

We need to learn from Sweden's approach

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As this wave of the pandemic winds down we should ask honest questions about our response to it. Although an accurate assessment of the lockdowns — closing schools and businesses — is months away, we need a plan to respond to a likely second fall wave.

The Economist magazine published an essay detailing how closing primary schools has probably caused lifelong harm to much of the student population while widening the inequality gap. Growing amounts of research suggest that closing schools was a very bad idea. An Australian study shows that COVID-19 does not sicken many children, and children are not effective spreaders of it. Sweden did not close their primary schools, yet experienced no significant infection problem in either their student or teacher populations.

It was a major mistake to close down primary schools, should we not reopen them now?

Also, was it necessary to shut down all “non-essential” businesses? Sweden left business owners and customers to make their own decisions. While our “lockdown and stay home approach” damaged, if not bankrupted, many small businesses, Sweden left businesses intact and did not need the huge government spending that will leave lockdown countries with severely damaged economies. As for their numbers of deaths, Sweden did no better or no worse than did lockdown countries.

Isn't Sweden's policy of leaving most decisions to the individual, rather than using state control, proving to be a better approach?

One area where Sweden and Canada both failed is with respect to the elderly and vulnerable. Thankfully, this virus has mainly spared the young, but much more has to be done to those now known to be vulnerable. And, wasn't the experiment of quarantining the healthy population (putting the working population on welfare) a massive mistake? Best to protect those either vulnerable or wishing to self-isolate, but allow healthy people to decide how much personal risk they want to take.

Likely there will be a second wave of COVID-19 — the current lockdown approach merely delays the virus. And,

we are nowhere near to achieving the desired “herd” immunity (where the virus dies off because so many people have recovered from the disease and are immune from catching it again). Sweden, close to achieving herd immunity, will likely not suffer as much as we will.

The good news is that this virus does not appear to be nearly as deadly as first thought. In fact, healthy people might have about as much to fear from getting this virus as they do in getting regular flu. It seems we were badly scared by wildly inaccurate models — particularly by one that predicted 2,000,000 deaths in America alone.

Experts like Dr. John Ioannidis and Professor Michael Levitt of Stanford University saw the mistakes of that forecast from the beginning. But, our senior medical science and political leaders, who largely represent the last of the Boomer class, didn’t listen. Did we not panic and follow the wrong “experts?” Going forward, we should keep our heads and follow the pragmatic Swedish approach.

We have and are paying a heavy price. And, our children and their children will be paying for it for decades. We Boomers will not be here to watch its end. Was our panic response the Boomer’s last gasp?

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