

Italy sees signs of slowing contagion despite heavy toll

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Italy reported fresh evidence Monday that weeks of life spent under a national lockdown could slow the spread of the coronavirus, although the country's death toll continued to grow.

Figures from Italy's civil protection service showed the rate of new COVID-19 infections hitting a new low of just 4.1 percent.

The number of people currently sick with the illness at its epicentre in the northern Lombardy region around Milan also dropped for the first time.

And the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 across the nation of 60 million people reached a new high.

"We saw 1,590 people recover in the past 24 hours," civil protection service chief Angelo Borrelli told reporters.

"This is the highest number of recoveries recorded since the start of the pandemic."

Deputy Health Minister Pierpaolo Sileri said the

latest data showed that Italy was on course to start seeing "a drop in the number of people infected within seven to 10 days".

The number of people currently sick with the [illness](#) is still growing—and the number of daily deaths is still high.

The Mediterranean country's world-topping [death toll](#) grew by 812 in 24 hours to 11,591 on Monday.

The number of infections recorded since the start of the crisis last month have surpassed 100,000.

Health official said one of Monday's most encouraging figures was the drop from 25,392 on Sunday to 25,006 on Monday in the number of people in Lombardy currently testing positive for COVID-19 .

The figure had been growing continuously for over a month.

"The data are better but our work continues," Lombardy's chief medical officer Giulio Gallera said.

The latest data came out nearly three weeks into a national lockdown that has emptied cities and paralysed most forms of business life.

Italian officials are expected to extend the closure and ban on public gatherings before they are due to expire on Friday.

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