

German virus death toll tops 50,000 as new cases ease

January 22 2021



In this April 24, 2020 file photo, a man with a face mask watches empty chairs with names of bars and restaurants on the Roemerberg square in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)

Germany on Friday recorded more than 50,000 deaths from the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, as public health officials expressed cautious optimism about a slowing infection rate.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) disease control centre said 859 people died from the virus in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of fatalities to 50,642.

"That is a distressing, incomprehensible number to me," RKI chief Lothar Wieler told reporters.

Nevertheless, Wieler said he saw hopeful signs in the latest, lower figures on new infections that a partial lockdown introduced in November and tightened in December was starting to have the desired effect.

The RKI said it had registered 17,862 new cases since the previous day, bringing the total number of infections in the pandemic to more than 2.1 million.

Wieler said he saw a "slightly positive trend" in the numbers after several days in the last month with new infections above 20,000.

However he urged the government to maintain the current restrictions until Germany sees a "massive" drop in cases and deaths.

At the same press conference, Health Minister Jens Spahn called the figures "encouraging" but warned they were "still too high".

He noted that several countries that had eased their lockdowns at the first sign of improvement "quickly saw a new flare-up".

Reporting about 4,800 patients in intensive care, health officials said

there was no evidence that the Christmas and New Year's holidays under country-wide restrictions on gatherings had led to a spike in critical hospitalisations.



In this Sunday, March 22, 2020 file photo, the autobahn along the airport is deserted when the first nationwide restrictions came in place in Germany to avoid the spread of the corona virus. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, file)

'Silent remembrance'

Germany survived the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic relatively well, but a second wave has hit Europe's biggest economy hard.

The country this week extended its current lockdown until February 14, and Chancellor Angela Merkel has not ruled out border checks to slow the spread of new, more contagious variants of the virus.

It closed restaurants, leisure and sporting facilities in November, then expanded the shutdown in mid-December to include schools and most shops to halt runaway growth in new coronavirus infections.

New cases have soared far above the 50 per 100,000 people threshold set by the government for any relaxation of the restrictions, and currently stand at 115.3 over the past seven days.

The RKI figures are based on people who died directly as a result of the illness caused by the virus and those who contracted COVID-19 but whose exact cause of death could not be confirmed.



In this April 13, 2020 file photo, young musicians plays the trumpet, right, and trombone in the garden of a retirement and nursing home in Karben near Frankfurt, Germany. They played various pieces for the old people who are due to the coronavirus not allowed to leave the building. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020 file photo, a woman walks away from a subway station in Oberursel near Frankfurt, Germany, as the numbers of new Coronavirus infections went over 20,000 again. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, file)



In this March 15, 2020 file photo, an Asian couple looks at timberframe houses at the almost empty Roemerberg square, the main tourist spot in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Dec. 15, 2020 file photo, a medical worker waits for customers at a corona quick test center that is located in an empty tequila bar in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Oct. 21, 2020 file photo, pupils of a fifth class at a high school wear face masks as they take part in an electronic learning session in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this April 1, 2020 file photo, the buildings of the banking district are reflected in the river Main in Frankfurt, Germany. Due to the coronavirus the economy worldwide expects heavy losses. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Tuesday, May 12, 2020 file photo, Iulian, Romanian worker who stands behind the fence that was set up at the entrance of a housing of Romania slaughterhouse workers in Rosendahl, Germany. Hundreds of the workers were tested positive on the coronavirus and were put on quarantine. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, file)



In this March 15, 2020 file photo, Lufthansa aircraft are parked on a runway at the airport in Frankfurt, Germany. Due to the Coronavirus Lufthansa had to cancel half of its flights. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this April 4, 2020 file photo, Priest Christian Rauch stands in front of photos with parishioners in the catholic St. Andreas church in Lampertheim, Germany. Due to the coronavirus no services are held these days. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this April 27, 2020 file photo, a woman working for the regional public transport company offers a face mask to an elderly man in the main train station in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Dec. 2, 2020 file photo, people wear face masks but stand close together as they wait for a subway train in Frankfurt, Germany, Wednesday. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this June 17 2020 file photo, a security wearing a face mask to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus stands on the empty tribune of the WWK Arena during the German Bundesliga soccer match FC Augsburg against TSG 1899 Hoffenheim in Augsburg, Germany, Wednesday. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Dec. 10, 2020 file photo, a hotel has switched on the lights in some rooms to form a heart near the buildings of the banking district in Frankfurt, Germany. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)



In this Nov. 24, 2020 file photo, plush pandas and Corona beer bottles decorate the tables of a closed restaurant in Frankfurt, Germany. Restaurants all over Germany were closed as a partial lockdown began in November to avoid the further outspread of the coronavirus. More than 50,000 people have died after contracting COVID-19 in Germany, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks as the country has struggled to bring down infection figures. (AP Photo/Michael Probst, File)

As Germany passed the grim milestone of 50,000 deaths, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced a new initiative to offer "solidarity" with coronavirus patients and grieving families.

Beginning on Friday at sunset, Steinmeier said he would place a light in the window above the main portal of his palace in central Berlin "to

bring light in this dark time".

He encouraged Germans to do the same at their homes and post photos on social media with the hashtag lichtfenster (light window).

"Behind every number there is a human fate—it is a human being who was lost whom we held in our hearts. That is why we need this sign of silent remembrance," he told reporters.

After Easter in early April, Steinmeier said he would hold a central memorial service in Berlin for those Germany lost to the coronavirus.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: German virus death toll tops 50,000 as new cases ease (2021, January 22) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-german-virus-death-toll-tops.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.