

Johns Hopkins Study: Lockdowns Had ‘Little To No Effect On COVID-19 Mortality’ But Had ‘Devastating’ Effects On Society

By Tim Meads
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A new working paper from Johns Hopkins University’s “Studies in Applied Economics” institute claims that COVID-19 lockdowns imposed by a variety of governments worldwide had “little to no effect” on COVID-19 mortality. The study, conducted by three professors from around the world, also found that lockdowns “imposed enormous economic and social costs” and are “ill-founded and should be rejected as a pandemic policy instrument.”

According to the study released this week, lockdowns were defined “as the imposition of at least one compulsory, non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI). NPIs are any government mandate that directly restrict peoples’ possibilities, such as policies that limit internal movement, close schools and businesses, and ban international travel.”

The study then narrowed down 18,590 studies to 34 “‘qualified’ studies after three levels of review.” From those potential studies, “24 qualified for inclusion in the meta-analysis,” used to make their conclusion:

They were separated into three groups: lockdown stringency index studies, shelter-in-place order (SIPO) studies, and specific NPI studies. An analysis of each of these three groups support the conclusion that lockdowns have had little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality.

More specifically, stringency index studies find that lockdowns in Europe and the United States only reduced COVID-19 mortality by 0.2% on average.

SIPOs were also ineffective, only reducing COVID-19 mortality by 2.9% on average. Specific NPI studies also find no broad-based evidence of noticeable effects on COVID-19 mortality.

While this meta-analysis concludes that lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, they have imposed enormous economic and social costs where they have been adopted. In consequence, lockdown policies are ill-founded.

The study elaborated further, stating that the overall conclusion was “that lockdowns are not an effective way of reducing mortality rates during a pandemic, at least not during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

As the study noted, “a major purpose of lockdowns is to save lives.”

So did they? The study claimed to have answered that question with a resounding “no”:

Finally, allow us to broaden our perspective after presenting our meta-analysis that focuses on the following question: “What does the evidence tell us about the effects of lockdowns on mortality?”

We provide a firm answer to this question: The evidence fails to confirm that lockdowns have a significant effect in reducing COVID-19 mortality. The effect is little to none.

The use of lockdowns is a unique feature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns have not been used to such a large extent during any of the pandemics of the past century.

However, lockdowns during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic have had devastating effects.

They have contributed to reducing economic activity, raising unemployment, reducing schooling, causing political unrest, contributing to domestic violence, and undermining liberal democracy.

These costs to society must be compared to the benefits of lockdowns, which our meta-analysis has shown are marginal at best. Such a standard benefit-cost calculation leads to a strong conclusion: lockdowns should be rejected out of hand as a pandemic policy instrument.

The study was conducted by three professors from Denmark, Sweden, and the United States:

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