

Italy records smaller increase in virus cases for 2nd day

March 23 2020



Coffins are lined up on the floor in the Crematorium Temple of Piacenza, Northern Italy, saturated with corpses awaiting cremation due to the coronavirus emergency Monday, March 23, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP)

Italy has recorded a smaller day-to-day increase in new coronavirus cases for the second straight day, officials said while cautioning it was too soon to know if the worst is behind the country with the world's second-biggest caseload.

Data released by Italy's Civil Protection agency on Monday showed 4,789 new cases, nearly 700 fewer than the day-to-day increase of 5,560 new cases reported Sunday.

The number of deaths also did not rise by as much. There were just over 600 registered on Monday compared to 651 on Sunday.

Italy has been anxious to see the day-to-day figures for new cases and deaths go down as its health system struggles under the weight of the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak outside of China.

As of Monday, Italy had a total of 59,138 virus cases compared to China's 81,496.

Health authorities have said it will be a few more days before they will know if Italy is at the beginning of a positive trend.

A top national health official, Silvio Brusaferrò, resisted being too optimistic, saying that the improvements registered Monday were due to actions taken at the beginning of the month, not in recent days.

"We need more consecutive results to confirm the trend, to be more certain that we are in a favorable situation.," Brusaferrò said.



A worker takes in a coffin in the Crematorium Temple of Piacenza, Northern Italy, saturated with corpses awaiting cremation due to the coronavirus emergency Monday, March 23, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP)

He stressed that while he favorably viewed the situation, "I don't feel like taking one side or the other to confirm that it is there or not. We can take note of what we see today."

In Milan, the capital of Lombardy, by far Italy's worst-hit region, local [health](#) officials expressed moderate optimistic that day-to-day increases of both positive test results and of new hospital admissions of patients

with COVID-19 were smaller. But they expressed renewed worry about the need for additional intensive care beds.

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