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France

France suspends 3,000 unvaccinated health workers without pay



▲ A protestor in a mask and personal protective equipment outside the regional health authority in Lyon yesterday, the deadline for compulsory vaccination for health workers. Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

Kim Willsher in Paris

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France has suspended 3,000 health workers without pay for refusing the Covid vaccine.

The health minister, Olivier Véran, said the staff had been notified in writing before the [government-imposed deadline](#) to have at least one dose.

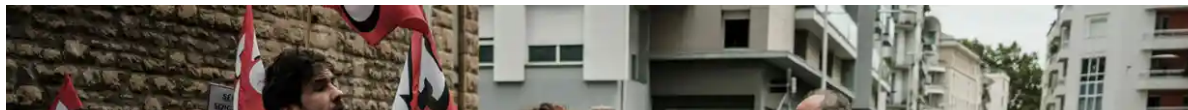
Véran said “several dozen” had resigned rather than have the vaccine, but with an estimated 2.7 million health workers in France, “continued healthcare is assured”, he said.

In July the president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), told staff at hospitals, retirement and care homes as well as those in the fire service they had until 15 September to be partially or fully vaccinated.

The French health authority, Santé Publique, estimates fewer than 12% of hospital staff and about 6% of doctors in private practice have not been vaccinated.

Currently just under 47 million French people aged 12 and over are fully vaccinated, representing 81.4% of the population; 86.1% have received at least one jab.

“A large number of these suspensions will be temporary,” Véran [told RTL radio](#). “They involved mostly personnel in support service, like those working in laundry or food preparation.” He said very few doctors and nurses remained unvaccinated. “Many of them have decided to get vaccinated now the obligation to do so has become a reality,” he said.





▲ Demonstrating nursing staff in Lyon displaying a banner that says: 'Applauded yesterday, stigmatised today, made redundant on 15/9.' Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

The organisation of Paris public hospitals, AP-HP, said 340 of its staff had been suspended. The figures were higher in the south, where vaccine hesitancy is more common: 450 staff have been suspended at a Nice hospital, 100 at Perpignan, 76 at Brest, and dozens in other big towns and cities.

The number of cases in France has dropped to fewer than 100 per 100,000 for the first time since mid-July. There are now about 10,000 new positive cases a day, meaning the [health restrictions](#), including the health pass requiring people to have been vaccinated, have recovered from Covid or have a negative Covid tests to enter bars, restaurants, cinemas, museums and other public places, must stay.

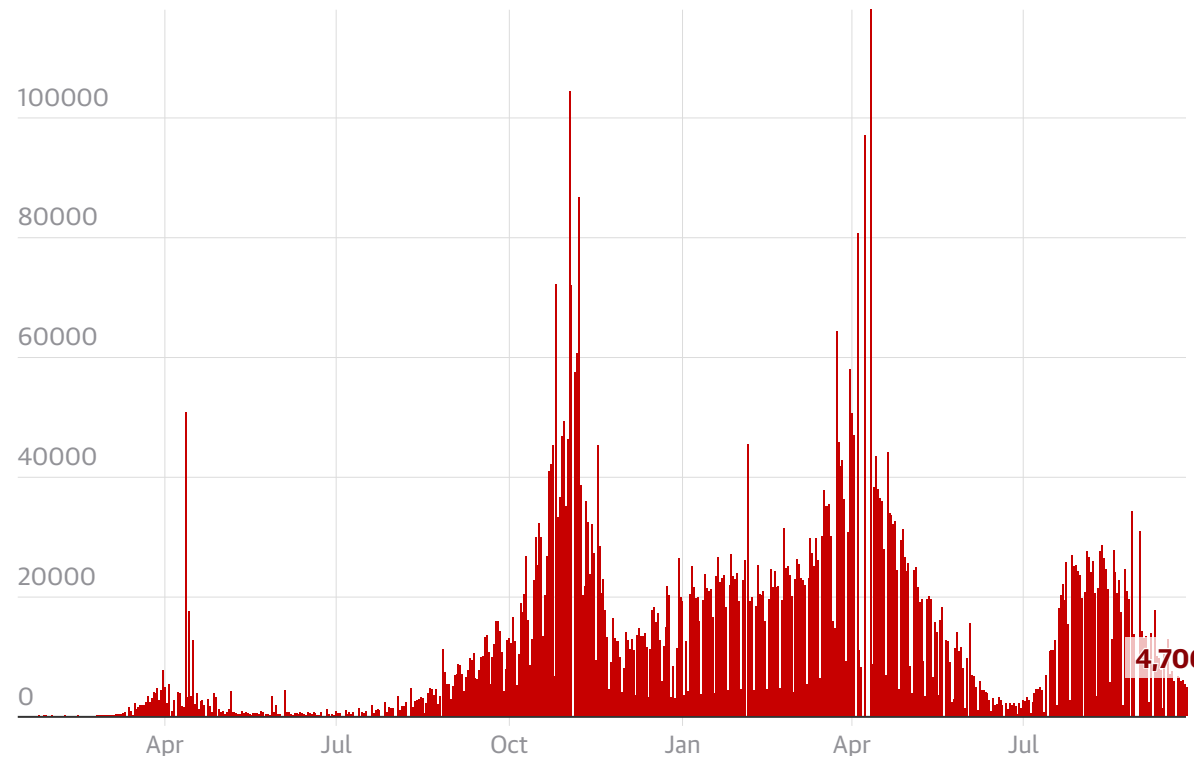
“The situation has considerably improved thanks to the massive vaccination of the French population, thanks to barrier gestures, people’s

vigilance ... and the health pass,” Véran said. “The epidemic is not over but we are reducing it with cases down 30% in a week, so we’re going in the right direction and we have to keep doing so.

“Nine of 10 people in France eligible to be vaccinated have been vaccinated. We are today one of the most vaccinated countries in the world ... the more we vaccinate the better chance we have of getting out of this.”

France: number of new coronavirus cases per day

Starting from day of first reported case



Data from Johns Hopkins University at 07:02 UTC 27 Sept 2021

The UK's health secretary, Sajid Javid, said earlier this week he was considering toughening the rules and obliging health workers to get vaccinated to ensure the country gets through the Covid crisis this winter.

“I believe that it's highly likely that frontline NHS staff and those working in wider social care settings will also have to be vaccinated to protect those around them,” Javid told parliament.

Véran defended making the vaccine obligatory for certain French workers. “It's just the first day but there was no chaos, far from it, and the numbers

of those who are vaccinated in hospitals and care homes is far, far higher than it would have been if the vaccine had not been made obligatory.”

He said most of the medical staff federations and orders had been consulted and had approved making the vaccine compulsory for health workers.

Thierry Schifano, the president of the Fédération Nationale de la Mobilité Sanitaire (the National Federation for [Health](#) Mobility), said 13% of ambulance and health vehicle drivers were not vaccinated “and don’t want to be”.

“We risk real difficulties with a break in patients’ treatment and an increase in ambulance shortages,” he said. “We have to find way of working in reduced conditions for a short while.”

Among firefighters an estimated 80% are vaccinated, but about 100 have lodged a second complaint with the European court of human rights after their first was refused at the end of last month.