# National Fiche – France

## COVID-19 cases

France has been one of the European countries with the highest COVID-19 related deaths with 30,544[[1]](#footnote-1) out of 67 million people[[2]](#footnote-2). *Santé Publique France* registered 282[[3]](#footnote-3) COVID-19 related deaths of persons with disabilities residing in institutions[[4]](#footnote-4) and 14,121 COVID-19 related deaths of older persons living in care homes[[5]](#footnote-5). Data and cases of COVID-19 were not disaggregated by disability to the best of our knowledge.

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

The State of Health Emergency was declared for an initial period of two months starting from 23 March 2020 and then extended to 11 July 2020[[6]](#footnote-6).

From 17 March to 10 May 2020, France imposed a strict lockdown limiting outings and imposing the possession of a dated, timed and signed self-certification when going out.

The Defender of Rights requested the French government for adaptation of outing conditions for persons with disabilities following complaints received in this regard[[7]](#footnote-7). This call resulted in the exemption of blind persons and persons with low vision from carrying a self-certification when going out[[8]](#footnote-8). On 2nd April 2020, the French government took another step in easing the lockdown for persons with disabilities and the person accompanying them by lifting both geographical limitation and time constraints when going out[[9]](#footnote-9).

## Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

Even though DPOs were not included in the development of national policies, they remained active in France during the COVID-19 pandemic. On 30 March 2020, *Collectif Handicaps*; a DPO representing a group of 48 French disability organisations; expressed three urgent demands to the French government in terms of continuity and effectiveness of the rights of people with disabilities, assistance to persons with disabilities and their families at home and continuity of assistance in institutions*[[10]](#footnote-10)*.

## Communications and announcement

Official communications and announcements made by the President of the Republic were accessible with interpretation in sign language and live captioning. The website of the Secretary of State in charge of persons with disabilities included a section dedicated to COVID-19 and a Frequently Asked Questions to answer questions of persons with disabilities and their family[[11]](#footnote-11). For deaf and hard of hearing persons, the Government implemented a teleservice on the Government’s website, answering questions and providing assistance. Easy-to-read resources and videos with captioning and sign language were also available on the Government’s website[[12]](#footnote-12).

The Government made available an easy-to-read version of the self-certification two weeks after the release of the self-certification[[13]](#footnote-13). In the meantime, disabled persons organisations including *Association Valentin Haüy*, made available easy-to-read self-certification on their website[[14]](#footnote-14).

## Institutions and closed settings

On 20 March 2020, t he French Government provided guidelines for employers and directors of institutions or services for older persons and persons with disabilities on the conduct to adopt towards professionals and public in times of COVID-19. Following these guidelines institutions and medico-social services are meant to reinforce protective measures and suspend visits and individual or collective outings in residential care home[[15]](#footnote-15).

## Health care

The above mentioned guidelines provided that the decision to transfer a patient from an institution to hospital is taken by doctors from the French Emergency Medical Service, *SAMU.* Only patient in severe and critical stage of COVID-19 were transferred to health care facilities[[16]](#footnote-16). On 4 April 2020, *Unapei* alerted the State about the fact that the level of autonomy and dependence was used as criteria to decide whether to admit a person with disabilities at the hospital. *Unapei* called on the State to provide instructions for non-discriminatory health care for persons affected by the coronavirus and to strengthen palliative care teams[[17]](#footnote-17). The Defender of Rights also highlighted the principle of equal access to health care for persons with disabilities, and added that access to health care should be based on medical criteria and evaluated on a case by case basis[[18]](#footnote-18).

## Social Protection

As of 12 March 2020, rights to disability-related benefits for adults and children expiring before 31 July 2020 are automatically extended for a six-month period. If these rights expired prior to 12 March 2020 but no decision has been taken yet on the renewal or not of these benefits, the six-month extension applies. The same applies to other social benefits as announced by the Secretary of State in charge of persons with disabilities[[19]](#footnote-19).

1. Santé Publique France - French National Health Agency – COVID-19 : epidemiological report of 27 August 2020 - Santé Publique France, COVID-19: point épidémiologique du 27 Août 2020, available in French at: <https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/maladies-et-traumatismes/maladies-et-infections-respiratoires/infection-a-coronavirus/documents/bulletin-national/covid-19-point-epidemiologique-du-27-aout-2020> . Deaths at home are not included. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies - INSEE, Population estimates (provisional data at the end of 2019), available at: <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/2382597?sommaire=2382613> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Santé Publique France - French National Health Agency – COVID-19 : epidemiological report of 27 August 2020 - Santé Publique France, COVID-19: point épidémiologique du 27 Août 2020, available in French at: <https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/maladies-et-traumatismes/maladies-et-infections-respiratoires/infection-a-coronavirus/documents/bulletin-national/covid-19-point-epidemiologique-du-27-aout-2020> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Institutions here are called “hébergement pour personnes handicapées”. 150 000 persons with disabilities lives in these institutions, 4 May 2020. Available in French at: <https://www.faire-face.fr/2020/05/04/270-residents-handicapes-deces-covid-19/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Data collected by Santé Publique France, 27 August 2020, available at:<https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/maladies-et-traumatismes/maladies-et-infections-respiratoires/infection-a-coronavirus/documents/bulletin-national/covid-19-point-epidemiologique-du-27-aout-2020> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Emergency Law n° 2020-290 of 23 March 2020 to deal with the covid-19 epidemic, available in French at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000041746313&categorieLien=cid>. Law n° 2020-546 of 11 May 2020 extending the state of health emergency and supplementing its provisions, available in French at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000041865244&categorieLien=cid> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Defender of Rights, Health crisis overview - Défenseur des droits, Synthèse Urgence Sanitaire, 3 June 2020, p.13. Available in French at: <https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Synth-EUS-NUM-03.06.2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Article from Handicap.fr, available in French at: <https://informations.handicap.fr/a-attestation-derogatoire-aveugle-accessible-coronavirus-12714.php> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Official Information from the Secretary of State in charge of persons with disabilities’ website, available in French at : <https://handicap.gouv.fr/actualites/article/assouplissements-des-sorties-des-personnes-en-situation-de-handicap?fbclid=IwAR32qUXzVOT7d9Ps7vE-67c9m6-yljSNHt1FAGhQZ3eCGFR1bnexPo-skW0> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Collectif Handicaps, Press release, COVID-19 Health crisis - le Collectif Handicaps lance un cri d’alerte, 30 March 2020. Available in French at : <https://www.apf-francehandicap.org/sites/default/files/cp_collectif_handicaps_covid_30_mars_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Secretary of State in charge of persons with disabilities’ website, FAQ on deconfinement is available in accessible format in French at: <https://handicap.gouv.fr/grands-dossiers/coronavirus/article/foire-aux-questions-deconfinement> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Easy-to read resources and videos with captioning and sign language are also available (in French) at: <https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus/espace-handicap> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Easy-to-read self-certification available in French at: <https://handicap.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/attestation-deplacement-falc.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Association Valentin Haüy, easy-to-read self-certification available in French at: <https://www.avh.asso.fr/sites/default/files/attestation_de_deplacement_derogatoire_-_accessible_avh_1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Informations pour les employeurs et directeurs d’établissements ou services accueillant des personnes âgées ou handicapées – informations sur la conduite à tenir envers les professionnels et publics en phase épidémique de coronavirus COVID-19, 20 March 2020, Available in French at : <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/covid-19_stade3_conduite_a_tenir_professionnels_publics_dans_etablissement_paph_20032020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. p.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Unapei is a French Federation of organization representing and defending persons with mental disabilities and their families. Unapei, COVID-19 – Urgence pour les personnes handicapées malades, 4 April 2020. Available in French at: <https://www.unapei.org/article/covid19-urgence-pour-les-personnes-handicapees-malades/> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Défenseur des droits, Synthèse Urgence Sanitaire, 3 June 2020, p.15. Available in French at: <https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Synth-EUS-NUM-03.06.2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. FaireFace, FAQ 3, handicap et coronavirus: “A quelles conditions mes droits à l’AAH seront-ils prolongés?”, 27 March 2020. Available in French at: https://www.faire-face.fr/2020/03/27/faq-handicap-coronavirus-droits-aah-pch-prolonges/ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)