

Vaccine bookings spike after Italy extends COVID pass

19 September 2021

Bookings for coronavirus vaccines in Italy spiked this week after the government said all employees must show proof of a jab, negative test or recent recovery from COVID-19, authorities said.

"On a national level, there was a generalised increase in bookings for the first dose of between 20 and 40 percent compared to last week," coronavirus commissioner Francesco Figliuolo said in a statement late Saturday.

Reservations for the first dose of the vaccine on Saturday were up 35 percent on the same time a week earlier, he added, without giving the actual figure.

Almost 41 million people in Italy have so far been fully vaccinated, government data shows—close to 76 percent of the population over the age of 12.

But authorities remain concerned about the hold-outs ahead of the winter flu season, and this week extended the so-called "Green Pass" to all public and private workplaces.

Introduced in August initially for indoor restaurant dining, museums and sports events, the pass shows proof of vaccination, a recent negative COVID-19 test or recent recovery from the virus.

This week, Prime Minister Mario Draghi's national unity government agreed to extend it to all workplaces from October 15, with employees who refuse to comply considered to be absent without pay.

Those exempt from the vaccine for health reasons will be given free coronavirus tests.

Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the pandemic in February 2020 and has the worst recorded death toll in the European Union, at more than 130,000.

The economy was plunged into a deep recession caused by lockdowns last year but with case numbers largely under control since the spring, growth is forecast to jump this year, aided by a huge injection of EU recovery funds.

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