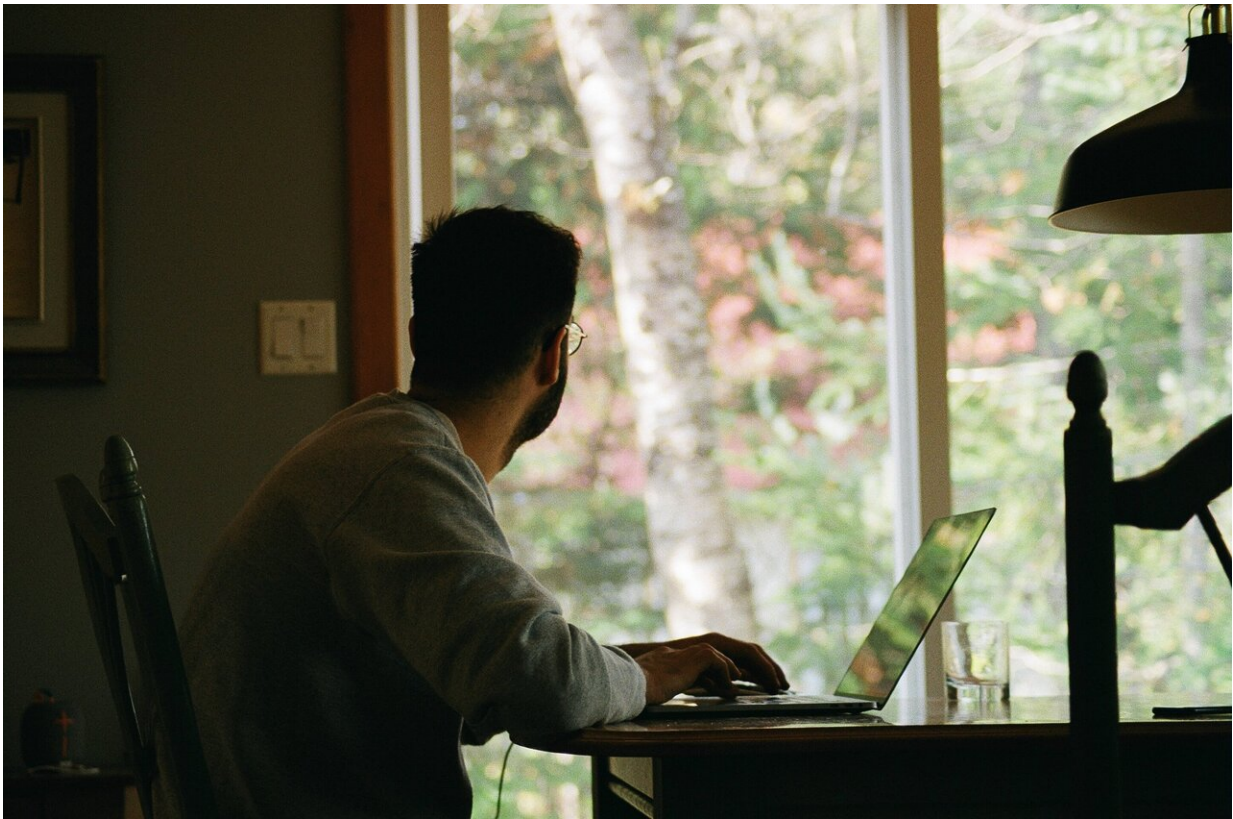


Poland declares partial lockdown as virus cases spike

March 17 2021



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Poland will go into a three-week partial lockdown from Saturday, with people encouraged to stay home and many shops and facilities closed to stem a rising tide of coronavirus cases.

"We ask employers to allow working from home as much as possible," Health Minister Adam Niedzielski told reporters in Warsaw.

Shopping malls, hotels, pools, gyms and schools will be closed until at least April 9.

"We had to react," Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters after returning from a visit to France, saying he hoped the new restrictions would "calm the current wave of coronavirus".

"I am confident that this fight, which we are supporting through the vaccination programme, will ultimately prove successful," he said.

The EU member of 38 million people already has a string of restrictions in place, including closed restaurants, fitness centres and schools for grades four and higher.

The fresh restrictions come as Poland has seen the spread of a highly infectious coronavirus variant first detected in Britain, which Niedzielski said was responsible for the majority of recent infections.

New [coronavirus](#) cases totalled 25,052 over the past 24 hours on Wednesday, raising the number of infections since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to 1,956,974, including 48,032 deaths.

Niedzielski said the recent spike has added pressure to overwhelmed hospitals, forcing authorities to impose fresh restrictions.

"If this growth dynamic were to continue, then in a week we could exceed 30,000 (new cases per day), maybe even more," Niedzielski warned.

"These numbers pose a threat to the functioning of the health care

system," he said.

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Citation: Poland declares partial lockdown as virus cases spike (2021, March 17) retrieved 14 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-poland-declares-partial-lockdown-virus.html>

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