

Italy surpasses UK for worst COVID-19 death toll in Europe

December 13 2020, by Frances D'emilio



In this May 8, 2020 file photo, flowers and stones placed in the shape of a heart are laid on a burial site as white crosses are scattered at the Campo 81, an area created to host COVID-19 victims, at the Maggiore cemetery in Milan, Italy. Italy on Sunday Dec. 13, 2020 eclipsed Britain to become the nation with the worst official coronavirus death toll in Europe. Italy, where the continent's pandemic began, registered 484 COVID-19 deaths in one day, one of its lowest one-day death counts in about a month. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno, file)

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Still, those latest deaths pushed Italy's official toll up to 64,520, while Britain's stood at 64,267, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Both numbers understate the true toll of the pandemic. Counting criteria differ in the two countries, and many coronavirus deaths, especially early in the pandemic, are believed to have gone undetected, including those of [elderly people](#) in nursing homes who were not tested for COVID-19.

Among the reasons cited for Italy's high death toll was it that was the first country in Europe to be slammed in the [pandemic](#), leaving [health workers](#) to grapple with a largely unknown virus. Italy also has a lower ratio of medical staff to patients compared to other European nations.

Germany, a nation much bigger than Italy, has a death toll one-third of Italy's or Britain's.

A little more than half of Italy's known COVID-19 deaths were registered in the first surge.



A nurse tends to a patient inside a COVID-19 intensive care unit of the Tor Vergata Polyclinic Hospital in Rome, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020. Italy is reclaiming a record that nobody wants: The most coronavirus deaths in Europe. Italy is still trying to figure out how to protect its vulnerable elderly. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

On Sunday, Italy reported another 17,938 coronavirus infections to raise its official tally to 1.84 million.

By far, the region registering the highest number of new infections was the northern region of Veneto. Italy's Lombardy region has the highest number of cases and deaths overall.

Largely heeding the advice of medical experts, Italian Premier Giuseppe

Conte has tightened travel rules for the period straddling Christmas, New Year's and Epiphany Day holidays. Starting on Dec. 21 and running through Jan. 6, people in Italy won't be able to travel between regions except for work or urgent reasons such as [health problems](#).

On the holidays themselves, under the nationwide restrictions, Italians can't leave their towns, as the government seeks to discourage families and friends from gathering in large numbers indoors.



A nurse adjusts a patient's oximeter in the COVID-19 intensive care unit of the Tor Vergata Polyclinic Hospital in Rome, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020. Italy is reclaiming a record that nobody wants: The most coronavirus deaths in Europe. Italy is still trying to figure out how to protect its vulnerable elderly. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Doctor Luigi Cavanna, right, walks with his nurse assistant Gabriele Cremona after doing a house call on a COVID-19 patient, in Travo, near Piacenza, Italy, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)



Doctor Luigi Cavanna, right, talks with COVID-19 patient Giancarlo Salvi's wife Luciana as he listens from the couch, in their home, in San Nicolo, near Piacenza, Italy, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)



Doctor Luigi Cavanna leaves a COVID-19 patient's home in Monticelli d'Ongina, near Piacenza, Italy, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)

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