

# Epidemiologist: Individual Responsibility Is Flattening Sweden's COVID Curve

Sweden may be on to something. Bloomberg [reports](#):

*Sweden's unusual approach to fighting the coronavirus pandemic is starting to yield results, according to the country's top epidemiologist.*

*Anders Tegnell, the architect behind Sweden's relatively relaxed response to Covid-19, told local media the latest figures on infection rates and fatalities indicate the situation is starting to stabilize.*

*"We're on a sort of plateau," Tegnell told Swedish news agency TT.*

*If Tegnell's characterization turns out to be true, it will be quite a vindication for Sweden, which has been widely denounced for bucking the trend among governments of imposing draconian "shelter-at-home" decrees that have crippled the world economy and thrown millions out of work.*

While fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has driven the citizens of many countries around the world to be extremely trusting of their governments' information, predictions, advice, and edicts, the Swedish government flipped the script by placing its trust in its citizens. As the Bloomberg report puts it (emphasis added):

*Sweden has left its schools, gyms, cafes, bars and restaurants open throughout the spread of the pandemic. Instead, the government has urged citizens to **act responsibly** and follow social distancing guidelines.*

The Swedish people have lived up to that trust, and have appreciated it:

*Yet overall, Lofven's strategy has won the approval of Swedes, and his personal popularity has soared.*

*"I have very high confidence in the Swedish authorities that manage this," Volvo Cars CEO Hakan Samuelsson said in a phone interview. "It's a hard balance to strike, but I have full confidence in the measures that Sweden has taken."*

*Volvo, which was forced to halt production across Europe and furlough about 20,000 Swedish employees, will [resume production](#) at its Swedish plants on Monday.*

*"Our measures are all based on individuals taking responsibility, and that is also an important part of the Swedish model," Samuelsson said.*

Measures based on individual responsibility used to be part of the American model, too, as codified in the Bill of Rights. Yet we have developed a culture of reflexively giving up that responsibility and those rights whenever we get scared: of terrorists, of economic hardship, of a virus. As the economic devastation from our latest collective panic attack mounts, we are seeing how counterproductive that cowering posture can be.

If we are going to recover from this anytime soon, Americans must rediscover our founding principles. And people all around the world must insist that their governments place at least as much trust in its citizens as Sweden has. But to do that, we must first learn to trust ourselves as a society of individuals. And to do *that*, it would help to learn some economics: especially the concept of [spontaneous order](#).

As FEE's Jon Miltimore wrote in his [detailed article](#) on Sweden's approach to COVID-19 earlier this month:


*There's a tendency to believe that free markets and*

*cooperation work, except in difficult or “complex” situations that call for more assertive means.*

*The great Leonard Read saw the flaw in such thinking.*

*The more complex the economy, society, or situation, Read [observed](#), “the more we should rely on the miraculous, self-adapting processes of men acting freely.”*

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*This article was originally published on [FEE.org](#). Read the [original article](#). *

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