

Chile tops 300,000 virus cases, plans to lift lockdown

July 7 2020

Chile surpassed 300,000 coronavirus cases on Tuesday after reporting more than 2,400 new infections over the last 24 hours, prompting the South American country to move ahead with easing its lockdown.

There were 50 new deaths, bringing the total to more than 6,400, although the [health ministry](#) believes another 3,500 deaths were probably caused by the virus.

Chile's numbers have been declining for more than three weeks, and the country is now planning to ease confinement measures.

"We confirm an improvement that has been going on for 23 days," said Health Minister Enrique Paris.

The metropolitan region of the capital Santiago—home to 7.1 million people, more than a third of Chile's [total population](#)—is also home to 80 percent of all cases.

Paris said the numbers in the capital had dropped a bit, but 24 percent of tests taken are coming back positive—still a high rate.

With plans for a gradual easing of lockdown restrictions under way, Paris warned that authorities still need to be cautious.

In mid-April, President Sebastian Pinera announced that the virus had reached a plateau, with daily new cases hitting 500.

He introduced a plan to relax containment measures that some experts say led to an exponential increase in cases.

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