



Written by [James Murphy](#) on February 11, 2022

## Sweden Declares COVID-19 Pandemic Over; Scraps Most Remaining Restrictions

Sweden, a Scandinavian nation that never imposed mandatory lockdowns or wearing masks, instead opting for voluntary approaches to dealing with the Chinese virus commonly known as COVID-19, declared on Wednesday that, for all intents and purposes, they consider the pandemic to be over.

The government announced that it was suspending the few remaining pandemic restrictions, including getting rid of the nation's vaccine passport system, allowing bars and restaurants to remain open beyond 11 p.m., and abolishing most COVID testing rules.



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Earlier this week, Sweden's National Health Agency claimed that the overuse of testing was not cost effective. The nation of approximately 10.4 million people had been spending in excess of \$55 million per week on testing in the first weeks of 2022, and since the pandemic began has spent more than \$2.6 billion on testing.

The government declared that readily available vaccinations and the far less-severe omicron variant of the virus have effectively ended the pandemic as far as government restrictions for the Nordic country are concerned.

"As we know this pandemic, I would say it's over," Minister of Health Lena Hallengren said. "It's not over, but as we know it in terms of quick changes and restrictions it is."

Sweden follows in the footsteps of fellow Scandinavian country Denmark, which decided to drop all restrictions at the beginning of February, with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen declaring, "We are ready to step out of the shadow of the coronavirus. We say 'goodbye' to restrictions and 'welcome' to the life we knew before."

Norway has also [dropped](#) most of its COVID-19 measures, including curfews on how late bars and restaurants can remain open and their limit of 10 visitors in private homes. Norway made its adjustments despite a recent surge in infections.

"Even if many more people are becoming infected, there are fewer who are hospitalized. We're well protected by vaccines. This means that we can relax many measures even as infections are rising rapidly," said Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

COVID-19 restrictions are easing elsewhere in Europe, as well. In the south, Italy and Spain have recently dropped their outdoor mandates. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has called upon the European Union to begin treating COVID-19 as an [endemic illness](#) akin to the flu.

France has announced that it will drop its indoor mask mandate for almost all public places on February



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28, and Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands are all signaling that restrictions may soon be coming to an end.

The Swedish announcement wasn't well received by everyone in the nation, though.

"We should have a little more patience, wait at least a couple of more weeks. And we are wealthy enough to keep testing," said Fredrik Elgh, professor of virology at Umeå University in northern Sweden. "The disease is still a huge strain on society."

And our friends at the World Health Organization (WHO) are also cautioning against opening up too soon. On February 8, Maria Van Kerkhove of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program said: "We are asking countries to continue to be cautious and individuals to continue to be cautious as we go forward."

"Again, it will not be forever. You will not need to wear a mask forever. We will not need to physically distance forever but, for now, it's really important that we be careful," Van Kerkhove warned.

WHO emergencies chief Mike Ryan had his own warning for countries who might wish to claim — without his agency's say-so — that the end of the pandemic is at hand. "If you open doors quickly you better be able to close them pretty quickly as well," he threatened.

Regardless of what WHO naysayers like Ryan might say, it's far past time for governments to lift all restrictions and declare this pandemic officially over. For two years the world has allowed petty functionaries such as Anthony Fauci to rule over the global populace with pronouncements of fear and threats of dire consequences that have turned out to be far less dire than predicted.

It's over already.





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