Viewpoint: Sweden's unique approach to COVID-19 containment has failed

There was a familiar refrain from political commentators on certain corners of the internet in the early days of the pandemic … that popped up wherever people felt the government's lockdown plans impinged on their rights: what about Sweden?

The Nordic country was used as an example of why closing down society in the way that most other European countries have done was unnecessary. Even now, restaurants and bars in Stockholm remain open, children are still going to school, and people are only advised to stay at home if they feel ill… .

Some argued that Sweden was a unique case because of its demographics, or because of the fact that more people live in single-person households, and multi-generational family units are less common than they are in countries like Italy. In hindsight, however, it's clear that Sweden is not a special case – and it never was.

More than 4,000 people have died in a country of ten million. For seven of the last 14 days, Sweden has had the highest number of deaths per capita in the world. … The comparison is particularly stark when compared to Sweden's neighbours, which have similar cultural practices and healthcare systems – it has almost four times as many deaths as Norway, Finland and Denmark combined.

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