



Eighty Percent of the Population Has Little on Nothing to Fear from COVID-19

by Richard W. Rahn

TIME TO RESTORE FREEDOMS FOR THOSE 24 OR YOUNGER

It is wrong to restrict the freedoms of everyone, destroy economic prosperity, and in many cases deny people the opportunity to work — all in the name of “saving their lives” while, in fact, more than 80 percent of the population has little or nothing to fear from the coronavirus. The restrictions on those younger than 65 years of age should be lifted immediately.

Approximately 2.8 million Americans die each year out of a population of 330 million, which means the average American has about one out of 118 chances of dying in any given year, from all causes. Those over 65 have about one chance in 33 of dying, while those who are 30 or younger have less than one chance in a thousand of dying, again from all causes.

Deaths from COVID-19 are even more skewed in favor of the young. Those who are 24 or younger have about one chance in a million of dying from COVID-19 (almost too small to measure). Those who are 65 or over have about one chance in 1,250 of dying from COVID-19 — a very small fraction of all of the other things that will kill them.

Recent studies have shown that the virus is far more widespread, far less lethal, and probably started much earlier than previously

thought. Given that tens of millions have been exposed and infected without even knowing it, makes the idea of trying to trace who infected who a fool’s errand. Studies are now showing that sunlight kills the virus. (Golly, who would even guess that sunlight and fresh air would be healthy?)

Despite knowing that sunlight is a disinfectant, those clever doctors at the CDC said we should all hide indoors. To make sure that we were not exposed to sunlight and fresh air, many Big Brother governors decided that parks, golf courses and beaches should be closed to taxpaying citizens for public safety, when just the opposite is the truth.

It may be a good idea not to cluster in large groups. But those who like to play act being members of the Gestapo, rather than say to their fellow citizens, “don’t cluster in large groups and stay away from others, particularly if you are coughing and sneezing” — deny them the courtesy of treating them like adults who are wise enough to take sensible precautions once they are given the information.

Sweden took a much more civilized approach to the COVID-19 problem than most of the rest of the world. Rather than punish their citizens by denying them the ability to work and many of the pleasures of life, they have opted for a light touch rather than the heavy foot of the state. Swedes are kept up to date as to the current medical findings and common-sense recommendations like doing such things as frequent hand washing, wiping down surfaces that are touched by many, avoiding large clusters, spacing tables in restaurants and elsewhere, etc.

The result is that Sweden does have a slightly higher death rate than the United States, but much lower than many other European countries. The Swedish population is on average older than the United States’, so when the proper adjustment is made for the age disparity, the difference in death rates is minimal — but the Swedes have managed to do this without destroying their economy, burdening future generations with massive debt or depriving citizens of their civil liberties.

If the United States had used the Swedish model, total deaths from COVID-19 would probably be around 100,000 rather than the currently projected 60,000. But many other

lives would be saved from fewer suicides and by people being able to get the medical checks for other potential lethal conditions and elective surgeries which they are now being denied.

The restrictions may actually result in a higher total number of deaths, when the additional deaths are subtracted from the direct COVID-19 total. And again, most of the COVID-19 deaths are among the elderly with other conditions, most of whom have very short remaining life expectancies.

President Trump, the U.S. governors and many other world leaders were given very bad information from the medical mathematical model builders about the number of expected deaths from the virus (upwards of 2 million in the United States) even using Swedish light-touch restrictions. It appears that the assumptions and data upon which the models were built were not critically evaluated by competent independent experts.

Political leaders and unquestioning members of the press panicked when given the flaky 2 million number. The result: Very bad decisions, where the costs greatly exceeded the benefits, and hurt most everyone, particularly the young. Members of the political class and the media who flamed the hysteria, ought to apologize, particularly to those under 24 who are needlessly suffering not only now, but from unnecessary debt burdens they will endure for decades.

It is possible to protect the elderly, by urging them to stick with the current restrictions, plus avoiding contact with young people whenever possible. Again, the rest of the population should immediately be freed to undertake their normal lives with only light touch restrictions. Free societies are in part defined by allowing individual citizens to decide what risks they choose to take or not take, whether it be skiing, or bungee jumping or going to a restaurant.

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