LOCKDOWNS FAILED

• Study reveals pandemic strategy caused more harm than good

By the AFP Staff

A rigorous study of the lockdowns imposed by governments in the Western world at the height of the global pandemic shows that the onerous restrictions had little effect on curbing the spread of the virus or stopping deaths.

As far as studies go, the benefit-cost calculation performed by three economists at Johns Hopkins University is considered the gold standard for research. It consisted of a meta-analysis of dozens of individual studies on the lockdowns as well as on Covid-19 mortality rates. The analysis showed that, in the end, closing businesses did almost nothing to stop the spread of the pandemic in the Western world.

In 2020 and 2021, leading health officials in the United States and Europe argued that, if countries didn’t lockdown and force people to stay home, millions of people would die from Covid-19. Two years later, those claims ring hollow.

“We find no evidence that lockdowns, school closures, border closures, and limiting gatherings had a noticeable effect on Covid-19 mortality,” the researchers wrote.

In fact, according to the estimates in the report, the onerous lockdowns that put hundreds of thousands of Americans out of work and kept millions of kids from schools only reduced Covid-19 mortality by about 0.2%—a shocking finding considering the doomsday scenarios that were predicted if governments refused to close down their economies.

What we do know, however, is that the lockdowns did have a terrible effect on economies.

“The lockdowns have contributed to reducing economic activity, raising unemployment, reducing schooling, causing political unrest, contributing to domestic violence, and undermining liberal democracy,” the report noted.

The study has caused shock waves around the Western world, as the researchers are considered to be establishment academics. Steve Hanke is the founder of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise. Jonas Herby is special adviser at the Center for Political Studies in Copenhagen, Denmark. Lars Jonung is professor emeritus in economics at Lund University, Sweden.

The researchers did note that closing some “nonessential businesses,” such as bars, had limited benefit in helping stem the spread of disease but not by the amounts health policy leaders claimed.

Early in the pandemic, academics at the Imperial College London predicted that locking down everything would reduce death rates by up to 98%. If the steps were not taken, they argued, England would face millions of deaths in the coming year.

Reflecting on their research, the Johns Hopkins University economists did not find any truth to that claim whatsoever.

“Closing nonessential businesses seems to have had some effect (reducing Covid-19 mortality by 10.6%), which is likely to be related to the closure of bars,” the report was forced to conclude.

Overall, their conclusions are a damning assessment of the health policies advanced by leaders in the Western world for the past two years.

“We conclude 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,” the researchers wrote.