# Country summary: Sweden

## COVID-19 cases

As of 21 September 2020, Sweden has registered 88,237 COVID-19 cases and 5,865 related deaths[[1]](#footnote-0). Data was not disaggregated by disability.

Some preliminary data on deaths in care homes has been collected and in few cases regional disaggregation is available[[2]](#footnote-1).

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

Sweden did not declare a state of emergency and did not issue a nation-wide lockdown. However, the Government took a series of specific provisions, like banning gatherings over 50 people, advising citizens to work from home “if possible”, and holding classes remotely for high-school students[[3]](#footnote-2). The Swedish Public Health Agency generally took the lead in guiding the Government through the pandemic and related restrictions[[4]](#footnote-3).

Upon being asked by representative organizations, Government officials admitted that there was no preparedness plan in place for persons with disabilities, with only some special rules being applied to “risk groups”[[5]](#footnote-4). Pressure was exercised by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions for the Government to issue temporary powers to local authorities to decide on facilities and services for persons with disabilities; while the authority was not passed, local agencies have cut back services for persons with disabilities[[6]](#footnote-5).

## Involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities

A disability delegation met with representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs to discuss COVID-19 aftermath[[7]](#footnote-6). However, the Government appointed a commission of experts on 3rd July to evaluate measures and public policy in national, local and regional government and public agencies. The representative DPOs asked to be part of the commission but were denied possibility[[8]](#footnote-7).

As far as actions taken by DPOs:

* The Swedish Disability Rights Federation, called on authorities to involve organisations of persons with disabilities in the creation of ethical guidelines on prioritisation of patients[[9]](#footnote-8). These Guidelines have since been published, Funktionskratt were not involved but their comments were taken in consideration and state that prioritisation must not be based on the patient's social situation or position, disability or on whether the patient himself has contributed to his condition[[10]](#footnote-9).
* The organization HejaOlika, denounced moves by local authorities to prioritise care in group homes and cut funding to services that provide community-based support[[11]](#footnote-10).
* Funktionsratt released a call on government and responsible authorities for the need for benefits for people who are at risk of a serious disease course in covid-19 and their relatives, many of whom have been forced to stay home from work to protect themselves or their relatives[[12]](#footnote-11).

## Communications and announcements

Most information was not available in accessible formats on mainstream platforms and was not easy to find unless one knew where to search. Only recently, after advocacy efforts by DPOs, the Public Health Agency started having subtitles and sign language interpretation in their conferences. Additionally, Emergency information has information in easy to read and sign language[[13]](#footnote-12).

A critique by the Swedish Association for hard of hearing has been about the lack of accessible contact during the COVID-19 crisis, both 1177 and 112 emergency number for the hard of hearing by phone[[14]](#footnote-13).

## Institutions and closed settings

Very little data was collected on the situation in institutions and closed settings. Two main policy efforts by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare:

* Issued preliminary data on deaths in special housing for persons with disabilities according to LSS law (after proposals from member organisation FUB)[[15]](#footnote-14).
* Released documents for staff within nursing homes and home care[[16]](#footnote-15).

Visits to closed settings were restricted, and, notably, all prisons have had a restraining order and very limited opportunities for leave (permission) since March 2020. Isolation in both institutions and prisons has occurred to a greater extent. Sweden has previously been criticized for disproportionately long detention periods, even for young criminal suspects.

All efforts regarding the right to a doctor, psychologist, etc. have been delayed during the pandemic. There are studies that show that about 25% of convicted people in the prison service are judged to have ADHD. All restrictions during the pandemic thus affect a large proportion of rights holders in the prison service[[17]](#footnote-16).

## Health care

On healthcare, two main points were raised:

1. Hospitals informed persons in risk groups that they were not allowed to go to hospital[[18]](#footnote-17).
2. Guidelines on Prioritization of patients’ state that prioritisation must not be based on the patient's social situation or position, disability or on whether the patient himself has contributed to his condition[[19]](#footnote-18).

## Social Protection

Funktionsratt called on authorities to grant persons with disabilities and people at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 higher social benefits, as many were forced to stay at home to shelter. During the spring of 2020, a government decision was made on a preventive sickness benefit and a carrier compensation for relatives of persons with disabilities[[20]](#footnote-19).

1. Sweden Public Health Agency, available at: <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/statistik-och-analyser/bekraftade-fall-i-sverige/> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Limited information available in English at: <https://www.sjdr.se/articles/10.1080/15017410802410068/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Information in English available at: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/emergency-preparedness/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Information in English available at: <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Interview with Swedish Disability Rights Federation, 28 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. <https://funktionsratt.se/nyhet-mote-om-corona-med-regeringens-funktionshinderdelegation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. [https://www.regeringen.se/](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2020/07/coronakommissionens-ledamoter-utsedda/)

[pressmeddelanden/2020/07/coronakommissionens-ledamoter-utsedda/](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2020/07/coronakommissionens-ledamoter-utsedda/) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Funktionsratt Sverige, available in Swedish at: <https://funktionsratt.se/press-prioritering-och-riktlinjer-inom-varden-kraver-patientmedverkan/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Available at: <http://edf-feph.org/covid19sweden> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Available at: <http://edf-feph.org/covid19sweden> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Available in Swedish at: <https://funktionsratt.se/debatt-smittskyddspenning-kravs-for-riskgrupper/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Available at: <https://www.krisinformation.se/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Available at : <https://hrf.se/debatt-en-halv-miljon-i-riskgrupperna-har-svart-att-na-1177/> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/statistik/statistik-om-covid-19/statistik-om-covid-19-bland-personer-med-funktionsnedsattning/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Available in Swedish at: <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/coronavirus-covid-19/stod-till-personal-inom-socialtjansten/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Interview with Swedish Disability Rights Federation, 28 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Interview with Swedish Disability Rights Federation, 28 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Available on EDF’s website at: <http://edf-feph.org/covid19sweden> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Funktionsratt Sverige, Debate: Infection control allowance is required for risk groups, April 2020, available at: <https://funktionsratt.se/debatt-smittskyddspenning-kravs-for-riskgrupper/> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)