

# Denmark to shut down public venues as virus infections rise

December 17 2021, by Jan M. Olsen

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Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen speaks during a press conference in the Prime Minister's Office in Copenhagen, Denmark, Friday Dec. 17, 2021. The Danish Prime Minister said Friday that theaters, cinemas, concert halls, amusement parks, museums and art galleries must shut down to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Credit: Olafur Steinar Gestsson/Ritzau Scanpix via AP

Denmark's prime minister announced Friday that theaters, cinemas, concert halls, amusement parks, museums and art galleries across the country must close down under new restrictions to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the measures also require stores smaller than 2,000 square meters (21,528 square feet) and restaurants to limit their number of customers. Restaurants must serve their last meals and alcoholic beverages at 10 p.m. and close at 11 p.m.

The partial shutdown order was approved later Friday by Parliament's 21-member Epidemic Committee. Most restrictions apply as of Sunday at 8 a.m.

The Danish government is advising residents to limit social contacts over the Christmas holidays, and urged public and private companies to have employees work from home where possible.

"We are not talking about shutting down the whole country as we did last year," Frederiksen said. "Our goal is still to keep as large sections of society open as possible. We need to curb activity. We all need to limit our social contacts."

Like many other European countries, Denmark is seeing an uptick in COVID-19 cases, with health authorities saying the number of infections and hospitalizations has risen faster than expected.

The country reported 9,999 new cases on Thursday, and the number was above 11,000 on Friday, the [prime minister](#) said.

The new variant "spreads at lightning speed. It would be irresponsible not to recommend new restrictions," said Soeren Brostroem, head of the Danish Health Authority.



Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen speaks during a press conference with Health Minister Magnus Heunicke, left, and Director of the National Board of Health Soren Brostrom, right, in the Prime Minister's Office in Copenhagen, Denmark, Friday Dec. 17, 2021. The Danish Prime Minister said Friday that theaters, cinemas, concert halls, amusement parks, museums and art galleries must shut down to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Credit: Olafur Steinar Gestsson/Ritzau Scanpix via AP

Lars Sandahl Sorensen, head of the Confederation of Danish Industry, representing approximately 18,000 companies, said the move "was not on anyone's wish list. Not at all. It will unfortunately be a sad Christmas for many."

Denmark currently requires [face masks](#) on public transportation and in shops. The government wants to extend the mask mandate to include [educational institutions](#) and places of worship.

Following the government's announcement, the royal palace said some of the planned January celebrations to mark the 50th jubilee of Denmark's popular monarch, Queen Margrethe, would be postponed.

They include a mid-month ride through Copenhagen in a horse-drawn carriage and a series of events attended by Denmark's royal family, Danish officials and foreign guests, both in the capital and around the country.

The queen plans to try to lay a wreath on her parents' grave as planned on Jan. 14—50 years after the death of her father King Frederik IX—and to meet with the Danish government and officials, the palace said.

Last year, Denmark was one of the first European countries to close schools because of the pandemic, and the government sent home all public employees without critical functions. The government also barred gatherings of more than 100 people.

In September, the [government](#) said the outbreak no longer was to be considered "a socially critical disease," citing the high rate of vaccination.

According to the latest figures, 80% of people over age 5 in Denmark have received two shots, while 84% have been given the first jab.

In Finland, the Institute for Health and Welfare on Friday reintroduced a recommendation for people to use face masks in public spaces, including on public transportation. It came into force Friday and applies to everyone 12 and older.

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