

France Rules Out Lockdown Despite Surge in COVID Cases

The long summer of 2020 just keeps getting longer, but some world leaders are showing a reluctance to keep marching to the drumbeat of the all-consuming war on COVID-19.

Public health officials in France last week announced the nation experienced 3,776 new COVID-19 infections on Wednesday, the largest daily total it had seen in three and a half months. The following day, cases jumped by a thousand more, and Sunday saw the total creep up to nearly 5,000, the highest total since mid-April, when France was ravaged by the virus.

Despite the surge in cases, French President Emmanuel Macron reportedly ruled out initiating a new series of economic lockdowns.

“We cannot shut down the country, because the collateral damage of confinement is considerable,” Macron said in an interview with Paris Match magazine, [according to](#) the *National Post*.

French President [@EmmanuelMacron](#) rules out lockdowns despite the surge of [#COVID19](#) in France.

“We cannot shut down the country, because the collateral damage of confinement is considerable,” Macron said.

World leaders are beginning to recognize just how damaging lockdowns are. pic.twitter.com/e2mxT4WGa5

– Jon Miltimore (Parler: [@Miltimore79](#)) ([@miltimore79](#)) [August 24, 2020](#)

Macron’s decision might have been made easier by the fact that

COVID-19 deaths in France have, for now, remained relatively flat despite the recent surge in coronavirus cases. (Deaths generally [lag cases](#), however, so this trend unfortunately may not hold.)

Regardless, it's refreshing to see a world leader openly and unequivocally admit that lockdowns have [serious collateral damage](#) that must be taken into consideration.

For France, this collateral damage included [a 13.8 percent drop](#) in GDP in the second quarter. This was hardly the only consequence, however.

Around the world, during the world's experiment with lockdowns, social scientists and governments have reported surges in [overdoses](#), [domestic abuse](#), and [suicide](#). An increasing body of research shows that social isolation increases loneliness and can result in various adverse mental and physical consequences. This includes [negative effects on the human brain](#) and increased risk of dementia. It can accelerate cognitive decline, increase the risk of heart disease, disrupt sleep patterns, and [damage immune systems](#).

And then there are the [deferred health treatments](#) and cancer screenings that will ultimately cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

Supporters of lockdowns have mostly overlooked the collateral damage of lockdowns, arguing that state enforced lockdowns prevented hundreds of millions of infections and saved [millions of lives](#).

"The lockdowns were necessary, and they worked," *The Washington Post* blithely [declared](#) in June.

There are clear problems with how the *Post* arrived at this conclusion, however.

First, as I've previously [noted](#), one of the studies the paper

used to reach its conclusion was submitted on March 22 – well before COVID had arrived in force. Second, the other study the paper cites was conducted by the Imperial College of London, the same school that was [astronomically wrong](#) in its initial estimates.

We have stronger evidence that COVID-19 would not do what these studies or *The Washington Post* claim, and it doesn't rely on models, but empirical evidence. Many U.S. states and some nations avoided implementing state-enforced lockdowns.

In the U.S., not only did states that opted to not lock down not experience a wave of deaths, they actually saw [far lower per capita death rates](#) than lockdown states.

And then we have evidence across the Atlantic. Sweden, which chose to not lock down, may have suffered more deaths than its Scandinavian neighbors, but it also suffered fewer deaths than other neighbors, such as Belgium, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain. Most importantly, the Swedes did not see [the nearly 100,000 deaths modelers predicted](#) would result if the nation refused to lockdown like other nations.

If COVID-19 was as transmissible and as lethal as lockdown proponents say, there wouldn't be enough room to store the bodies in places like Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, Sweden and other parts of the world.

From the modelers who urged lockdowns, to the media who championed them, to the politicians who implemented them, few have been willing to acknowledge what more and more people are beginning to realize: the lockdowns were a catastrophic mistake, both unnecessary and unhelpful.

For too long, the COVID-19 debate has been falsely framed as a moral conflict that pitted those who care about people (lockdown supporters) against those who care about the stock market (lockdown opponents).

Well, if you look at America today, the stock market is doing [just fine](#), but people are not. They are suffering, angry, confused, and – perhaps most of all – scared.

Yet Emmanuel Macron's simple acknowledgement that lockdowns carry collateral damage too serious to ignore suggests that at least some world leaders learned something between March and August. That is encouraging.

At the very least, it could mean that world leaders are finally recognizing that the costs of lockdowns – vast economic damage, [sweeping social unrest](#), and widespread psychological distress and health deterioration – simply outweigh their benefits.

But if we're lucky, maybe they've grasped something far more important.

Perhaps economists, social scientists, politicians, and experts have finally learned what the economist F.A. Hayek once highlighted as perhaps the most important moral lesson for intellectuals of the postmodern age: *humility*.

Hayek, in [his 1974 Nobel Prize speech](#), said greater humility concerning knowledge was necessary if humans were to overcome their natural impulses to control others through collective systems.

"If man is not to do more harm than good in his efforts to improve the social order, he will have to learn that in this, as in all other fields where essential complexity of an organized kind prevails, he cannot acquire the full knowledge which would make mastery of the events possible," Hayek said. "He will therefore have to use what knowledge he can achieve, not to shape the results as the craftsman shapes his handiwork, but rather to cultivate a growth by providing the appropriate environment, in the manner in which the gardener does this for his plants."

Hayek continued:

“There is danger in the exuberant feeling of ever growing power which the advance of the physical sciences has engendered and which tempts man to try, “dizzy with success”, to use a characteristic phrase of early communism, to subject not only our natural but also our human environment to the control of a human will. The recognition of the insuperable limits to his knowledge ought indeed to teach the student of society a lesson of humility which should guard him against becoming an accomplice in men’s fatal striving to control society – a striving which makes him not only a tyrant over his fellows, but which may well make him the destroyer of a civilization which no brain has designed but which has grown from the free efforts of millions of individuals.”

Humility does not come easy to humans, particularly learned and powerful ones. But as they say, perhaps the fastest path to humility is humiliation.

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