

# France says virus spread 'increasing' with summer holidays

July 21 2020

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The French health ministry said Tuesday that coronavirus transmission is increasing during the summer holiday season, with the total number of COVID-19 deaths now standing at 30,165.

The ministry's DGS health directorate said it had registered "an increase in the number of emergency doctor calls, emergency room visits, the number of virus clusters and new hospitalisations" for suspected cases across the country.

The directorate said a total of 547 virus clusters had emerged since May 9, just before France began lifting the strict stay-at-home orders and business closures imposed in March to limit the virus's spread.

But currently only 208 clusters remain active, it said, clarifying a statement from Monday by Health Minister Olivier Veran, who cited 400 to 500 active clusters even though "we are very far from a second wave" of widespread cases.

As people take advantage of the summer holidays, "travel, events and gatherings of families or friends are factors that could foster the epidemic's resurgence," the DGS said.

Over the past 24 hours, however, only 13 new deaths had been recorded in France, far below the daily tolls at the height of the outbreak.

Currently, 6,482 people are hospitalised for COVID-19 treatment, of

which 455 are in [intensive care](#) requiring ventilator assistance to breathe—compared with over 7,000 in intensive care while the virus was overwhelming hospitals in March and April.

Nationwide the "R" number indicating the viral transmission rate now stands at 1.2, meaning 10 infected people will infect an additional 12 on average, according to the Sante Publique France health agency.

But in some areas on the French mainland, the rate is much higher, with the southern Mediterranean region including Marseille and Nice now reporting a rate of 1.55.

Brittany in western France stands at 2.6 percent—meaning 10 infected people could infect on average 26 more people.

This week the government made face masks mandatory in enclosed public spaces such as shops or public buildings, and new lockdowns are possible as the government hopes to avoid a "second wave" of cases that could swamp hospitals.

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