

Are We Looking At The Wrong Numbers?

As the second wave of COVID-19 continues sweeping the nation, it is becoming even more politically polarized than ever before.

This is sad to me, that we can't unite over something that is really not a partisan issue but is affecting us all. Our focus, all of us, should be on doing what is best for the people of our county; and that includes both protecting their health and protecting their ability to provide for their needs, financially speaking. The two are not mutually exclusive.



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But that's not what's happening. Those on the political left are trying to use the pandemic to make Trump and Republican governors look bad, focusing on the rise in cases, as we wade through the second surge. It doesn't matter that this second surge was part of the plan all along, as the original lockdowns were just about flattening the curve, in their narrative, the surge has to be because of some grave error in judgment on the part of their political enemies.

Then we've got the political right, many of whom are focusing on how the left-leaning media is overreacting and overstating the danger of the current situation. Sadly, they aren't serving us any better, when they're saying that we shouldn't have to be wearing masks. Yes, I understand their position that the government is infringing on our liberty, but at the

same time, I've got to say that there's enough evidence that masks help save lives, that it makes sense to do so.

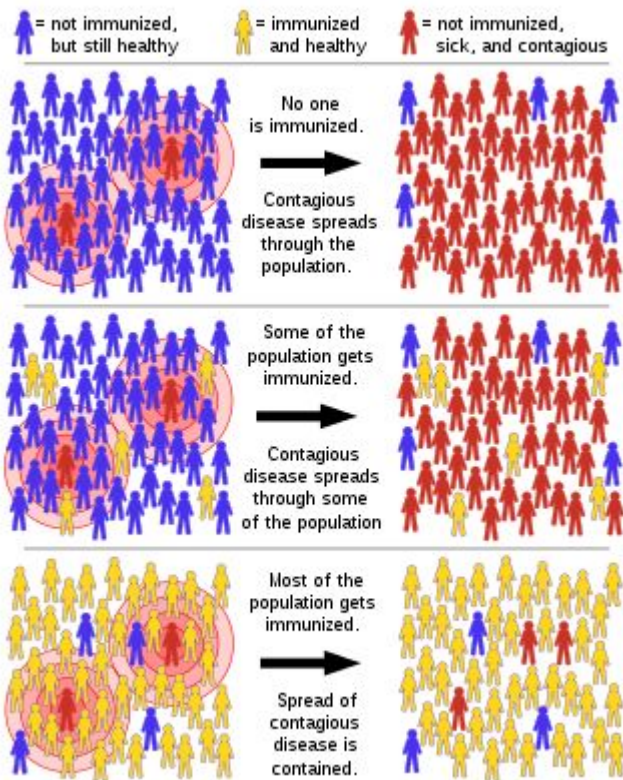
The argument that's being used is that only one percent of the people die of COVID-19. But just what do they mean by "one percent?" If they're talking 1% of the people who come down with it, the numbers don't jive. We've had 4,170,000 people come down with the disease and 147,342 deaths as of this writing. That works out to 3.53% of total cases ending up in death.

But we need to realize that 3.53% is a low number. Even if nobody else comes down with the disease, some of the 2,042,559 active cases will result in death. We just don't know how many. If we divide the number of people who have died by the total number of closed cases, we get 6.9%. That's probably too high. When all is said and done, the death toll will probably end up being somewhere between those two percentages; we just don't know where.

On the other hand, if they're talking about one percent of the total population dying from COVID-19, then we're talking 3.31 million people. Since we have no idea of how many total people are going to come down with the disease, that number is not outside the realm of possibility. I personally don't think it will get that bad, but I can't discount the possibility.

What About Herd Immunity?

Doctors have been touting "herd immunity" ever since this pandemic began, with some saying that the lockdown orders were in error because they prevent the population from reaching herd immunity. But we're not finding that those doctors were wrong. There is no herd immunity with COVID.



The problem is that they've discovered that antibodies from the disease only stay in our system for a couple of months. Theoretically, that means that people who catch the disease and recover can catch it again after those antibodies are gone. Would they be more susceptible to it after the first bout? Nobody knows that yet. Nor do we know if they would have a more serious case of COVID the second time around. Only time will tell on both those questions.

Since herd immunity is impossible, that means a vaccine is also impossible. Vaccines work by causing our bodies immune systems to create antibodies, making it so that if the virus enters our system, our autoimmune system will be ready to destroy it. As long as the antibodies are there, it's easy for the body to reproduce them. Creating the right antibody in the first place is what takes time.

But if those antibodies only last a couple of months, the effect of the vaccine will only last those couple of months. What are they going to do, vaccinate everyone every two months, just to make sure we're protected from COVID? I don't think so.

It looks like all those medical labs which are working on a vaccine need to shelve that project and put their efforts into developing a means of treating the disease. But I'm not the guy in charge, so it's not my call to make.

Here's the Kicker



While everyone and their brother has become a COVID-19 expert in the last couple of months, we're still not getting the whole story. There's still a major gap in our knowledge because it takes time to study a new disease. There are some things you have to just wait to discover. One of those things is what the long-term effects of the disease are.

I've been looking for information about this for weeks, but it hasn't been out there. Granted, we've only been dealing with COVID for six months, so there isn't a whole lot of long-term data. But there are people who are supposedly "cured" as well as people who have never fully gotten over the disease. What's happening with them? Other than a few anecdotal stories on social media, by people who claim to still be suffering from the disease, there's very little information around.

Just yesterday, I came across some long-term statistics about the disease. Before I share them with you, let me say that this is so new, that it is unconfirmed information. I've looked, and I can't find anything to substantiate it. But on

the other hand, I can't find anything that disputes it either.

To start with, for every person who dies of COVID-19, there are 19 others who require hospitalization. That's a hard number, which can be substantiated by hospital records. So the 147,342 people who have died become 2.8 million who have been hospitalized. Unfortunately, I can't find any data to substantiate that; as everyone is reporting hospitalizations on a weekly basis, not a cumulative total; and I can't just add those up, because we don't know how long any of those people have been in the hospital.

So let's use that 2.8 million number for now. Supposedly for every person who dies of COVID-19:

- 18 people will have to live with permanent heart damage
- 10 people will have to live with permanent lung damage
- 3 people will end up having strokes
- 2 people will have to live with chronic weakness and loss of coordination due to neurological damage
- 2 people will have to live with a loss of cognitive function due to neurological damage

Granted, I'm sure these numbers are preliminary and they will be modified in the future, as our medical community gains more information. But we're talking about the potential for all of those 2.8 million people having to live with some sort of permanent or semi-permanent disability. And that number is only going to go up, as we're nowhere near the end of this pandemic if an end actually even exists.



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If we take the viewpoint that one percent of the population is

going to die of COVID-19, as some are saying, then we're looking at a total of:

- 3,311,000 dead
- 59,598,000 with permanent heart damage
- 33,110,000 with permanent lung damage
- 9,933,000 who have strokes
- 6,622,000 with permanent weakness and lack of coordination
- 6,622,000 with permanent loss of cognitive function

Obviously, we can't afford that as a nation. While I'm sure that there will be a considerable amount of overlap, with people having more than one of those symptoms, that just means that those who do have long-term effects will be in that much worse shape. And before you say it will just be old people, I know people in their 20s who have come down with COVID and are still battling these sorts of long-term symptoms two to three months later.

When I say we can't afford that, I'm referring to the loss in our labor force. While a large percentage of the people who have serious problems with COVID-19 and die are elderly people with underlying health problems, more and more younger people are having serious problems with the disease. Are those young people going to become disabled and end up needing public assistance their whole lives?

So What's the End Game?



There are still a lot of people talking about “after” COVID-19. I think they are sadly mistaken. I don’t like being the pessimist in the room, but I don’t see an “after” any time soon. Perhaps there will be somewhere down the road, but I don’t see it coming anytime this year or even the next.

Rather, I think it’s time that we all seriously consider what this “new normal” is going to look like. Few people realize it yet, but we live in a time of great opportunity. The world we are living in is changing and those who can manage to get in front of that change and be a part of making it happen, have a great potential for coming out on top.

Just look at our grocery stores as an example. Many grocery chains started offering curbside pickup last year before we even heard of any Novel Coronavirus. As with anything new, there were some who gladly accepted that as an advance, while many more rejected the idea of even trying that new service. They didn’t want to pay someone else to do their shopping for them. Yet now when you go to the grocery store, you see personal shoppers all over the place, filling orders for customers to pick up.

I’m not sure what other grocery stores are doing, but our local chain is charging 3% for this service, plus a \$4.99 fee if you want to pick it up within 24 hours. That’s low enough that most people ignore it, which means that a lot of people will keep using that service, once COVID is gone.

Or how about schooling? Most of our schools ended last year with “distance learning,” perhaps unintentionally proving that all those expensive school buildings built with taxpayer dollars are unnecessary. Why should we send our kids to school, when they can learn just as well at home?

Surprisingly, few businesses have truly grasped the opportunity that they have to reimagine their businesses in a world with COVID, seeking how to make it work. Most of what can be called “the best” of what we see are businesses that are managing to “make due” in this situation, but that’s only the best when compared to all the businesses which are permanently shuttering their doors.

I know of only a few examples of businesses that are making the most of the current situation, other than online businesses, which I hear are booming.

- Of course, grocery stores and Wal-mart are doing well, providing curbside service, as I’ve already mentioned. I doubt that any of them have lost much business.
- Chick-Fil-A has probably done the best in keeping their restaurants running during the pandemic. They are offering exceptional drive-thru service, with a cashier standing outside, taking your order. It’s just about like going inside to get your order at the counter, but you don’t have to leave your car. They’ve eliminated the biggest hassle of the drive-thru, dealing with the poor intercom systems.
- Seeing this, a local seafood restaurant has followed suit, offering the exact same sort of drive-thru service. They’re doing a booming business, at a time when other restaurants are barely managing to keep the doors open.
- Another local restaurant here has turned themselves into a drive-in theatre/restaurant, offering a dinner menu you can order online, then have delivered to your car when you arrive for the movie. I’ve been trying to get a

reservation for three months, but they've been so successful, they've been booked solid.

- A dance studio that is following what the public schools are doing and offering online dance classes for their students.

Shortlist, isn't it? Unfortunately, that's all I have. See why I'm saying there's such a huge opportunity? If that's all there is, because most businesses are waiting for things to get back to normal, then coming up with a workable idea means that you probably won't have much competition.

The thing is, just like people getting used to curbside pickup from their local grocery store, they'll get used to whatever new business ideas people come up with. So even if we manage to defeat COVID and life gets back to the old normal, those businesses will become part of that normal. People will have become accustomed to the convenience and will continue using it.

Surprisingly, it seems like none of the big companies out there are seeing this, so they're not taking advantage of it. That leaves the opportunity for the little guys; you and I. All we need is that one good idea and we can be part of defining what the new normal is going to be.



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