

# **MALAWI MONTHLY COVID-19 SITUATION REPORT**

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# Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	COVID-19 Situation in Malawi.....	2
3	Travel to Malawi and entry restrictions .....	3
4	Management of the pandemic .....	4

## 1 Introduction

This is the Covid-19 situation update for Malawi as of 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2021. The report focuses on the situation of the pandemic in the country and the position on travel restrictions.

## 2 COVID-19 Situation in Malawi

Official daily updated figures on the COVID-19 situation in the country are published by the Government's National Task Force on COVID-19 which is co-chaired by the Minister of Health. The task force gives regular updates on the situation on national television. On 29 January 2021, the figures were as follows:

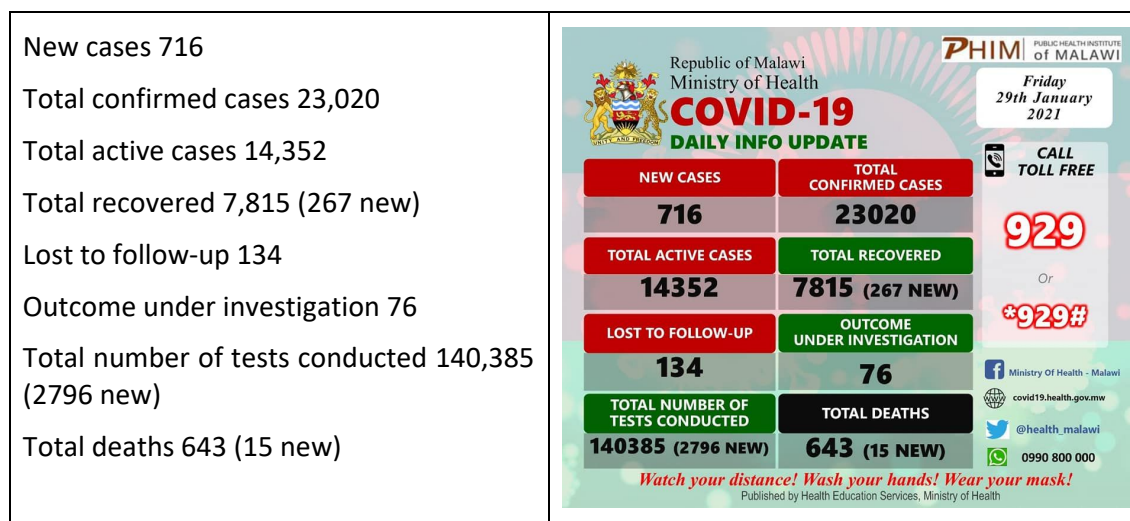


Figure 1: Summarized latest information is published on the Malawi Ministry of Health Facebook page

1.

## 3 Second wave of the COVID-19

From late December 2020, Malawi started experiencing a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was initially fueled mainly by an influx of Malawian returnees from South Africa. They are believed to have brought in the South African variant of the COVID-19 virus. Further spread of the disease has been blamed on local transmission due to some social practices and a lax observation of the preventive measures. Cases of new infections registered two spikes in the month of January 2021. On 17 January officially registered new cases were 1,291 while on 23 January 2021 the figure was 1,315. The reported daily new infection figures have since come down, hovering between 500 and 900. The government has since tightened enforcement to ensure that people observe the preventive measures in public places.

Some sections of the society such as public bus operators took to the street to protest against the government's order to reduce the carrying capacity for the buses to 60%. They were

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/malawimoh>

upset that the government had rejected their proposal to increase the bus fares as a means to compensate for the loss on carrying capacity. The government has responded by negotiating with insurance companies and the Malawi Revenue Authority to reduce premiums and some applicable taxes on public buses. The situation is back to normal.

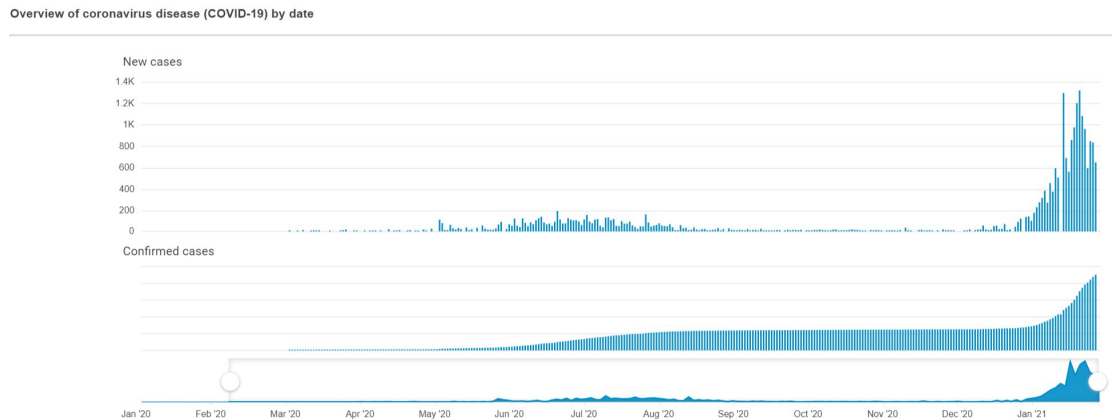


Figure 2: Trend in Covid-19 since Jan 2020

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## 4 Travel to Malawi and entry restrictions<sup>3</sup>

Flights into and out of Malawi resumed on 1 September 2020 and rules of entry gradually relaxed since then to the point that, in December 2020, with a negative COVID test, all nationalities were welcome via land or air for leisure tourism and could travel freely in Malawi whilst self-monitoring.

However, in late December, after a surge of new COVID cases, Malawi’s land borders were again closed to all but Malawi citizens and residents. Airports remain open. Up to date information and useful documents<sup>4</sup> about Visa<sup>5</sup> and other requirements for those travelling to Malawi are available online. A summary of the situation is as follows:

- Effective 23rd December 2020, Malawi closed all its land borders to non-residents until further notice. The restrictions are still in effect at the time of writing this report- 30 January 2021.
- Malawi airspace remains open to a limited number of commercial flights.
- Arriving passengers who are eligible for entry are required to submit to the health officials a completed health travelers’ declaration form and a negative COVID-19 certificate obtained no more than 72 hours prior to their arrival in Malawi

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/countries/mwi/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malawi>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.malawitourism.com/getting-there/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.malawitourism.com/visa-guide/>

- Passengers without a valid certificate are required to have samples collected for COVID-19 testing at their own expense and thereafter proceed on self-quarantine for 14 days. Such passengers are followed up by health authorities during the period under quarantine. Their COVID-19 test results are normally communicated within 3 days.
- Passengers with a negative test result are allowed to proceed on self-monitoring for signs and symptoms, they can mix with others but are required to always use face masks, observe physical distancing, practice hand washing. Should they experience any COVID-19 related symptoms, they are advised to contact health authorities at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Departing passengers from Malawi must provide a valid “Travel Certificate” showing that a negative COVID-19 test has been taken at a government designated centre within 72 hours of their departure.
- Mandatory COVID-19 testing may also take place on departure if the departing passengers fail to produce a valid negative test certificate, or if the airport staff judge the passenger to display COVID-19 symptoms. This test will be at the travelers’ own expense.
- For intercontinental flights from Europe, South African Airways, Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways (also with KLM) offer good options to Malawi, with routes involving an aircraft change at their respective national hubs (Johannesburg, Addis Ababa and Nairobi). All international flights have the option to land in either the capital Lilongwe (5-7 times per week) or Blantyre (2-3 days per week).
- Regional links between Malawi and countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe are provided by Malawi Airlines and some of the national airlines of those countries. Such connections can sometimes be used in conjunction with another African or European airline flying from Europe to these countries.

## 5 Management of the pandemic

In response to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Malawi government has intensified its response and fight to control the spread. The government gives regular media briefs and updates on the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent briefs, the government task force has been confronting negative perceptions about treatment and assistance available in public hospitals. Social media reports tended to paint a negative picture of the services available at the isolation centres, thereby discouraging people from going to hospital when they noticed symptoms of the disease.

In addition, the government has increased equipment and staff capacity in its hospitals and other isolation centres. It recently turned a large stadium into an isolation centre in Lilongwe. The government has also increased numbers of health workers in the fight against the pandemic. The outlook is positive. The demonstrated commitment of government in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is getting positive reception by people in general.