

# Sweden avoided the lockdowns; two years later, it is not doing badly

| December 13, 2021 12:04 AM

Pdf by:  
<https://www.pro-memoria.info>

As the world slides back into lockdown, one word is conspicuously absent from the debate. That word is not "freedom" or "proportionality" or "vaccines." It is "Sweden."

The United Kingdom, which had been an outlier in its refusal to impose restrictions, caved in last week and required proof of vaccination for indoor venues and face masks in several situations. Most European countries had already gone much further, ordering curfews, closures, and even mandatory vaccination. These measures are defended as the only way to curtail a fourth wave, or else as a precaution against the new omicron variant.

A year ago, the consensus was that inoculating the vulnerable would mean the end of such petty prohibitions. The virus would continue to circulate, just as the Spanish flu virus does, but the death toll would be much lower, in line with that of other seasonal diseases. We would, we assured one another, "learn to live with it."

Such talk has dried up. Once again, panicky governments are reaching for lockdowns as the handiest weapon in their armories. And, once again, frightened populations are backing them.

Yet, all along, there has been a control in the experiment. Sweden never locked down. It banned big meetings and imposed some restrictions in schools but, other than that, it told people to use their common sense.

When I say "control in the experiment," I mean precisely that. If the argument deployed by lockdowners were correct, Sweden would stick out

like a sore thumb in every measure of mortality or infection rates.

It doesn't.

Lockdowns, remember, were not sold as a way to reduce the spread of the disease slightly. They were sold as the only alternative to catastrophe. We were asked to submit to house arrest (something that normally requires a high burden of proof) on grounds that anything else would ensure mass fatalities.

Early during the pandemic, researchers from Uppsala University, adapting professor Neil Ferguson's models, predicted that, even with a full lockdown, 40,000 Swedes would die by the summer of 2020; without one, that number would exceed 90,000. The actual death toll that summer was less than 5,000.

Of course, Sweden, like every other country, has also been affected by subsequent waves. The total number of fatalities there now stands just above 15,000. But, and this is the key point, Sweden is not an outlier. In European terms, it is doing slightly less well than average, roughly level with Austria and Greece, and well ahead of Italy and Bulgaria. If it were a U.S. state, it would rank 43 out of 51.

We must remember that behind every number, there are human tragedies and grieving relatives. Still, it is impossible to argue, based on these numbers, that amassing warlike levels of debt and cratering our economies was the only way to prevent mass fatalities.

How the tone of the watching world has shifted. It takes an effort of will to recall the media coverage of early 2020. "Heading for disaster," was the headline in Britain's right-wing *Sun*. "Leading us to catastrophe," agreed the left-wing *Guardian*. *Time* reported that "Sweden's relaxed approach to the coronavirus could already be backfiring" and quoted a doctor saying that it would "probably end in a historical massacre." "We fear that

Sweden has picked the worst possible time to experiment with national chauvinism," chided the *Washington Post*. It was "the world's cautionary tale," pronounced the *New York Times*. "Sloppy," declared Germany's *Focus* magazine. "Dangerous," said Italy's *La Repubblica*.

That view was even shared, somewhat improbably, by President Donald Trump. In seeking to justify his own crackdown, he made the bizarre claim that Sweden "gave it a shot, and they saw things that were really frightening, and they went immediately to shutting down the country."

But no, they didn't. Sweden remained open. When the forecast calamities failed to materialize, international observers tried to find reasons why Sweden was a special case. We were told, for example, that it had low population density. But Sweden, like other rich countries, is largely urban: 85% of its people occupy 2% of its territory. Swedes do not live evenly spaced among the birch forests. They swarm together like the rest of us.

Then we were told that Sweden was doing less well than Norway and Finland. Well, so what? The claim was not that a lockdown would mildly reduce the death rate; it was that it would prevent a total collapse.

And now? Now, the world's media simply ignore the stolid Scandinavian state altogether. How else can they live with what they have put themselves through? And the worst of it is that, by refusing to admit their mistake, they condemn their own countries to repeat it.

Pdf by:  
<https://www.pro-memoria.info>