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## Denmark to scrap all coronavirus restrictions as it declares COVID-19 'under control'

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Denmark is set to remove all its remaining measures against the spread of COVID-19—with the exception of border controls—as the government says the country's epidemic is "under control."

The government announced the move Friday, explaining that it had always promised not to maintain the measures any longer than necessary. "We are there now," said Health Minister Magnus Heunicke in a statement hailing Denmark's high vaccination levels. Health authorities were involved in the decision.

Denmark did not have many measures left in place anyway—just a requirement for visitors to restaurants, bars, cinemas, and some other indoor facilities to prove vaccination, recovery, or lack of infection. It started phasing out mask mandates in June.

All of Denmark's national COVID rules (with the exception of its entry restrictions) were legally underpinned by a classification of the coronavirus as a "critical threat to society." The government will allow this classification to expire on Sept. 10, when the country's *Coronapas* health pass will no longer be needed to access nightclubs and sports games; it will no longer be required for other facilities as of Wednesday this week.

Over 71% of the Danish population is now fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The country's seven-day incidence rate—representing known infections per 100,000 people over the last week—is **currently** 113, compared with 333 in the U.S., 355 in the U.K., and 77 in Germany. The country is reporting fewer than 1,000 new cases each day, and losing at most a few people each day to COVID-19.

That makes its decision to drop restrictions less risky than a recent, similar move **in the U.K.**, where there are regularly more than 130 daily deaths. (The U.K.'s population is around 11 times the size of Denmark's.)

However, the emergence of new variants can rapidly change policy demands. Europe's poster child for this fact is the Netherlands, which threw out most restrictions in June only to see the Delta strain—which caused an **over 500% increase** in case numbers over a single week—force their reintroduction just two weeks later. "We made a miscalculation," **said** Prime Minister Mark Rutte in mid-July.

The Danish government says it is aware of this risk. "Even though we are in a good place right now, we are not out of the epidemic," said Heunicke in Friday's statement, promising the administration would "not hesitate to act quickly" if needed.

It should also be noted that Denmark's high numbers of vaccinated citizens do not, of course, include children under the age of 12. Infection rates are soaring in that demographic, but Danish health authorities have concluded that this will rarely result in serious illness or death.

Søren Brostrøm, director of the National Board of Health, told The Local that the country does not "have a strategy that the infection should spread through the children, but we accept infection because children don't get so sick."