

# France sees over 100,000 daily virus infections for 1st time

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Hospital workers pose for a selfie together in the COVID-19 intensive care unit of the la Timone hospital in Marseille, southern France, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021. Marseille's La Timone Hospital, one of France's biggest hospitals, has weathered wave after wave of COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole

France has recorded more than 100,000 virus infections in a single day

for the first time in the pandemic and COVID-19 hospitalizations have doubled over the past month, as the fast-spreading omicron variant complicates the French government's efforts to stave off a new lockdown.

More than 1 in 100 people in the Paris region have tested positive in the past week, according to the regional health service. Most new infections are linked to the omicron variant, which [government experts](#) predict will be dominant in France in the coming days. Omicron is already dominant in Britain, right across the Channel.

Meanwhile a surge in delta variant infections in recent months is pushing up hospital admissions in France, and put ICUs under strain again over the Christmas holidays. More than 1,000 people in France with the virus died over the past week, bringing the country's overall death toll to more than 122,000.

President Emmanuel Macron's [government](#) is holding emergency meetings Monday to discuss the next steps in tackling the virus. Some scientists and educators have urged delaying the post-holiday return to school, or suggested re-imposing a curfew.

But France's education minister says schools should open as usual on Jan. 3, and other [government officials](#) are working to avoid measures that would hammer the country's [economic recovery](#).



Emergency room nurse Sonia Harrat takes a break while working on Christmas day at the la Timone hospital in Marseille, southern France, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021. Marseille's La Timone Hospital, one of France's biggest hospitals, has weathered wave after wave of COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole

Instead the French government is hoping that stepped-up vaccinations will be enough. The government is pushing a draft law that would require vaccination to enter all restaurants and many public venues, instead of the current health pass system which allows people to produce a negative test or proof of recovery if they're not vaccinated.

In neighboring Belgium, the government imposed new measures starting Sunday that ordered cultural venues like [movie theaters](#) and concert halls to close.

Some venues defied the ban, and thousands of performers, event organizers and others demonstrated Sunday in Brussels against the decision, carrying signs reading "The Show Must Go On" or "No Culture No Future." They accuse the Belgian government of double standards because it allowed Christmas markets, with their boisterous crowds and mulled wine drinking, to stay open, along with restaurants and bars.



Hospital worker Houda Mokrani takes a selfie with her colleagues on Christmas day in the COVID-19 intensive care unit at the La Timone hospital in Marseille, southern France, Friday, Dec. 25, 2021. Marseille's La Timone Hospital, one of France's biggest hospitals, has weathered wave after wave of COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole



A doctor leaves the room of a patient as hospital workers enjoy a Christmas day lunch together in the COVID-19 intensive care unit of the la Timone hospital in Marseille, southern France, Friday, Dec. 25, 2021. Marseille's La Timone Hospital, one of France's biggest hospitals, has weathered wave after wave of COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole



A medical staff prepares nasal swabs to test a woman with her children at a testing site on the Christmas Eve in La Celle-Saint-Cloud, west of Paris, Friday, Dec. 24, 2021. President Emmanuel Macron released a selfie-style TikTok video on Thursday calling on young people to get themselves tested before joining family members for the holidays. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler



A boy holds a sign referring to cancelled performance as he protests with other artists during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



People lining up to get a nasal swap at a mobile COVID-19 testing site on the Christmas Eve at the Champs Elysees avenue in Paris, Friday, Dec. 24, 2021. President Emmanuel Macron released a selfie-style TikTok video on Thursday calling on young people to get themselves tested before joining family members for the holidays. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler





A New Orleans brass band plays in the street during a demonstration of people in the arts sector in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



A person holds a sign which reads 'Give us a seat at the theatre' as they protest with other artists during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



A man holds a sign which reads 'I don't drink Gluhwein' as he protests with other artists during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



A man holds a sign which reads 'Land of double standards' as he protests with other artists during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



A dog wears a sign which reads 'Grrr' as it stands with a protestors during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo



Children hold signs referring to cancelled performances as they protest with other artists during a demonstration in Brussels on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021. Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government's decision to close down the country's cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron virus variant. Gluhwein refers to a common drink which is served at Christmas markets. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo

Even the scientific committee advising the Belgian government had not asked for the culture industry closures, leaving virologist Marc Van Ranst to ponder that, in Belgium, "gluhwein beat culture."

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, the Dutch government has gone farther than most European countries and shut down all nonessential stores, restaurants and bars and extended the school holidays in a [partial new lockdown](#).

In Britain, where the [omicron variant](#) has been dominant for days, government requirements have been largely voluntary and milder than those on the continent, but the Conservative government said it could impose new restrictions after Christmas. The U.K. hit a new high of 122,186 daily infections on Friday, but did not report figures for Christmas.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland imposed new restrictions Sunday on socializing, mainly limiting the size of gatherings, moves that the restaurant, pub and nightclub industries have described as economically devastating.

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