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Expert claims Sweden now has 'herd immunity' from coronavirus

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6-8 minutes

Has Sweden beaten coronavirus? Expert claims by refusing to shut the country down the Swedes now have 'herd immunity' and have avoided a second wave

- **Sweden was only European nation not to introduce strict lockdown measures**
- **It has been recording its lowest number of Covid-19 cases since start of outbreak**
- **It has seen 28 infections per 100,000 people compared to UK's 69 per 100,000**

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[Sweden](#) has beaten [coronavirus](#) by refusing to shut the country down and achieving herd immunity, according to an expert.

The Scandinavian nation was the only country in Europe not to introduce strict lockdown measures at the start of the pandemic.

But scientists believe that this may have helped it avoid a second wave of Covid-19 as it continues to record its lowest

number of cases since March - with just 28 infections per 100,000 people.

This figure is less than half of the UK's own infection rate of 69 per 100,000 people.

Professor Kim Sneppen, an expert in the spread of coronavirus at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, said that Sweden might have beaten the pandemic.

He told Denmark's Politiken newspaper: 'There is some evidence that the Swedes have built up a degree of immunity to the virus which, along with what else they are doing to stop the spread, is enough to control the disease.'

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Professor Kim Sneppen, (pictured) an expert in the spread of coronavirus at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, said that Sweden might have beaten the pandemic

'Perhaps, the epidemic is over there.'

He said that the virus may now have run out of steam.

He added: 'That is what they have said.'

'On the positive side, they may now be finished with the epidemic.'

Sweden was initially criticised at the start of the outbreak after recording a spike in its mortality rates which was five times that

of Denmark and ten times that of Norway and Finland.

Number of deaths per 24 hours peaked in April at 115 with more than half in care homes.

But its seven-day average for coronavirus-related deaths is now zero.

Sweden's state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell, who has become the face of the no-lockdown strategy, said in a recent interview that voluntary hygiene measures had been 'just as effective' as complete shutdowns.

Sweden kept open schools for children under 16, banned gatherings of more than 50 people and told over-70s and vulnerable groups to self-isolate.

Shops, bars and restaurants stayed open throughout the pandemic and the wearing of masks has not been advised by the government.

'The rapidly declining cases we see in Sweden right now is another indication that you can get the number of cases down quite a lot in a country without having a complete lockdown,' he previously told [Unherd](#).

Sweden's chief epidemiologist talks the countries Covid strategy



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The Scandinavian nation was the only country in Europe not to introduce strict lockdown measures at the start of the pandemic.

Pictured: Crowds walking in Stockholm earlier this week

Tegnell added that 'deaths are not so closely connected to the amount of cases you have in a country', saying the death rate was more closely linked to whether older people are being infected and how well the health system can cope.

'Those things will influence mortality a lot more, I think, than the actual spread of the disease,' he said.

Swedish economic activity has also started to pick up with the effects of the downturn looking less severe than previously feared.

The economy had shrunk by nine per cent but this too was less than the 20 per cent dip seen in the UK.

It is thought that because many younger people have already had coronavirus in Sweden it now has less chance to spread through the population.

Recent studies suggested that an infection rate of 43 per cent may be enough to achieve herd immunity - a figure much lower than the 60 per cent previously cited.

WHAT IS HERD IMMUNITY?

Herd immunity is a situation in which a population of people is protected from a disease because so many of them are unaffected by it - because they've already had it or have been vaccinated - that it cannot spread.

To cause an outbreak a disease-causing bacteria or virus must have a continuous supply of potential victims who are not immune to it.

Immunity is when your body knows exactly how to fight off a certain type of infection because it has encountered it before, either by having the illness in the past or through a vaccine.

When a virus or bacteria enters the body the immune system creates substances called antibodies, which are designed to destroy one specific type of bug.

When these have been created once, some of them remain in the body and the body also remembers how to make them again. Antibodies - alongside T cells - provide long-term protection, or immunity, against an illness.

If nobody is immune to an illness – as was the case at the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak – it can spread like wildfire.

However, if, for example, half of people have developed immunity – from a past infection or a vaccine – there are only half as many people the illness can spread to.

As more and more people become immune the bug finds it harder and harder to spread until its pool of victims becomes so small it can no longer spread at all.

The threshold for herd immunity is different for various illnesses, depending on how contagious they are – for measles, around 95

per cent of people must be vaccinated to it spreading.