

UK and U.S. to achieve herd immunity in 2021, but not Europe

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The race to vaccinate populations in Europe and the West comes as rich nations are accused of hoarding doses at the expense of poorer ones. (Photo: Henry Nicholls/Reuters)

London, February 23 (RHC)-- The United States and the United Kingdom are on course to achieve herd immunity against COVID-19 by the end of 2021 given the speed of their mass vaccination programmes, but key European Union nations are not, according to a new report.

The German database firm Statista studied the number of COVID-19 vaccines that were given on a daily basis, using recent data from local health authorities of each country.

In a study published on Tuesday citing figures from February, it said while the US and the UK administered 1.6 million and 434,444 doses on average per day, Germany gave 110,714 doses, France 96,706, and Italy gave only 67,887 doses a day.

“Only the UK and U.S. are administering sufficient daily COVID-19 vaccines to achieve herd immunity by the end of 2021. In contrast, EU countries would have to nearly triple the current number of daily vaccine administrations to reach the target,” Statista said.

The US and the UK “are already on a promising path,” Statista said, despite having been badly hit by the pandemic – registering the world’s worst and fifth-worst death tolls respectively. The report predicted the U.S. is on course to become the first G20 country to reach herd immunity, and that the UK will become the first large European nation to do so.

In the UK, more than a third of the adult population have so far received a first dose of a vaccine since early December – a widely praised feat the report cited as evidence of the country’s rapid inoculation progress.

It is not yet known what proportion of a population must be vaccinated against SARS-CoV2 – the virus that causes COVID-19 – to achieve herd immunity, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Scientists’ estimates of the threshold vary wildly. Some have said it may be 70 percent, or more. Statista based their modelling on a threshold of 70 percent.

Based on that figure, the report said the current rate of vaccinations in France, Germany and Italy needed to be increased substantially to achieve herd immunity against the coronavirus this year.

In Germany, 315,200 people would need to be vaccinated every day to meet the 70 percent threshold by the end of 2021. According to the data studied, Germany has been recently administering about 110,714 doses per day.

In France, 246,500 people per day would need a dose for that target to be met, more than double the recent number.

Italy, too, needed to significantly ramp up its efforts – with a target of 229,900 doses administered per day compared with the recent average of 67,887, Statista said.

The sluggish vaccination efforts in the three EU countries exemplify slow roll-outs across the rest of the bloc, with efforts hampered by delivery delays, production bottlenecks and political blunders.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen admitted last month that the EU had been too late to approve COVID-19 vaccines and overly optimistic regarding production.

Von der Leyen said despite the problems, 70 percent of adults in the bloc should have been inoculated by the end of the summer.



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