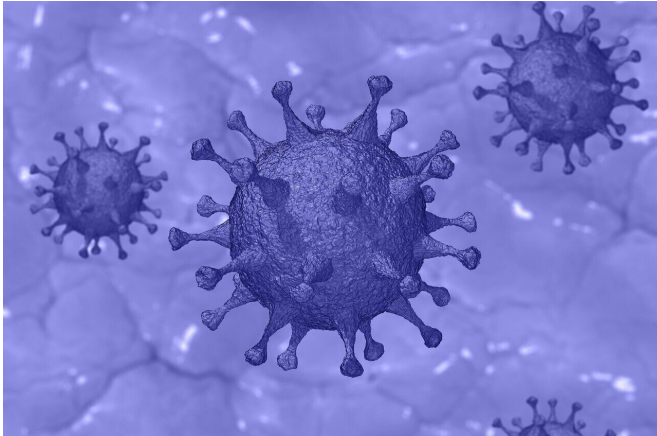


Sweden tops EU virus case rates

20 May 2021



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For the first time this year, Sweden's incidence rate of coronavirus cases has topped European Union figures, the EU's health authority said Thursday, but associated deaths are among the lowest.

The country had a 14-day-notification rate of 577 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Passing one million cases in early May, Sweden has been near the top, after Cyprus, for weeks with new cases subsiding quicker in the rest of Europe.

Sweden saw a peak in mid-April with a 14-day-notification rate of over 800 per 100,000 inhabitants.

"Many countries in Europe have been at considerably higher levels than what we are seeing now, so it's probably more about Sweden had a fairly late surge in this hopefully last third wave," state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell told a press conference, lamenting that the caseload was still higher than last summer.

The Scandinavian country has never imposed the

type of lockdown seen elsewhere in Europe, controversially relying on mostly non-coercive measures.

It has however gradually tightened restrictions since November, including a ban on [alcohol sales](#) after eight pm and on public gatherings of more than eight people.

Since March, cafes, bars and restaurants have also been required to shut by 8:30 pm.

The 14-day-notification for deaths however was much lower than many other countries, with 12 cases per million inhabitants. In comparison, Hungary and Croatia saw [death rates](#) of 133 and 128 per million inhabitants respectively.

The total number of deaths associated with COVID-19 since the start of pandemic reached 14,351 on Thursday, putting Sweden in the middle of the pack in Europe, although well ahead of Nordic neighbours Finland, Norway and Denmark,

Mortality statistics also show Sweden had a lower than average excess mortality in 2020, compared to the rest of Europe.

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