

Germany, France see virus surge as holidaymakers return home

20 August 2020, by Florian Cazerès With Afp Bureaus



Fears have been raised of a spike in infections as people in Europe return from their summer holidays

Germany and France recorded their worst daily infection rates in months with concerns growing Thursday that coronavirus cases could spike in Europe just as holidaymakers return home and children go back to school.

In the United States, the country's top infectious diseases official, Anthony Fauci, said the government would not make any future COVID-19 vaccine obligatory for the [general public](#).

But he said local jurisdictions could make it mandatory for some groups, like children.

"You don't want to mandate and try and force anyone to take a vaccine. We've never done that," said Fauci, a member of the White House coronavirus task force, during a video talk Wednesday organised by George Washington University.

His comments came hours after Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that

coronavirus vaccines, once approved, would be mandatory for everyone in his country barring medical exemptions.

Mandatory tests

An ethics and safety debate is raging around the world as the race to develop a vaccine gathers pace.

Pope Francis said Wednesday that the pandemic is exacerbating inequalities between rich and poor, and called for universal vaccines not reserved just for the wealthiest.

Some governments have struck deals with companies, hoping to secure exclusive supplies of the vaccines when developed in hopes of ending the pandemic, which has now killed more than 780,000 people and infected over 22 million, according to an AFP tally.



In India, the official coronavirus death toll has soared past 50,000

Germany Thursday reported 1,707 new cases of the coronavirus in the past 24 hours, the highest

daily toll since the peak of the pandemic in April.

The country has fared better than many European neighbours in suppressing the virus so far but like elsewhere, the number of cases has jumped significantly over the summer holidays.

Much of the rise has been blamed on returning holidaymakers as well as parties and family gatherings. Schools already resumed last week in parts of Germany.

Faced with the surge in cases, Germany earlier this month introduced free, mandatory tests for anyone returning from areas deemed at high risk for COVID-19 infections.

And Chancellor Angela Merkel warned this week there could be no further relaxation of coronavirus restrictions.

France on Wednesday recorded new coronavirus cases at the fastest daily rate since May.



Schools have already resumed in parts of Germany after the summer break

Almost 3,800 COVID-19 infections were confirmed in the past 24 hours, the health ministry's DGS public health division said.

"All indicators continue to climb and transmission of the virus is intensifying," the DGS said in a

statement.

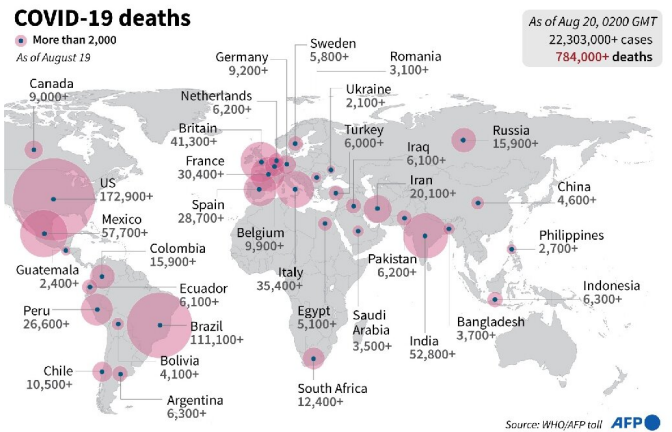
Toulouse on Wednesday became the first French city to declare face masks compulsory outdoors.

Masks are already mandatory on public transport in France and indoors in public places, amid fears that a mass movement of people as the summer break draws to a close will lead to a spike in infections.

On Wednesday, Spain recorded 6,700 new infections in 24 hours, bringing the total to more than 370,000, the highest caseload in western Europe.

Ukraine on Thursday also reported a record daily increase in coronavirus cases, exceeding 2,000 new infections for the first time.

In Finland, the government on Wednesday removed most EU countries from its "green travel list", meaning that only people arriving from a handful of states will be able to enter the country without [coronavirus](#) restrictions from Monday.



Graphic showing the highest national death tolls around the world since the start of the coronavirus crisis.



Fauci said the government would not make any future COVID-19 vaccine obligatory for the general public

'Near-total collapse'

Elsewhere, Iran's [health ministry](#) said the death toll has surpassed 20,000, six months after announcing the start of what quickly became the Middle East's deadliest outbreak.

Further evidence of the profound economic impact came when Australian flag carrier Qantas on Thursday posted an annual loss of almost US\$2 billion after a "near total collapse" in demand because of the pandemic.

But in China—where the virus was first detected late last year—the Super League is planning to allow a very limited number of spectators into a high-profile match on Saturday, the first time fans can attend a football game since the pandemic.

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