

# Portugal adds virus booster jab incentives, cuts isolation

January 6 2022, by Barry Hatton

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People, some wearing face masks, cross a street in Lisbon, Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022. Authorities in Portugal are wrestling with a conundrum: how to hold a general election scheduled for Jan. 30 amid a surge in COVID-19 cases that is confining hundreds of thousands of potential voters to their homes. Around 400,000 people are currently in isolation in the country of 10.3 million. Political leaders say they are trying to figure out how to organize the ballot. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

Portugal's government announced Thursday further incentives for people to get COVID-19 booster shots and said new rules will require people to isolate only if they live with someone who tests positive.

People who had a [booster](#) jab two weeks previously will from next Monday no longer need to show a negative coronavirus [test](#) result to attend events and enter places where it otherwise would be required, Prime Minister António Costa said.

Also, anyone who has had a booster shot will be exempt from isolating, unless they live with an infected person. That means about 270,000 [people](#) of the around 400,000 currently in isolation will be allowed out, Costa said.

"This is an incentive ... to get a booster," he said.

Furthermore, the government is scrapping a requirement to isolate if a work or school colleague tests positive. That measure had forced coworkers and entire school classes to be sent home.

The change addresses the problems of company staff shortages and turmoil at schools witnessed across Europe in recent times as the [omicron variant](#) has spread and infected record numbers of people.

The alterations take effect next week.

Negative tests will still be required for everyone arriving in Portugal by plane, Costa said, and mandatory working from home is extended from Jan. 9 to 14.



A man wearing a face mask on his chin checks a map at a subway station, Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022. Portugal's government has announced new incentives for people to get COVID-19 booster shots. People who had a booster jab two weeks previously will from next Monday no longer need to show a negative coronavirus test result to attend events and enter places where it otherwise would be required. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A man enters a subway station in Lisbon, Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

The government is awaiting an assessment it has requested from the attorney general's office about what changes might be made to voting procedures for a [general election](#) scheduled for Jan. 30, Costa said.

With the omicron surge expected to continue at least into next week, potentially hundreds of thousands of voters could be in home confinement at the end of the month, and authorities are searching for ways of holding the ballot.

Detailed electoral laws govern the vote and they can be changed only by parliament, which has already been dissolved.



A sign shows directions for the COVID-19 emergency at Lisbon's main Santa Maria hospital, Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022. The number of officially recorded new daily COVID-19 infections in Portugal hit a new record Wednesday, reaching almost 40,000. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

Costa said that 89% of Portugal's population of 10.3 million people is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Around 3 million people have received booster shots.

Portugal, where vaccine uptake is traditionally strong, is one of the leading countries in the world in coronavirus jabs.

New daily cases hit a record of almost 40,000 on Wednesday, but

hospitalizations have remained much lower than in previous surges. Portugal has been recording on average fewer than 20 deaths a day in recent weeks.

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