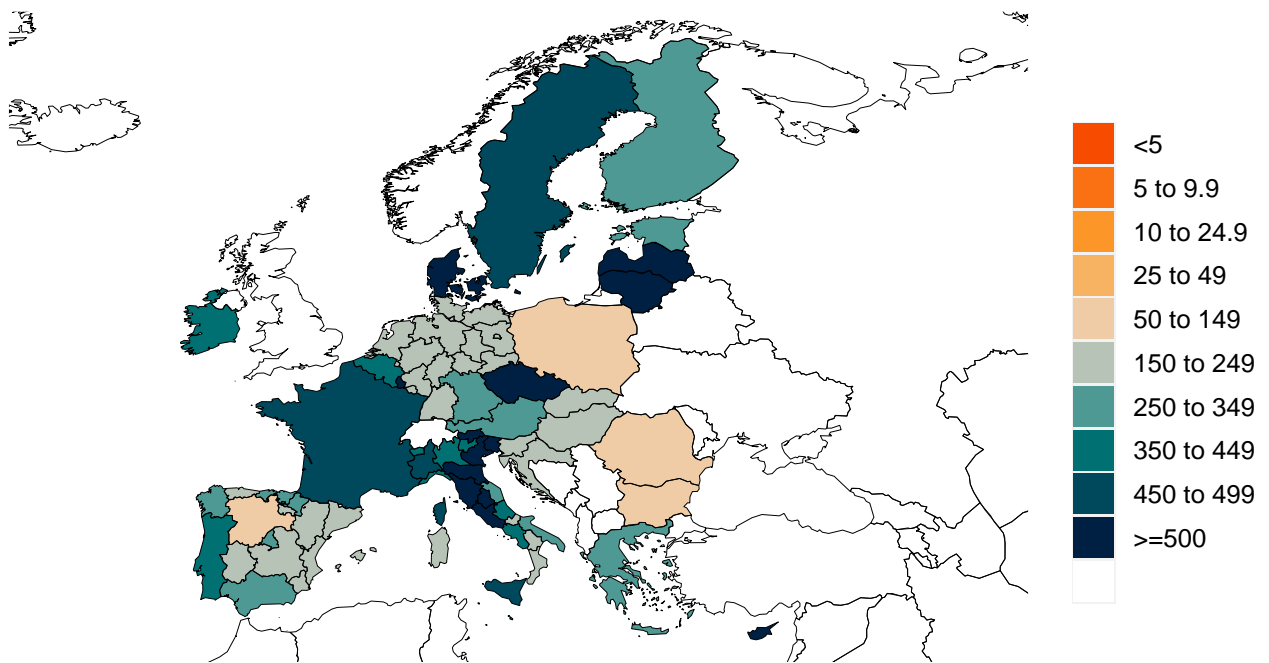
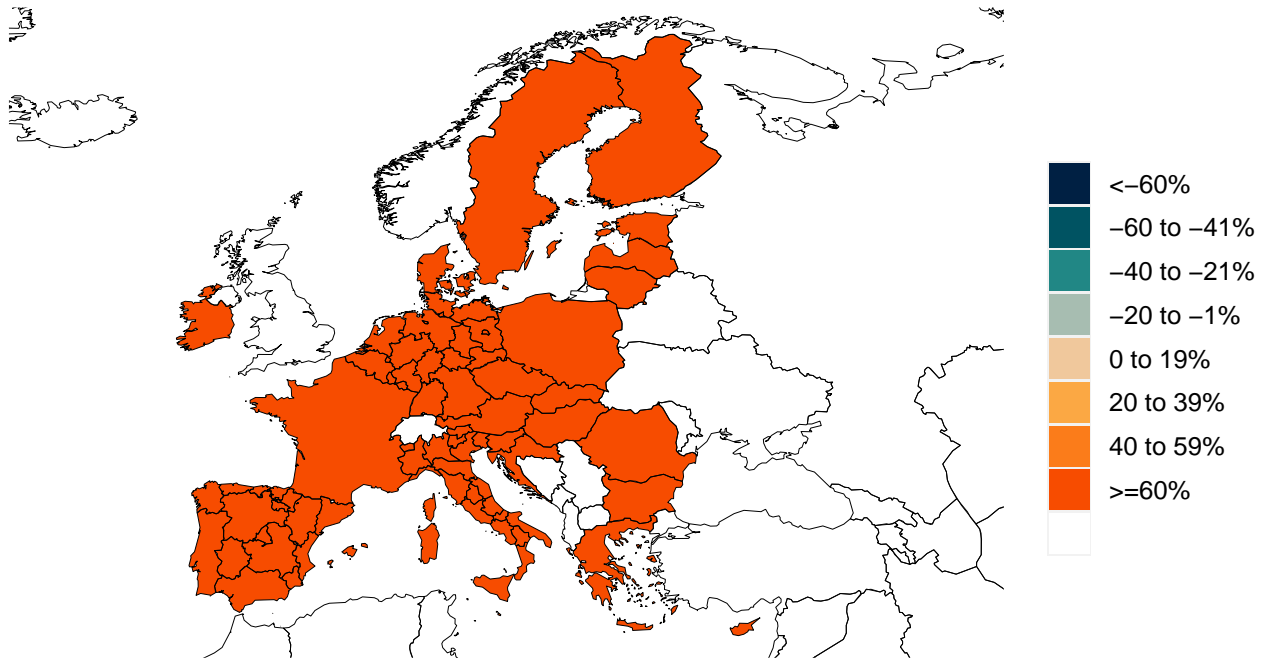


Figure 15. COVID-19 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people on May 10, 2021





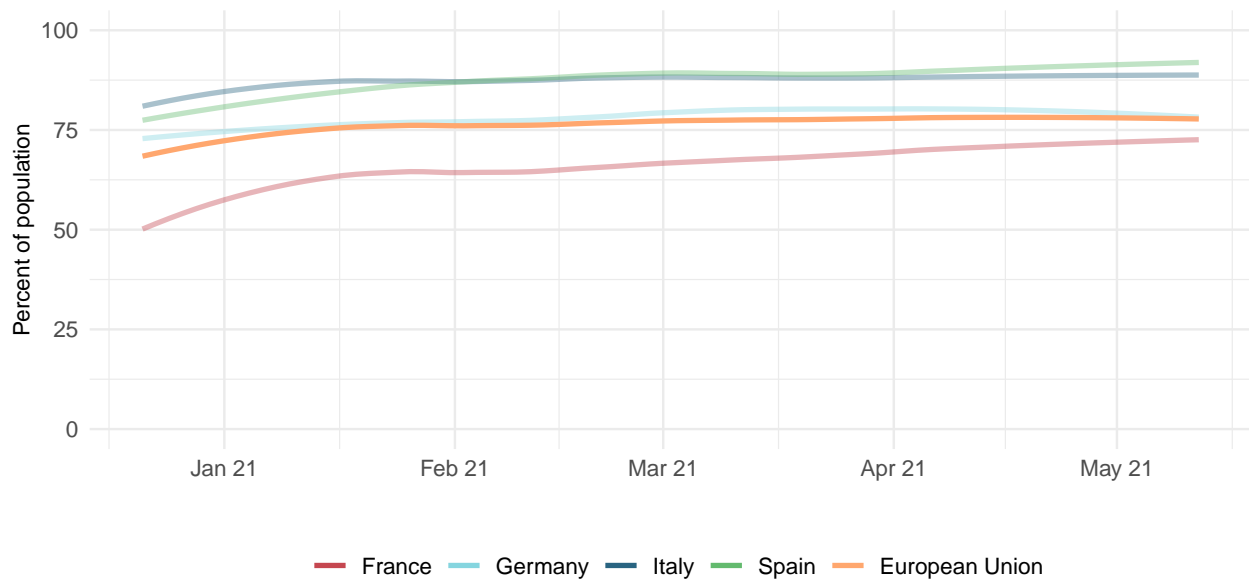
**Figure 16.** Increase in the risk of death due to pneumonia on February 1 compared to August 1



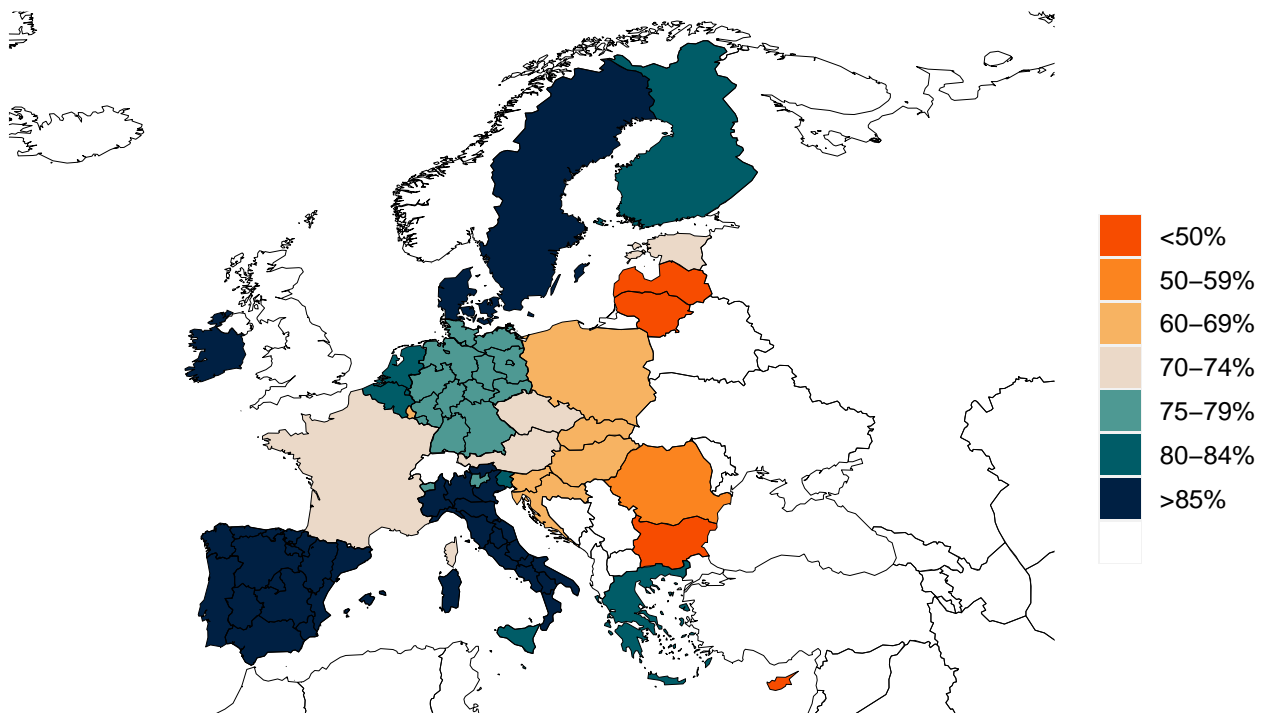
**Table 3.** The SEIR model uses variant-specific estimates of vaccine efficacy at preventing symptomatic disease and at preventing infection. We use data from clinical trials directly, where available, and make estimates otherwise. More information can be found on our website (<http://www.healthdata.org/node/8584>).

Vaccine	Efficacy at preventing disease: D614G & B.1.1.7	Efficacy at preventing infection: D614G & B.1.1.7	Efficacy at preventing disease: B.1.351, B.1.617, & P.1	Efficacy at preventing infection: B.1.351, B.1.617, & P.1
AstraZeneca	74%	52%	10%	9%
CoronaVac	50%	44%	38%	33%
Covaxin	78%	69%	59%	52%
Janssen	72%	72%	64%	56%
Moderna	94%	89%	79%	75%
Novavax	89%	79%	49%	43%
Pfizer/BioNTech	91%	86%	76%	72%
Sinopharm	73%	65%	55%	49%
Sputnik-V	92%	81%	70%	61%
Tianjin	66%	58%	50%	44%
CanSino				
Other vaccines	75%	66%	57%	50%
Other vaccines (mRNA)	91%	86%	76%	72%

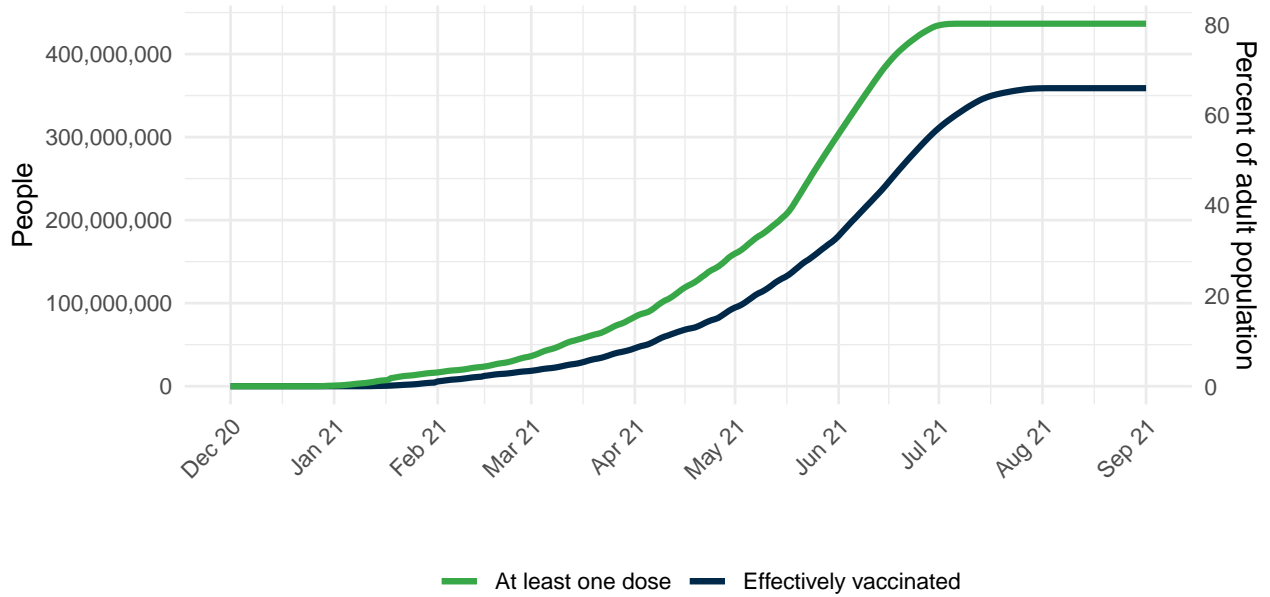
**Figure 17.** Trend in the estimated proportion of the adult (18+) population that have been vaccinated or is open to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine based on Facebook survey responses (yes and yes, probably).



**Figure 18.** This figure shows the estimated proportion of the adult (18+) population that has been vaccinated or is open to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine based on Facebook survey responses (yes and yes, probably).



**Figure 19.** The number of people who receive any vaccine and those who are effectively vaccinated and protected against disease, accounting for efficacy, loss to follow up for two-dose vaccines, partial immunity after one dose, and immunity after two doses.



## Projections and scenarios

We produce three scenarios when projecting COVID-19. The **reference scenario** is our forecast of what we think is most likely to happen:

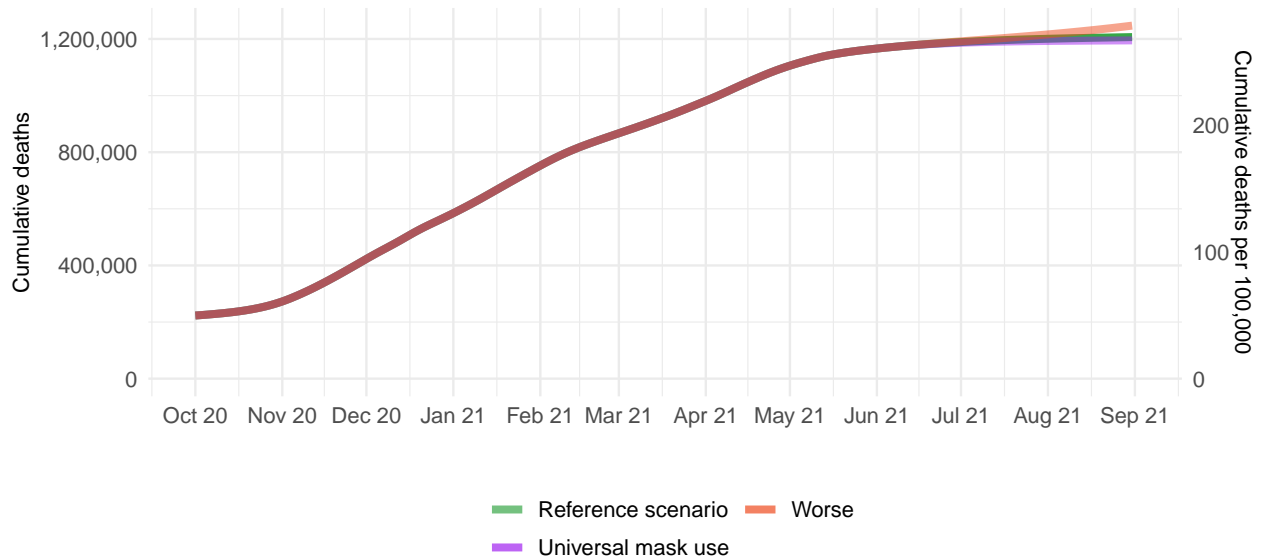
- Vaccines are distributed at the expected pace.
- Governments adapt their response by re-imposing social distancing mandates for 6 weeks whenever daily deaths reach 8 per million, unless a location has already spent at least 7 of the last 14 days with daily deaths above this rate and not yet re-imposed social distancing mandates. In this case, the scenario assumes that mandates are re-imposed when daily deaths reach 15 per million.
- Variants B.1.1.7 (first identified in the UK), B.1.351 (first identified in South Africa), and P1 (first identified in Brazil) continue to spread from locations with (a) more than 5 sequenced variants, and (b) reports of community transmission, to adjacent locations following the speed of variant scale-up observed in the regions of the UK.
- In one-quarter of those vaccinated, mobility increases toward pre-COVID-19 levels.

The **worse scenario** modifies the reference scenario assumptions in three ways:

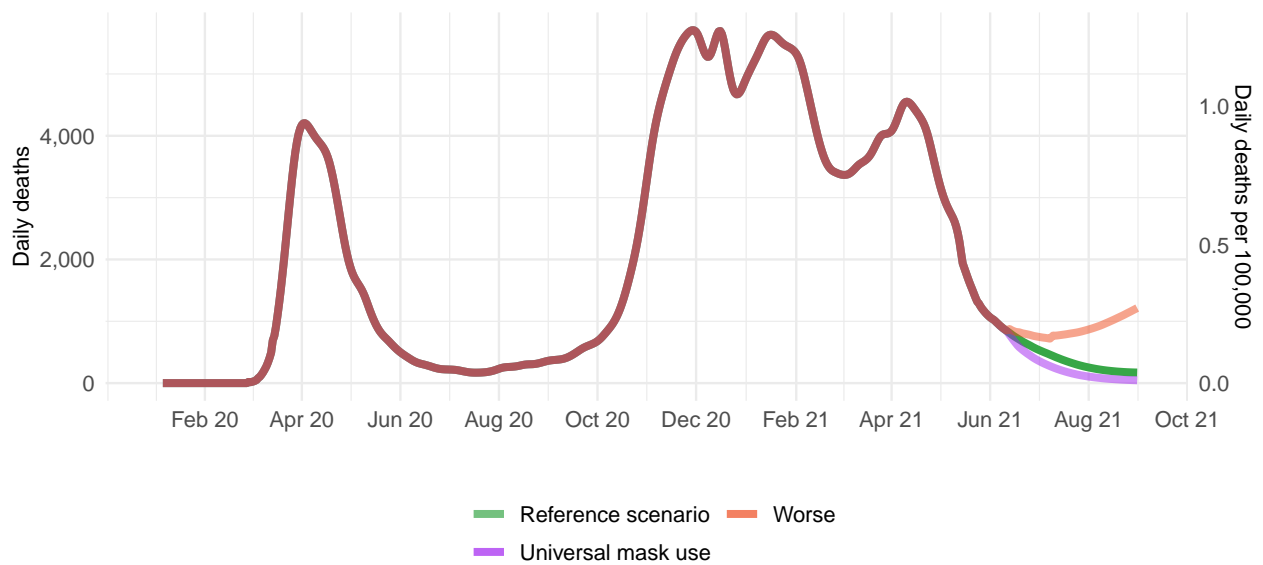
- First, it assumes that variants B.1.351 or P1 begin to spread within 3 weeks in adjacent locations that do not already have B.1.351 or P1 community transmission.
- Second, it assumes that all those vaccinated increase their mobility toward pre-COVID-19 levels.
- Third, it assumes that among those vaccinated, mask use starts to decline exponentially one month after completed vaccination.

The **universal masks scenario** makes all the same assumptions as the reference scenario but also assumes 95% of the population wear masks in public in every location.

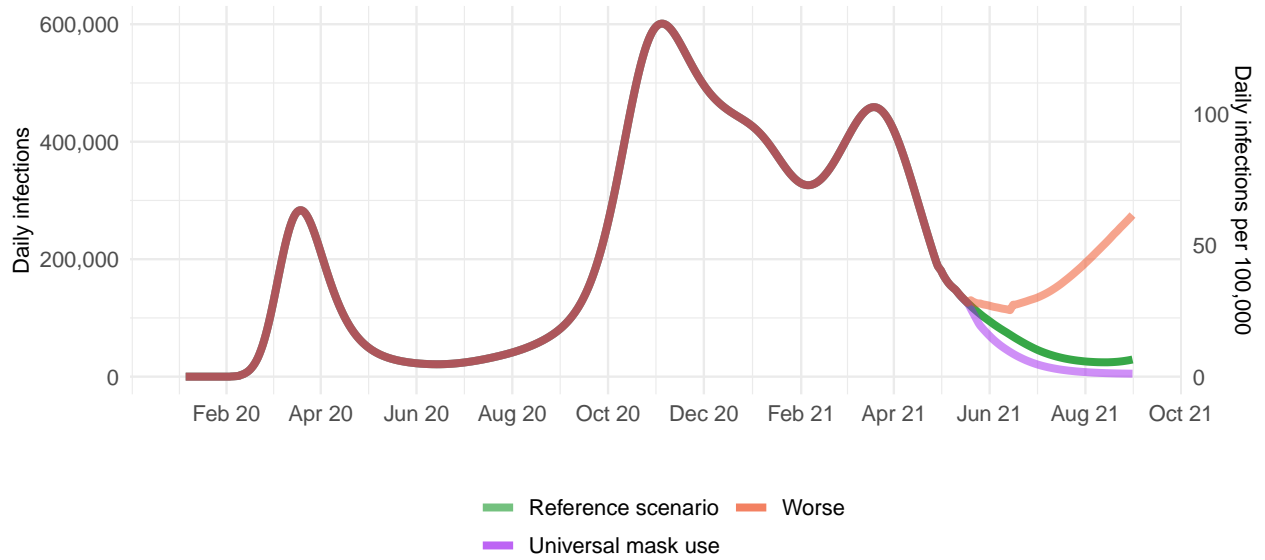
**Figure 20.** Cumulative COVID-19 deaths until September 01, 2021 for three scenarios



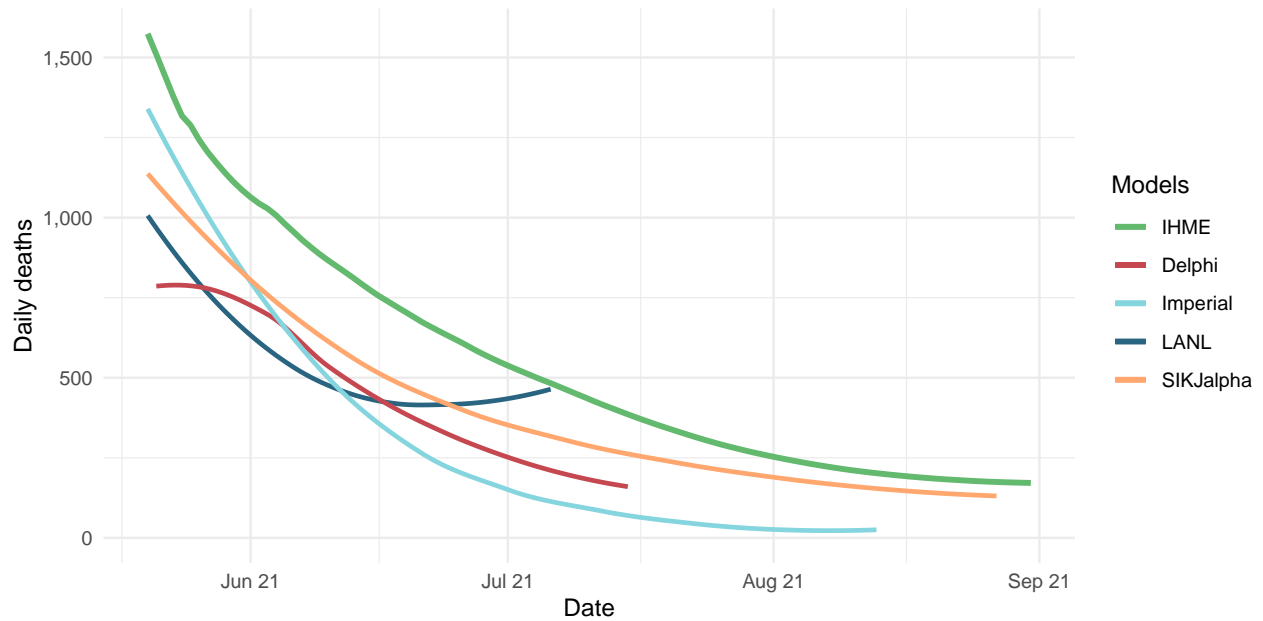
**Figure 21.** Daily COVID-19 deaths until September 01, 2021 for three scenarios,



**Figure 22.** Daily COVID-19 infections until September 01, 2021 for three scenarios.

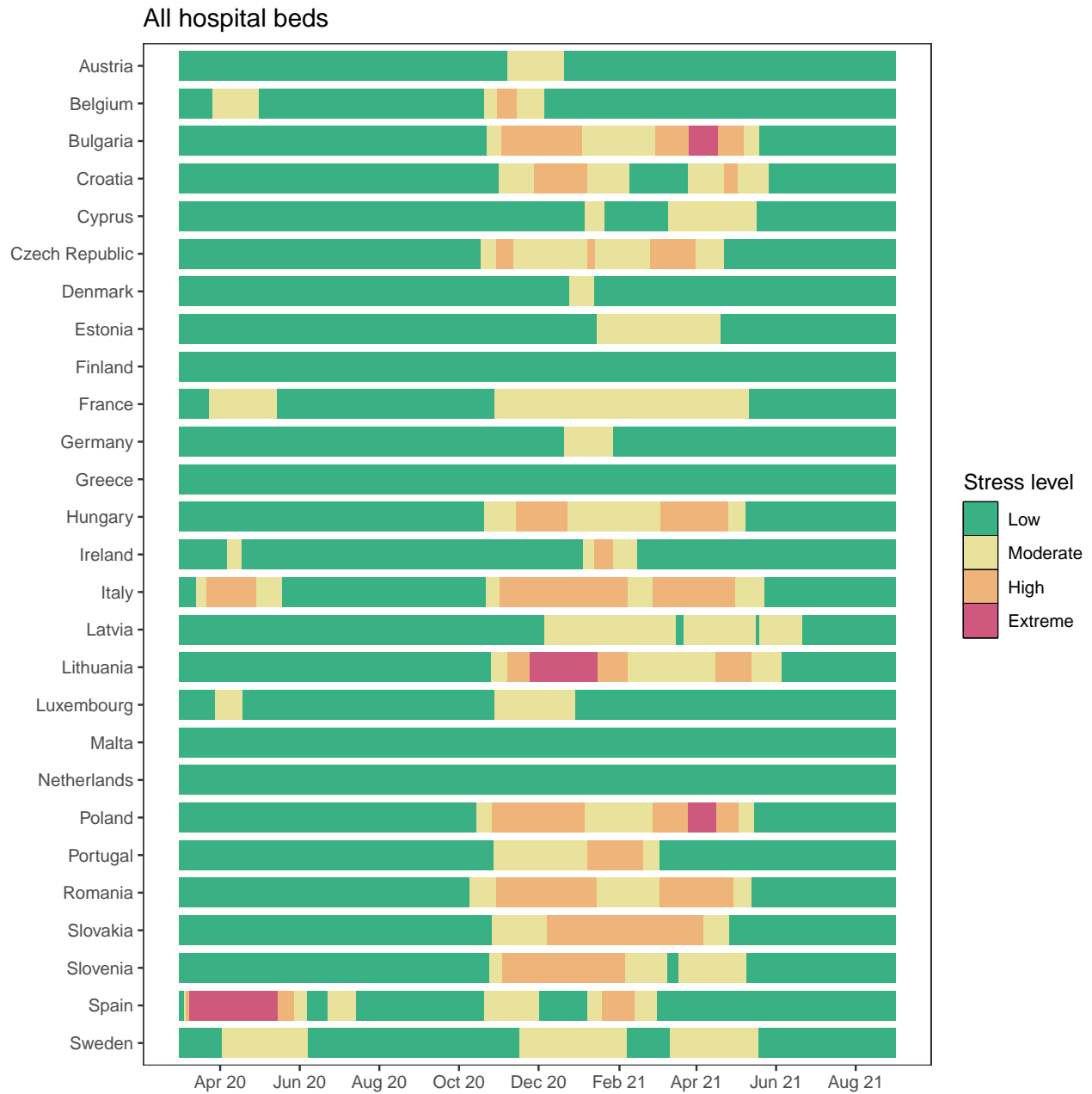


**Figure 23.** Comparison of reference model projections with other COVID modeling groups. For this comparison, we are including projections of daily COVID-19 deaths from other modeling groups when available: Delphi from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Delphi; <https://www.covidanalytics.io/home>), Imperial College London (Imperial; <https://www.covidsim.org>), The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL; <https://covid-19.bsvgateway.org/>), and the SI-KJalpha model from the University of Southern California (SIKJalpha; <https://github.com/scc-usc/ReCOVER-COVID-19>). Daily deaths from other modeling groups are smoothed to remove inconsistencies with rounding. Regional values are aggregates from available locations in that region.

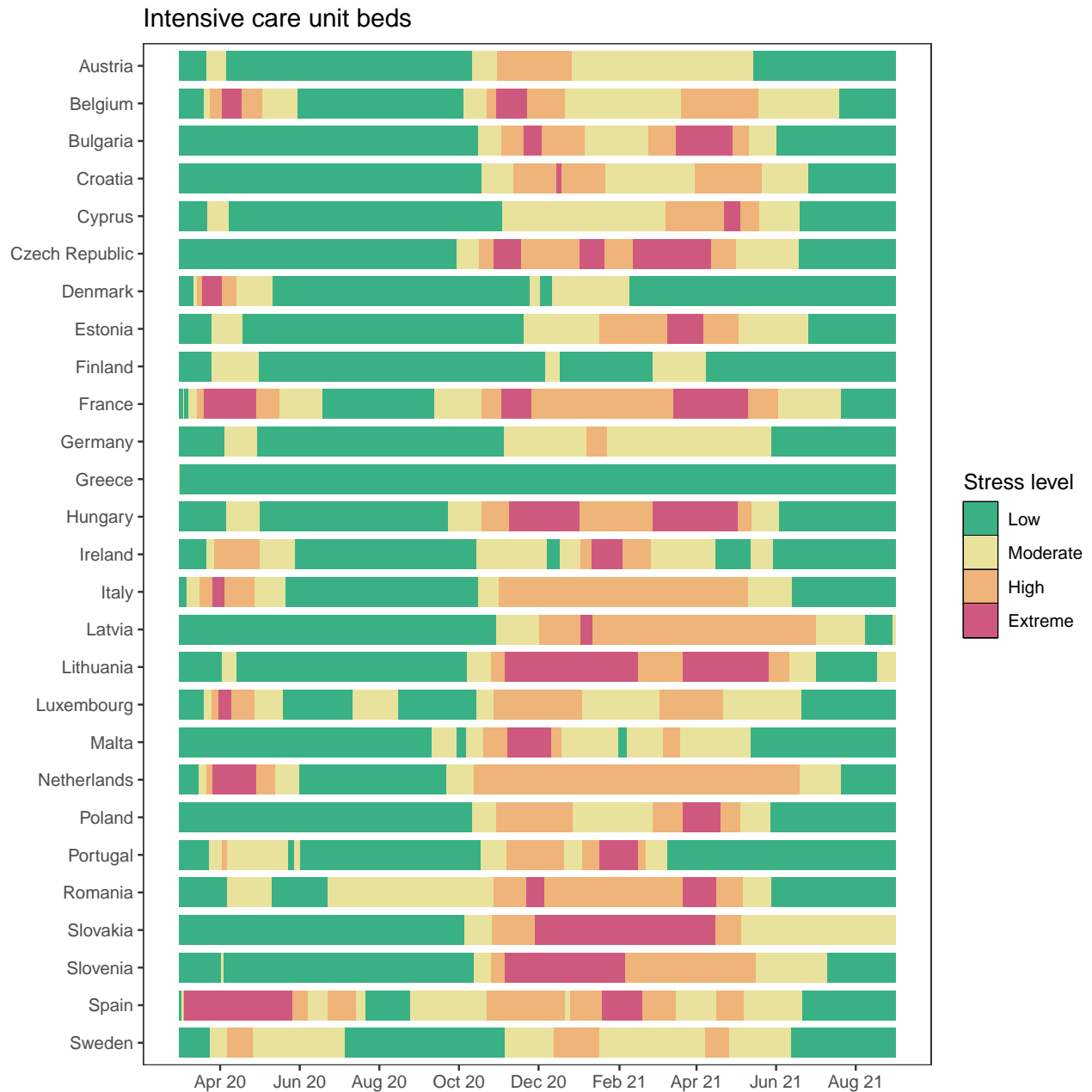




**Figure 24.** The estimated inpatient hospital usage is shown over time. The percent of hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is color coded based on observed quantiles of the maximum proportion of beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. Less than 5% is considered *low stress*, 5-9% is considered *moderate stress*, 10-19% is considered *high stress*, and greater than 20% is considered *extreme stress*.



**Figure 25.** The estimated intensive care unit (ICU) usage is shown over time. The percent of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is color coded based on observed quantiles of the maximum proportion of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. Less than 10% is considered *low stress*, 10-29% is considered *moderate stress*, 30-59% is considered *high stress*, and greater than 60% is considered *extreme stress*.



## More information

### Data sources:

Mask use data sources include [Premise](#); [Facebook Global Symptom Survey](#) (This research is based on survey results from University of Maryland Social Data Science Center) and the [Facebook United States Symptom Survey](#) (in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University); Kaiser Family Foundation; [YouGov COVID-19 Behaviour Tracker](#) survey.

Vaccine hesitancy data are from the COVID-19 Beliefs, Behaviors, and Norms Study, a survey conducted on Facebook by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (<https://covidsurvey.mit.edu/>).

Vaccine hesitancy data are from the [Facebook Global Symptom Survey](#) (This research is based on survey results from University of Maryland Social Data Science Center), the [Facebook United States Symptom Survey](#) (in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University), and from the Facebook [COVID-19 Beliefs, Behaviors, and Norms Study](#) conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Genetic sequence and metadata are primarily from the GISAID Initiative. Further details available on the COVID-19 model [FAQ page](#).

### A note of thanks:

We wish to warmly acknowledge the support of [these](#) and others who have made our COVID-19 estimation efforts possible.

### More information:

For all COVID-19 resources at IHME, visit <http://www.healthdata.org/covid>.

Questions? Requests? Feedback? Please contact us at <https://www.healthdata.org/covid/contact-us>.