

Study: 'Devastating' lockdowns had miniscule effect on mortality

Jody Brown | Feb 02, 2022



English



According to a meta-analysis conducted by three researchers, lockdown policies during the pandemic brought economic and social hardships – but very little public health benefits.

Clearly, after two years of unpopular, restrictive measures, people around the world have had enough. Many countries are [opening up](#) and easing measures aimed to fight COVID-19. Britain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and several Nordic countries – most recently, [Denmark](#) – have taken steps to end or ease their COVID-19 restrictions. Last week, England ended almost all domestic restrictions: Masks aren't required in public and vaccine passes are no longer needed to get into events or other public venues.

Then there's the miles-long [convoy of truckers in Canada](#) protesting Justin Trudeau's vaccine mandate for cross-border truck drivers.

Now comes a [study](#) released on Monday by Johns Hopkins University that clearly states lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic "have had little to no public health effects" – but instead were "ill-founded" and imposed "enormous economic and social costs" in those places where lockdowns were adopted.

The 62-page [study](#) was authored by three researchers (one from Denmark, one from Sweden, and one from the U.S.) with noted economic expertise. Following are excerpts from their analysis of 24 studies separated into three groups: lockdown studies, shelter-in-place orders (SIPO) studies, and non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) studies (emphasis ours):

"The use of lockdowns is a unique feature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns have not been used to such a large extent during any of the pandemics of the past century. However, lockdowns during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic have had **devastating effects**. They have contributed to **reducing economic activity, raising**

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lockdowns should be rejected out of hand as a pandemic policy instrument."

"An analysis of each of these three groups support the conclusion that **lockdowns have had little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality**. More specifically, stringency index studies find that lockdowns in Europe and the United States only reduced COVID-19 mortality by 0.2% on average. Shelter-in-place orders (SIPOs) were also ineffective, only reducing COVID-19 mortality by 2.9% on average. Specific non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) studies also find no broad-based evidence of noticeable effects on COVID-19 mortality.

"While this meta-analysis concludes that lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, **they have imposed enormous economic and social costs where they have been adopted**. In consequence, **lockdown policies are ill-founded and should be rejected as a pandemic policy instrument**."

An earlier look at Sweden

The lead researcher – Steve H. Hanke – is a professor of applied economics at Johns Hopkins University, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, and a contributor for [National Review](#). One year ago, he penned an [article](#) addressing Sweden's "light-touch" approach to using lockdowns, describing it as "a relatively laissez-faire" approach to addressing the virus, "which has kept businesses open, left domestic travel unconstrained, and allowed healthy citizens to continue living their daily lives as they see fit."

Sweden's approach, he wrote, "appears to be the one most consistent with science – and its benefits have allowed Sweden to avoid many of the costs associated with hard lockdowns."

Those benefits?

"By doing its best to leave schools open, Sweden has at least partially preserved the educational integrity of its youth. By avoiding mandatory stay-at-home orders, it has safeguarded its citizens’ mental health. By keeping businesses open, Sweden has suffered fewer economic losses than most of its European peers."

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