

Sweden stands by virus strategy despite tighter measures

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Sweden is continuing to pursue the same strategy against the COVID-19 pandemic, despite a recent slew of stricter measures, Prime Minister Stefan Lofven insisted on Tuesday.

Sweden has made headlines around the world for its decision to combat the spread of the virus with mostly non-coercive measures and never

imposing the type of lockdown seen elsewhere around Europe.

But faced with a strong second wave and a once again rapidly rising [death toll](#), the country imposed stronger measures during the autumn, notably a ban on public gatherings of more than eight people and a call for people to severely limit social interactions to one household of a very small circle of friends.

On Monday, the country for the first time during the pandemic imposed a travel ban to one of its Nordic neighbours, barring entry from Denmark to avoid lockdown-weary Danes travelling to Sweden to go shopping.

"I can understand the urge to ask: Has the strategy been changed? No, in essence it is the exact same strategy, make sure to keep the spread down as much as possible," Lofven told broadcaster SVT.

"Of course you have to be able to make changes, depending on the situation," Lofven said.

Even if stay-at-home orders and a complete closure of restaurants and shops are not on the agenda, new measures were introduced on Friday, including a ban on the sale of alcohol after 8:00 pm (1900 GMT) and for the first time a recommendation to wear masks on [public transport](#).

Caps on the number of visitors to shops and gyms were also announced together with requirement for a maximum of four people per table in restaurants.

The government is also preparing a one-year "pandemic law" that could limit the number of people in [public places](#) and regulate businesses and services by restricting opening hours or forcing them to close.

Originally, the government was aiming to have it in place by March, but now aims to be passed by January.

At a press conference, Lofven also promised a [government](#) probe of elderly care—where nearly half of deaths have occurred—and a committee to investigate whether the country's constitution needs to be amended to allow future governments more powers in a similar crisis.

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