

Germany says omicron surge 'under control' despite records

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Germany's coronavirus surge fueled by the omicron variant remains "under control" despite a string of new infection records, the country's health minister said Friday.

Cases as a result of the highly contagious [variant](#) in the European Union's most populous nation shot up at a later stage than in several other countries in the region. Officials attribute that to [restrictions](#) such as curbs on private gatherings, nightclub closures and requirements for restaurant and bar patrons to have received a booster shot or to present a negative test.

Yet infections continue to rise steeply in the country of 83 million. On Thursday, new cases reported in the previous 24 hours topped 200,000 for the first time. On Friday, the infection rate reached another record of 1,073 new cases per 100,000 residents in a week.

Those numbers didn't deter Health Minister Karl Lauterbach from declaring that authorities "have the [omicron](#) wave in Germany well under control at the moment."

Lauterbach told reporters in Berlin that the infection rate among the elderly - many of whom remain unvaccinated - is much lower than the average.

The [omicron variant](#) surge is so far slightly below projections, Lauterbach said. Daily infections are expected to reach up to 400,000

before falling, likely in mid-February. The drop could come later the same month because of a [mutation of omicron](#) known as BA.2, he added.

The government may ease restrictions "when the wave is broken," and Lauterbach said that is "a very realistic perspective."

The minister defended a recent decision to cut by half the six-month recovery period of infected people, although he conceded a "communication problem" with the announcement's abruptness. He said Germany is pushing for all other EU countries to do the same.

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