

Germany mulls new COVID restrictions as omicron advances

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A medical staff gives syringes with vaccination against the coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease to a doctor inside the Klunkerkranich Restaurant and night club during an ongoing vaccination campaign of the Clubkommission in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022. German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach renewed an appeal for vaccine holdouts to reconsider. He said people who remain unvaccinated in Germany can't expect contact restrictions for them to be lifted "in the short- or medium-term." The Clubcommission Berlin, an association that protects and supports the Berlin club culture. Credit: AP

Photo/Markus Schreiber

Germany's leaders are set to consider possible new restrictions and changes to quarantine rules on Friday as the new omicron variant advances quickly.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the country's 16 state governors are likely to build on restrictions introduced just after Christmas that limited private gatherings to 10 people, among other things.

One measure under consideration is toughening a measure that requires people to provide proof of full vaccination or recovery to enter restaurants or bars. They could now be required to provide proof of either a booster shot or a fresh negative test.

Scholz and the governors also are expected to consider shortening required quarantine or self-isolation periods that are currently as long as 14 days, something that many other countries already have done.

The COVID-19 situation in Germany has been foggy for the past two weeks because of very patchy testing and slow reporting over the holiday period. Official figures, which authorities have acknowledged don't yet show the full picture, have shown a steady increase in the infection rate over the past week.

On Friday, the national disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, reported an official rate of 303.4 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. Over the past 24 hours, 56,335 new cases were reported.



Medical staff prepare syringes with vaccination against the coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease inside Klunkerkranch Restaurant and night club during an ongoing vaccination campaign of the Clubkommission in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022. German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach renewed an appeal for vaccine holdouts to reconsider. He said people who remain unvaccinated in Germany can't expect contact restrictions for them to be lifted "in the short- or medium-term." The Clubcommission Berlin, an association that protects and supports the Berlin club culture. Credit: AP Photo/Markus Schreiber

In its weekly report on Thursday, the institute said that omicron accounted for 44.3% of cases tested for variants in Germany last week, up from 15.8% the previous week.

Germany's vaccination campaign is regaining speed after the holidays. As of Thursday, 71.5% of the population had received a full first vaccine course and 40.9% had had a booster shot.

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