

Worst-hit Belgium hopes virus second wave has peaked

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The second wave of the coronavirus in Belgium, the hardest-hit country in the world in terms of its proportion of fatalities, may have peaked, health authorities said on Friday.

"For the past few days now... we can finally see the peak of this second wave," Yves Van Laethem, a spokesman for the country's virus crisis centre, told reporters.

However, "just because these results are better does not mean they are good," Van Laethem warned.

"Together with the Czech Republic, we remain the European champions in terms of the number of new infections," he said.

If the trend continues, the Belgian authorities hope that the peak will have been reached on October 27 when 22,171 new infections were recorded.

The latest [infection](#) data on Friday showed half that level with 11,128 new cases over 24 hours, down from 15,672 on Thursday.

Thursday was also "the first time since the beginning of September that the number of patients in our hospitals has fallen, although it is a very limited decrease," said virologist Steven Van Gucht.

On Friday, 7,282 patients were in hospital with 1,428 in [intensive care](#).

Belgium, a country of 11.5 million, has the highest number of deaths compared to its population in the world, not counting micro-states.

It has 106 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Peru with 105 and Spain at 82.

The country, which is split between Dutch- and French-speaking populations, has imposed a lockdown since the end of October, although restaurants and bars have been closed longer.

Some experts have called for a total lockdown, but restrictions have so far left shops and schools open, although half-term holidays were extended by a week to November 16.

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