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No evidence to support Covid lockdowns in Scotland during pandemic says new report

Nicola Sturgeon introduced a raft of stringent restrictions in Scotland but a new report for the Scottish Covid Inquiry suggests there was 'insufficient or no evidence' to suggest that lockdowns, social distancing and face masks had any impact on slowing the spread of the virus

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By [David Walker](#) Politics reporter 16:44, 14 JUL 2023 | **UPDATED** 16:46, 14 JUL 2023

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Nicola Sturgeon led Scotland's response to the coronavirus pandemic

A new report has shed new light on the impact of [Nicola Sturgeon's](#) "intrusive" [Covid](#) lockdown restrictions and revealed there is no evidence to say they were effective. Scots were

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Epidemiologist, will form the basis of discussions during the process.

But he has said there was "insufficient evidence... or alternatively, no evidence" to support the use of face masks outside healthcare settings, lockdowns, social distancing and test, trace and isolate measures in 2020. He adds: "The evidence base has not changed materially in the intervening three years."

The whole of the UK was plunged into a strict lockdown in March 2020 and Ms Sturgeon often went much further and was far more reluctant to lift the restrictions than the authorities in England. The legal requirement to wear face masks indoors was not lifted until April 2022.

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In the report, Dr Croft writes: "The physical measures recommended or mandated by the Scottish government ranged from simple public health practices (the encouragement of frequent handwashing, cleaning of environmental surfaces, the use of PPE in hospitals and care homes) to coercive and / or intrusive measures (face mask mandates outside of healthcare settings; lockdowns; enforced social distancing; test, trace and isolate measures).

"In 2020 there was scientific evidence to support the use of some of the physical measures (e.g. frequent handwashing, the use of PPE in hospital settings) adopted against COVID-19. For other measures (e.g. face mask mandates outside of healthcare settings, lockdowns, social distancing, test, trace and isolate measures) there was either insufficient evidence in 2020 to support their use – or alternatively, no evidence; the evidence base has not changed materially in the intervening three years.

"It has been argued that the restrictive measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in individual, societal and economic harm that was avoidable and that should not have occurred."



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 **Covid restrictions were put in place across the UK.** (Image: Getty)

[Ms Sturgeon became notorious during the pandemic for giving autocratic daily](#)

[briefings](#) about how Scotland was coping with the disease and giving out more mandates. But her iron grip was criticised during the 2021 festive season where she re-introduced harsh restrictions due to the Omicron strain despite evidence suggesting it was not as dangerous as previous strains.

She demanded that one-metre rule for social distancing will be reintroduced in indoor hospitality and leisure settings, from 27 December 2021 and also shut down nightclubs. This was restrictions only for Scotland, with England allowed to celebrate New Year normally.

Writing about the pandemic measures in Scotland, Dr Croft added: "Routine long-term implementation of some of the measures assessed in this review would be problematic, particularly maintaining strict hygiene and barrier routines for long periods of time. This would probably only be feasible in highly motivated environments, such as hospitals.

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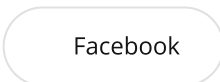
"Scotland, as in most counties, a wide range of physical measures against COVID-19 was either recommended or else mandated, from early 2020 onwards. Some of the measures were undoubtedly effective. Others were harmful.

"During August to November 2020 there was little scientific evidence to support the physical measures that were mandated in Scotland against COVID-19."

And on vaccines, Dr Croft added: "It remains unclear as to whether or not COVID-19 vaccination has resulted in fewer deaths from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines have been shown in randomised controlled trials to be effective, or probably effective, in reducing the number of people acquiring COVID-19 or severe COVID-19; however vaccine-induced protection against COVID-19 is short-lived."

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