

4.4.3 Vaccine nationalism

Vaccine access and distribution is a highly charged political issue and choice. As of now, a number of high-income countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, across the European Union, and the United States, have been able to secure vaccine doses that would be enough to cover 200% of their populations⁽⁵²⁾.

A core mechanism to address global vaccine availability is COVAX, launched by WHO and partners in April 2020 as the vaccines pillar of its Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). Its initial aim expressed in September 2020 was to purchase 2 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses by the end of 2021 and deliver them to people in 190 countries. By mid-March 2021, COVAX had shipped 30 million doses to at least 54 countries^(53, 54). At that time COVAX expected approximately 1.8 billion doses to be available to 92 low- and middle-income countries before the end of 2021, covering 27% of their populations.

But these expectations must contend with uncertainties of manufacturing capacity, regulation, funding availability, final contract terms and the readiness of countries to deliver their national COVID-19 vaccination programmes. Had COVAX had sufficient and readily available early funding it would have been better able to secure enough immediate supply to meet its aims⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Figure 7: Total COVID-19 vaccine doses per 100 people as of 21 April 2021

Source: World Health Organization Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. Data as of 21 April 2021.

