

# Germany's virus curbs are working, say experts

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Measures taken by German officials to slow the spread of the coronavirus are starting to show effect, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for disease control said on Friday.

"We are seeing that the spread of the virus is getting slower... it's

working," said RKI president Lothar Wieler, stressing that restrictions on public life "need to be maintained" and it was too early to claim victory.

Wieler explained that each person who had caught the virus was now infecting only one person on average, where previously that number had been as high as seven.

"If the number is below one, then it means the epidemic is slowly easing up. That is our aim," he said.

"We know that we have pushed the number down to one with the measures, and we hope to push it down further."

Wieler nonetheless urged the public to keep observing government restrictions, which include a ban on public gatherings of more than two people and a requirement to stay at least 1.5 metres (five feet) from others at all times.

"I need to say very clearly: the measures need to be maintained. Keeping your distance and staying at home is imperative, otherwise we will not push the number under one," he said.

Federal states across the country have introduced penalties to crack down on those flouting the rules.

In the capital city Berlin, people risk being fined up to 500 euros (\$540) for standing too close to each other.

Meanwhile, the RKI altered its recommendations on Friday to encourage citizens to wear self-made masks in public.

It was "important to understand" that such masks would not protect the wearer, but they could help to protect others, said Wieler.

He added that there was "not yet any scientific proof" that the masks would limit the spread of the virus, but it "seemed plausible".

According to RKI figures on Friday, Germany has recorded more than 79,000 cases of the novel [coronavirus](#).

A total of 1,017 deaths have been recorded, though RKI president Wieler warned Friday that the actual number could be much higher.

"We won't manage to test every single person... I assume we will have more deaths than are officially recorded," he said.

Wieler also said that the mortality rate would "continue to rise" in Germany.

Latest figures showed that the death rate in Europe's largest economy had jumped to 1.2 percent, still considerably lower than that of neighbouring countries.

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