

French COVID cases rising at unprecedented rate: health minister

July 20 2021



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French Health Minister Olivier Veran said Tuesday that new COVID-19 infections were increasing at an unprecedented rate due to the Delta variant, after 18,000 cases were reported for the previous 24 hours.

Referring to the latest figures while speaking in parliament, Veran said: "That means we have an increase in the spread of the virus of around 150 percent in the last week: we've never seen that, neither with COVID [the original form], nor the British variant, nor the South African or the Brazilian one."

The level of infections is the highest since mid-May, when the country was emerging from a third nationwide lockdown.

France, which is bracing for a fourth wave of infections because of the spread of the Delta variant, has been racing to get as many people vaccinated as possible.

Addressing [vaccine](#) sceptics, Veran said the new figures showed that "this is no time for doubts and hesitation" and that achieving herd immunity through a high degree of vaccine coverage is "the only way we have ...of getting rid of COVID once and for all."

He was speaking as parliament was due to debate a set of controversial new rules aimed at pressuring millions of vaccine holdouts into getting a jab, since only 45 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

Under a bill to be put a vote in the coming days, people who want to eat in restaurants, go to the cinema or take a long-distance train will have to be vaccinated or produce a negative COVID test.

And from September on, vaccinations will become mandatory for healthcare and retirement home workers.

Macron's announcement of the measures this month sparked a scramble for vaccine shots in a country that was one of the most vaccine-shy in the world at the start of the pandemic.

MPs receive death threats

But it has also sparked a backlash, with over 100,000 people protesting across the country on Saturday against what they called the country's vaccine "dictatorship."

In a sign of the passions unleashed by the measures, two vaccination centres have been vandalised in the past week, and MPs from Macron's Republic on the Move party have been the target of vitriol on [social media](#).

Paris prosecutors said Tuesday that they were investigating [death threats](#) received by several lawmakers who have backed the new rules.

Patricia Miralles, a Republic on the Move MP representing the southern Hérault constituency, which includes the city of Montpellier, published a message she received that threatened pro-vaccine MPs with "real bullets."

On Friday, a dozen anti-vaccine protesters stormed parliament speaker Richard Ferrand's constituency office in the western Brittany region but caused no damage.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin has ordered the police to boost security around the homes and constituency offices of MPs.

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Citation: French COVID cases rising at unprecedented rate: health minister (2021, July 20) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-07-french-covid-cases-unprecedented-health.html>

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