

Subscribe Try 6 Free Issues

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [World News](#) | [Europe](#)

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH . . .

Swedish towns ban face masks despite mounting Covid death toll

Vetoos follow a string of anti-mask statements by nation's top officials

CHAS NEWKEY-BURDEN

11 FEB 2021



Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP via Getty Images

Towns across Sweden are banning the use of face masks despite facing the twin threats of widespread Covid outbreaks and a slow rollout of vaccines.

Is coronavirus outlier Sweden on the verge of a rules policy U-turn?

Officials in Halmstad municipality recently forced a teacher to remove their mask and banned the use of all forms of PPE in schools. And while “the municipality eventually backed down”, other “examples of mask bans keep popping up in Sweden”, according to an article on [The Conversation](#) by two Swedish academics.

These “local mask bans” are a “logical product of nine months of consistent anti-mask statements by the Swedish state”, write Tine Walravens, assistant professor in international economics at the Copenhagen Business School, and Paul O'Shea, senior lecturer in South-East Asian Studies at Lund University.

An open mind on the issues that matter

The Week magazine is simple and clever. Subscribe today and your first 6 issues are completely free.

START YOUR FREE TRIAL

The country's "public health agency has consistently stated that masks are ineffective and that their use could actually increase the spread of Covid-19", the pair explain.

Indeed, as [France24](#) notes, Sweden "[stood apart from other nations by shunning lockdowns](#)" throughout last year and was "one of the few holdouts in recommending widespread mask use, even after the World Health Organization changed their advice in June".

In the wake of the advice change, Health Minister Lena Hallengren said that the Swedish government did not have a culture of making decisions about protective clothing such as masks, and that the evidence supporting the wearing of face coverings was "astonishingly weak".

[Stockholm did eventually U-turn on face masks](#), with Prime Minister Stefan Lofven saying in December that the government was "recommending face masks and that they should be used on public transport at certain times".

Discover The WeekDay

A twice-daily digest of the biggest news stories of the day – and the best features from our website

Enter email address...

SIGN ME UP

The government's previous advice appears to have stuck, however, with continuing reports of localised mask bans even after Sweden imposed lockdown measures in early January, as the nation's infection and death rates continued to outstrip those of Nordic neighbours.

Sweden has now reported more than 600,000 coronavirus cases and more than 12,000 related deaths. Meanwhile, fewer than four vaccine doses have been administered for every 100 people in the ten million-strong population, according to latest tracking from [Oxford University](#).

SHARE:



COVID-19

SWEDEN

SCIENCE & HEALTH

CORONAVIRUS

EUROPE

Recommended

CORONAVIRUS

Covid-19: everything you need to know about coronavirus

IN BRIEF

Indian Wells tennis cancelled – is Wimbledon in danger?

IN FOCUS

How many people need to be vaccinated to get life back to normal?

WHY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT . . .

Four things we learnt about the jab campaign from vaccine taskforce boss

Popular articles

DAILY BRIEFING

Ten Things You Need to Know Today: 18 Feb 2021

TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

Why Harry and Meghan's Oprah interview is the 'final straw' for Royal Family

IN DEPTH

Best TV crime dramas to watch in 2021

Popular searches

COVID VACCINE DOWNING STREET BRIEFING

SEE ALL





[Contact Us](#)

[About Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Kiplinger](#)

[MoneyWeek](#)

[The Week US](#)

[Privacy Preferences](#)

Discover The WeekDay

A twice-daily digest of the biggest news stories of the day – and the best features from our website

Enter email address...

SIGN ME UP

Copyright © Dennis Publishing Limited 2021. All rights reserved.

The Week™ is a registered trade mark.

