

Italy extends regional coronavirus lockdowns

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Italy's health minister announced Friday that another region would be subject to lockdown measures due to worsening pandemic numbers fuelled by the spread of more contagious coronavirus variants.

The new clampdown came after the ISS health institute said the R number—which measures the rate at which the virus is spreading—had risen above one, to 1.06, for the first time in seven weeks.

As of Monday, the southern region of Campania, which includes Naples, will be classified as a "red" zone, joining the regions of Basilicata and Molise in the highest-risk level, announced Health Minister Roberto Speranza.

In red zones, bars and restaurants are closed as well as all schools including nurseries and museums.

Two other regions, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto were to become medium-risk "orange" zones, from their earlier "yellow" category.

Sardinia remains the sole low-risk "white" [region](#).

On Thursday the GIMBE health think tank warned that Italy had entered the third wave of the coronavirus, as it reported a sharp increase in infection numbers.

In the February 24-March 2 period coronavirus cases rose by a third from the previous week to more than 123,000, the highest figure since early December, GIMBE said.

The jump has coincided with the spread of the so-called British variant of the [coronavirus](#), which has become "overwhelmingly dominant", ISS President Silvio Brusaferrò said.

But the other variants, the so-called Brazilian, South African and others are also worrying, he added.

Italy's new Prime Minister Mario Draghi, sworn in last month, has promised to use "all means" to fight a pandemic that has killed almost 100,000 people, starting with a faster rollout of vaccines.

To date, Italy has administered around five million doses and fully vaccinated 1.56 million people, out of a [total population](#) of some 60 million, the [health ministry](#) said Friday.

"We need to get to 300,000 doses administered per day" from current levels of around 180,000, a top [health](#) ministry official, Giovanni Rezza, told reporters.

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