

COVID-19 Panic is the New State Religion

The TL;DR on COVID-19: Panic, not science, continues to drive the public policy discussion.

Here, such as it is, is the current science:

If 100,000 Americans age 19 or younger contract COVID-19, three of them will die.

If 10,000 Americans between 20 and 49 years old contract COVID-19, two of them will die.

If a thousand Americans between 50 and 69 years old contract COVID-19, five of them will die.

But if you're 70 years or older and contract COVID-19, your chances of dying skyrocket to about 1 in 20.

Those are the "best estimates" of COVID-19 Infection Fatality Ratios published by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If the CDC's estimates are correct — and if I had a nickel for every time I've heard "listen to the experts!" I'd need a bigger house to store my nickels in — a COVID-19 infection is less likely than a seasonal flu infection to kill anyone under 70.

There's a caveat, of course: CDC estimates COVID-19's "R0" (the average number of people an infected person infects in turn) at 2.5, while seasonal flu's R0 runs about half that. COVID-19 spreads more quickly and easily than flu. More cases equals more deaths.

And there's an excuse: These are the numbers we have NOW, not the numbers we had when the pandemic hit. What we had THEN was uncertainty.

But uncertainty isn't a very good excuse for shutting down significant portions of the US economy, driving unemployment up from one in 25 American workers to one in seven (it's still nearly one in ten), and placing much of the population under house arrest.

When we didn't know what was going on, panic wasn't the correct answer.

Now that we have a better idea of what's happening, holding onto the visible vestiges of panic isn't the correct answer either. It's just a new, state-imposed religion.

As late as a few months ago, the US regime condemned governments which require women to cover their faces in public.

Now, American politicians command men and women alike to do so, and most Americans

meekly submit — not because masks prevent the spread of COVID-19 (evidence for that claim is sketchy at best), but because politicians and the “scientific” bureaucratic priesthood live to issue orders and obeying those orders lets us feel like we’re “doing something” about COVID-19.

Thus the masks, and the special magic “social distancing” formulae, and the ubiquitous “Stay Home, Stay Safe” signage. The Cult of the Omnipotent State is enjoying a periodic revival unlike any since 9/11.

If the CDC’s numbers are correct, they offer two lessons:

First, protecting the elderly from COVID-19 as best we can makes sense.

Second, the rest of us need to abandon the state-imposed superstitions and get back to living in the real world.