

On second thought: Sweden's top epidemiologist says nation should have done more to slow COVID-19

For months, the world has watched Sweden's light-touch approach to fighting the coronavirus pandemic, wondering whether it was genius or misguided. On [June 3], the architect of the strategy said that, in retrospect, he might have pushed something closer to other countries' restrictions.

Swedish authorities have consistently denied that they were aiming to achieve full-population immunity by keeping much of their public life humming as usual. They said that if they protected the elderly and other vulnerable groups while allowing others to carry on, the country might be more resilient in the face of a second wave of infections and avoid the economic chaos of a total shutdown.

Deaths in Sweden, though, have been eight times higher than in Denmark and 19 times higher than in Norway, even though Sweden is only double each neighbors' size. The outbreak appears to be continuing to course through their society, even while most other European countries seem to have gotten things under control, at least for now. And because Sweden's economy is tightly bound to the rest of Europe's, it also has suffered, although not as badly as others.

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The official Swedish death toll rose to 4,468 on [June 3], a toll of 44 per 100,000 residents, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. The United States stood at roughly 33 deaths per 100,000 residents.

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