

Germany's COVID-19 infection rate hits record high

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**Germany has recorded more than 4.7 million coronavirus cases since the pandemic erupted
[File: Christian Mang/Reuters]**

Berlin, November 8 (RHC)-- Germany's coronavirus infection rate has risen to a record days after Health Minister Jens Spahn warned that a massive "pandemic of the unvaccinated" was gathering pace.

The seven-day incidence rate – the number of people per 100,000 to be infected over the last week – rose to 201.1 on Monday, higher than a previous record of 197.6 in December last year, figures from the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases showed.

The institute said 15,513 new COVID-19 cases were reported over the past 24 hours – down from a record 37,120 on Friday, but figures are typically lower after the weekend. Another 33 deaths were also recorded, bringing Germany's overall death toll to 96,558.

Bavaria state premier Markus Soeder called for more decisive action in view of the new peak. He told Deutschlandfunk radio that tests should be offered free of charge again, vaccination centres should be reactivated and said states and the federal government must coordinate their strategies.

Germany had abolished free testing to incentivise people to get shots, charging them instead 19 euros per test (\$22).

Most places restrict access to indoor facilities while events are limited to people who have been vaccinated, have recovered or been tested — with the latter now excluded in some areas. Rules on whether schoolchildren should wear masks in class vary between states.

The latest surge comes as Germany struggles to find ways to pep up its much-slowed vaccination campaign. At least 67 percent of the population of 83 million is fully vaccinated, according to official figures, which authorities say is not enough. Unlike other European countries, it has balked at making vaccinations mandatory for any professional group.

Christian Karagiannidis, scientific director at the DIVI association for intensive and emergency medicine, expected a further rise in infections in the coming weeks, meaning some scheduled operations would have to be postponed. "We will only be able to cope with the burden of all emergencies if savings are made somewhere else, though definitely not with surgical cancer treatments," he told the Augsburg Allgemeine newspaper.

New hospital admissions are at just below four per 100,000 residents over a week — compared with a peak of about 15.5 last Christmas — but officials say hospitals are filling up in badly affected areas and some patients have already been relocated from regions with overburdened facilities.

The three German parties working to agree on a coalition government by early December will present proposals to combat a fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic on Monday, daily newspaper Die Welt reported. The plan includes the reintroduction of free tests.

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