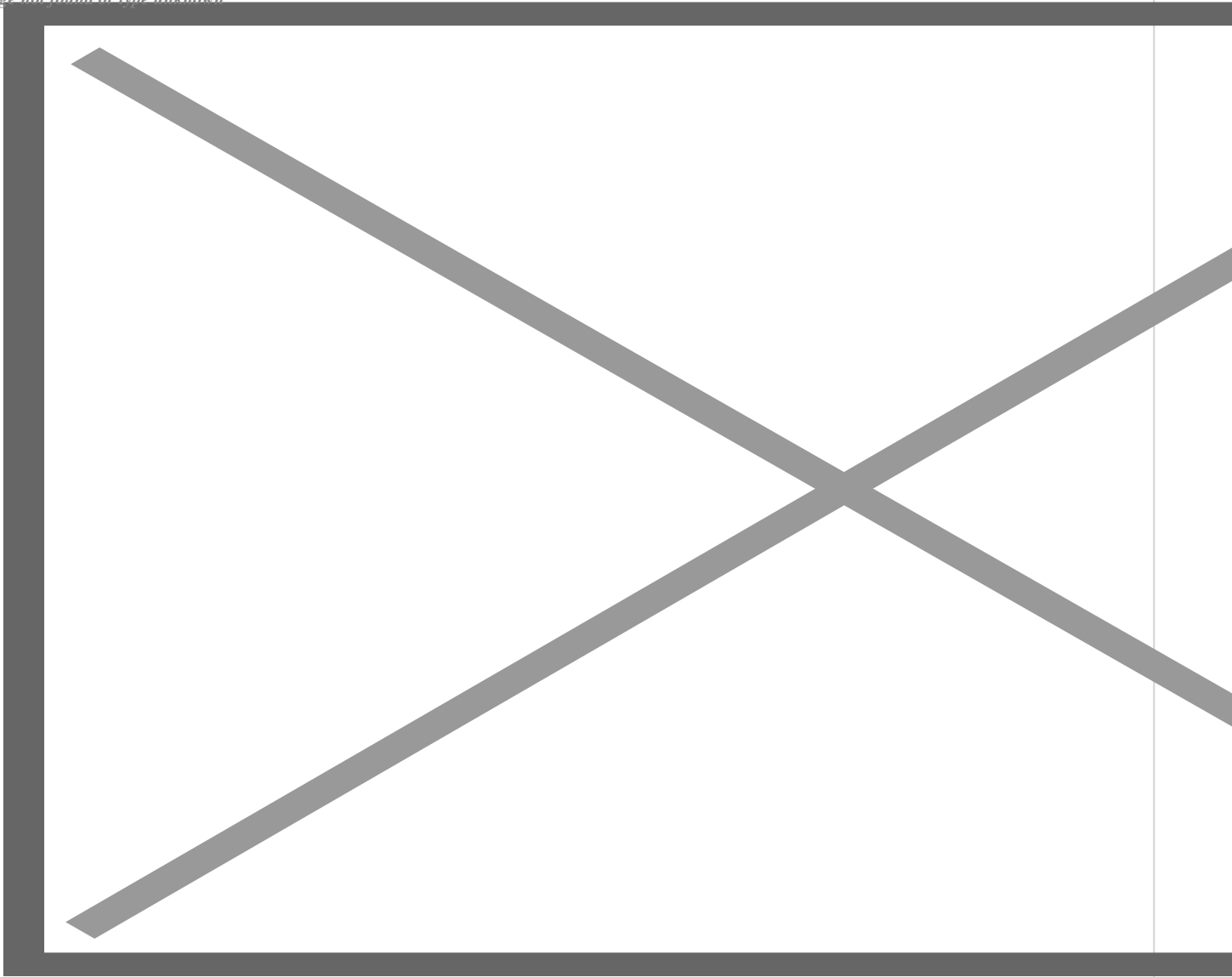


COVID-19 hospitalizations surge across the U.S.

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The United States has reported more than 13.04 million cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began. (Photo: Callaghan O'Hare / Reuters)

New York, November 28 (RHC)-- The number of COVID-19 patients being treated in hospitals across the United States reached 90,000 on Friday, according to Reuters News Agency, as people travelled to attend Thanksgiving holiday gatherings this week.

The rate of hospitalizations is now at the highest since the pandemic began, the news agency said, pushing some medical facilities beyond their capacity and drawing alarm from public health experts and state officials.

Rural regions in New Mexico, which has put a lockdown in place to try to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, are among the hardest-hit areas of the country. On Friday, 880 people were hospitalized across the U.S. state.

A hospital in Curry County, which borders the sparsely populated Texas Panhandle, was the latest to reach capacity in its intensive care unit earlier this week, according to the county's Facebook page.

"This is the reality we face when COVID-19 is allowed to spread unchecked," New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham tweeted on Friday, referencing the situation in Curry County and urging people to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus. "ICUs at capacity, not enough health care workers available," she wrote.

COVID-19 infection rates have been going up for weeks across the United States, and public health officials have warned the situation could worsen as people who mingled with friends and relatives during Thanksgiving gradually develop symptoms.

The country has reported more than 13.04 million cases of COVID-19 to date, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University, as well as more than 264,000 deaths linked to the virus. Many health experts and politicians pleaded with Americans to refrain from gathering for Thanksgiving this year, as socialising between households could accelerate the rate of community transmission and push an already strained healthcare system to the brink.

Some abided by the public health guidance, but a day before the holiday, typically one of the busiest travel days of the year in the U.S., more than 1.07 million people passed through US airports, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) said. That was the most of any single day since the start of the pandemic.

Nearly six million Americans travelled by air from Friday to Wednesday, the TSA also said – less than half what was reported during the same period last year. State governors have also urged people to stay home on Black Friday, a traditionally busy holiday shopping day. "Remember, skip the crowds and shop from home this Black Friday. Our local shops have curbside pickup options and need our support," Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear wrote in a tweet on Friday.

In an effort to mitigate a COVID-19 wave during the U.S. winter, more than 20 states have issued new restrictions, including mask mandates and limiting the capacity of bars, restaurants and houses of worship.

In New York state, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Governor Andrew Cuomo's limits on religious gatherings on Wednesday, voting in favour of an injunction request by a Roman Catholic Diocese and Orthodox Jewish congregations to block the capacity restrictions. It remains unclear if curbs in other states would be challenged following the Supreme Court ruling.



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