

Poland expects highest infection rate so far in new wave

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Hanna Zientara, an 83-year-old resident of Warsaw, receives a booster shot against COVID-19, in Warsaw, Poland, on Dec. 7, 2021. Poland has become the latest European nation to reach the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths related to the coronavirus. Nearly a quarter of those deaths—some 24,000—occurred in the most recent wave of infection that began in October, a period in which vaccines have been widely available in the European Union nation. Credit: AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski

Poland's health officials say that the country has entered a new, fifth wave, in the coronavirus pandemic, predicting that it will peak in mid-February at about 60,000 new infections per day or even more.

Waldemar Kraska, the deputy [health](#) minister, said Tuesday that the highly transmissible omicron variant now accounts for 19% of the samples nationwide that have been sequenced, though 50% are in the Pomerania province along the Baltic coast in the country's north.

If the Health Ministry's predictions prove correct, the rate of infection in the coming wave would be more than double that of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2021.

On Tuesday, Poland recorded 19,652 new cases of COVID-19 and 377 deaths.

Poland's vaccination rate is at 56.5%, significantly lower than in many other European Union nations, and the [death](#) rate is significantly higher in proportion to the population.

Kraska said that 300 of the 377 deaths were among unvaccinated people.

"These are deaths that we could have avoided if these people had been vaccinated," he said.

Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said there were other forecasts which predict new infections reaching 120,000 new daily cases or even higher.

"We have to say that the fifth wave is becoming a fact and we can expect increases in the near future," Niedzielski said on Monday.

He said that the health care system is exposed to "the risk of a very high burden," one that Poland has not yet faced during any of the [infection](#) surges to date.

The death rate in the central European nation of 38 million has now reached 102,686.

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