

## Viewpoint: ‘Untold human death and suffering’: What could be the impact of the Trump administration plan to reach herd immunity

“Surrendering to the virus” is not a defensible plan, says Kristian Andersen, an immunologist at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California. Such an approach would lead to a catastrophic loss of human lives without necessarily speeding up society’s return to normal, he says. “We have never successfully been able to do it before, and it will lead to unacceptable and unnecessary untold human death and suffering.”

Despite widespread critique, the idea keeps popping up among politicians and policymakers in numerous countries, including Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. US President Donald Trump spoke positively about it in September, using the malapropism “herd mentality.” And even a few scientists have pushed the agenda. In early October, a libertarian think tank and a small group of scientists released a document called the Great Barrington Declaration. In it, they call for a return to normal life for people at lower risk of severe COVID-19.

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The writers of the declaration received an audience in the White House, and sparked a counter memorandum from another group of scientists in The Lancet, which called the herd-immunity approach a “[dangerous fallacy unsupported by scientific evidence](#)”.

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