

Sweden right not to lockdown for COVID: report

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Sweden made the right decision not to impose a lockdown early on in the COVID pandemic, but should have introduced more measures earlier, a government-appointed commission said on Friday.

The Scandinavian country made headlines early on in the [pandemic](#) by not introducing a lockdown, instead issuing recommendations on homeworking, social distancing and good hand hygiene.

"In comparison with the rest of Europe, Sweden has come through the pandemic relatively well and is among the countries with the lowest excess mortality over the period 2020-2021," the commission wrote in its [final report](#).

"Focusing on advice and recommendations which people were expected to follow voluntarily was fundamentally correct. It meant that citizens retained more of their personal freedom than in many other countries", it said.

But tougher measures should have been introduced in February-March 2020, the report said, noting that during the first wave Sweden had [death rates](#) that "were among the highest in Europe".

"Earlier and additional steps should have been taken to try to slow community transmission of the virus", it said.

While the commission hailed Sweden's decision to keep most schools open during the first wave, it said that by March 2020 there "should have been temporary closures" of indoor places where people gather, such as shopping centres, restaurants, sport events and so on.

In particular, it criticised the fact that it took until the end of March 2020 for the limit on public gatherings to be lowered to 50 people.

At later stages of the pandemic, Sweden eventually introduced stricter measures, including bans on elderly home visits, earlier closings at bars and restaurants, and vaccine passes for indoor events.

The commission also said the government should have assumed leadership of all aspects of COVID crisis management, despite the Public Health Agency's large degree of autonomy and a healthcare system managed by self-governing regional councils.

"The government had too one-sided a dependence on assessments made by the Public Health Agency", it said.

An earlier partial report by the commission had also criticised the country's slowness in setting up adequate testing measures.

With more than 17,000 fatalities so far, Sweden's [death toll](#) is slightly better than the European average but is far higher per capita than those of neighbouring Norway, Finland and Denmark.

The Scandinavian country lifted all its COVID restrictions on February 9.

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