

Washington Monthly is typically described as a "center-left" publication, and that's what makes its just-published article on Sweden's experience all the more significant.

An excerpt:

Sweden seems to have been right. Countries that took the severe route to stem the virus might want to look at the evidence found in a little-known 2021 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The researchers found that among 11 wealthy peer nations, Sweden was the only one with no excess mortality among individuals under 75. None, zero, zip.

That's not to say that Sweden had no deaths from COVID. It did. But it appears to have avoided the collateral damage that lockdowns wreaked in other countries. The Kaiser study wisely looked at excess mortality, rather than the more commonly used metric of COVID deaths....

There is particular value in looking at excess mortality as the principal metric, as the article explains:

Excess mortality is the smart, objective standard. It includes all deaths, whether from COVID, the indirect effects of COVID (such as people avoiding the hospital during a heart attack), or the side effects of lockdowns. And it gets rid of the problem of underlying differences among countries, allowing a direct comparison of their performance during COVID.

Using data from the Human Mortality Database, a joint project of the CDC and the Max Planck Institute in Germany, Kaiser compared mortality during the five years before the pandemic and mortality in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. Sweden had zero excess mortality in 2020 among people younger than 75. In other words, COVID wasn't all that dangerous to young people.

Even among the elderly, Sweden's excess mortality in 2020 was lower than that in the U.S., Belgium, Switzerland, the U.K., the Netherlands, Austria, and France. Canada, Germany, and Australia had lower rates than Sweden among people over the age of 70—probably because Sweden failed to limit nursing home visits at the very beginning of the pandemic.

The Kaiser study is far from alone in reaching these results:

The Kaiser results might seem surprising, but other data have confirmed them. As of February, Our World in Data, a database maintained by the University of Oxford, shows that Sweden continues to have low excess mortality, now slightly lower than Germany, which had strict lockdowns. Another study found no increased mortality in Sweden in those under 70. Most recently, a Swedish

commission evaluating the country's pandemic response determined that although it was slow to protect the elderly and others at heightened risk from COVID in the initial stages, its laissez-faire approach was broadly correct.

The authors end the article by noting that although lockdowns are unlikely to return, masks certainly could, but that there's little evidence masks do anything.

Even though the *Washington Monthly* has conceded the wisdom of Sweden's approach and the destructiveness of our own here in the United States, the battle is far from over. The essential goal now is to ensure that this never happens again, and that the correct view of what happened becomes the conventional wisdom.