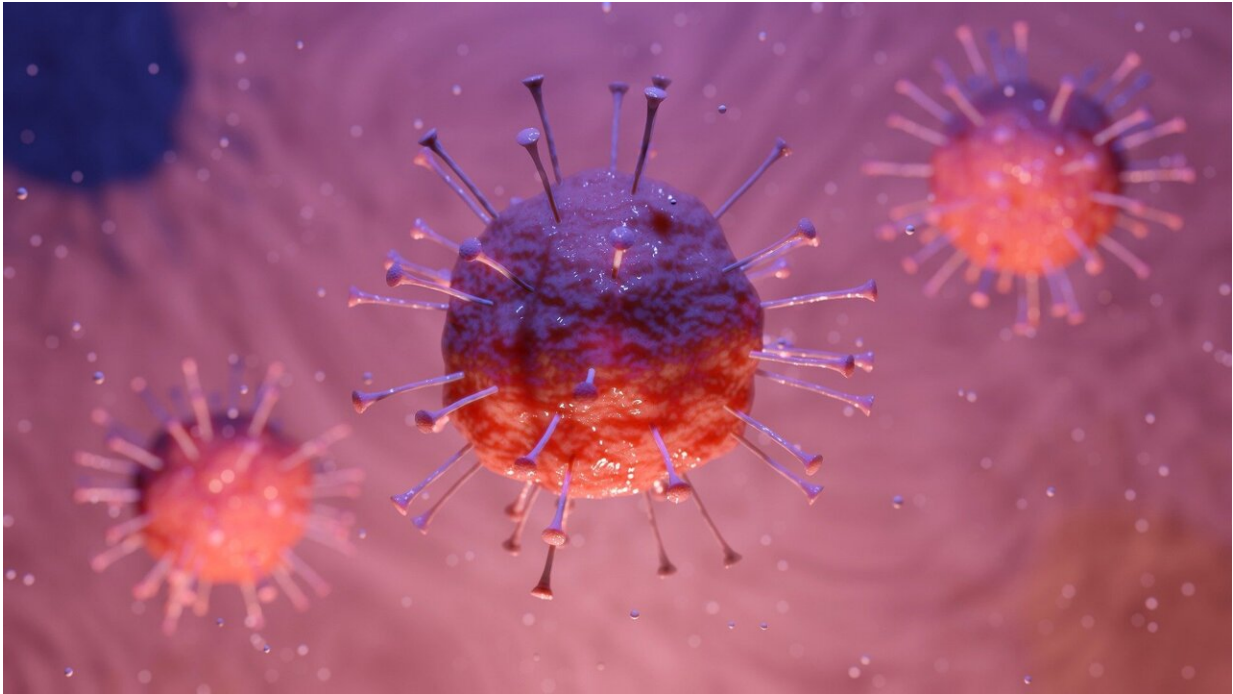


Coronavirus deaths in Sweden pass 1,000

April 14 2020



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Sweden on Tuesday reported that more than 1,000 people had died from the novel coronavirus, as a group of experts attacked the authorities' approach to the crisis.

Sweden's Public Health Agency said it had recorded a total of 11,445 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,033 deaths.

And it warned that because not all deaths had yet been reported over the four-day Easter weekend, the true number might be higher.

"Deceased per day is probably the figure we can trust the least today, because there is normally a lot of trailing when it comes to weekends," state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell told journalists.

Sweden has not imposed the extraordinary lockdown orders implemented elsewhere in Europe to stem the spread of the virus, instead calling for citizens to take responsibility to follow social distancing guidelines.

The government has banned gatherings of more than 50 people and barred visits to nursing homes.

But the Nordic country's softer approach has still drawn criticism abroad and the been the subject of fierce debate at home.

A group of 22 doctors, virologists and researchers criticised the Public Health Agency in an op-ed published by Dagens Nyheter newspaper on Tuesday.

They accused it of having failed to draw up a proper strategy, pointing out that the mortality rate in Sweden was now way above that of its Nordic neighbours.

"So in Sweden more than 10 times as many people are dying than in our neighbouring country Finland," they wrote while stressing a number of more aggressive measures taken in Finland.

During the news conference, Sweden's Anders Tegnell rejected the criticism from the experts, disputing the figures they had advanced.

Tegnell has previously stated that Finland appears to be in a different phase of the epidemic, which partly explains the lower mortality.

Finland, which has about half the population of Sweden, had as of Tuesday reported 64 deaths, and has closed down restaurants and schools.

On Tuesday, their public health chief recommended people wear masks in public to counter the spread of the virus by asymptomatic carriers.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Ann Linde has already pushed back at criticism from US President Donald Trump, who last week said the country was not doing enough to combat the virus.

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