



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 25, 2020

## CDC: COVID-19 Death Rate Far Lower Than Previously Thought

The federal government is finally admitting what many observers have suspected all along: The average American's chances of dying from COVID-19 are extremely small. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) latest best estimate of the death rate for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms is just 0.26 percent, slightly higher than that of the seasonal flu.



The CDC offers five estimates in its latest "[COVID-19 Pandemic Planning Scenarios](#)," which are "designed to help inform decisions by modelers and public health officials who utilize mathematical modeling." Its "current best estimate" is that the symptomatic case fatality ratio (CFR) for all Americans is 0.4 percent and that 35 percent of those who get the virus are asymptomatic. Thus, the infection fatality rate (IFR) is 0.4 percent of the 65 percent who actually have symptoms, which comes to just 0.26 percent.

This is, of course, considerably lower than the CDC's [March forecast](#), which, assuming an IFR of 0.8 percent, called for up to 1.7 million deaths from COVID-19 in the United States. The [Imperial College estimate](#) of Dr. Neil Ferguson — whose computer code experts have called "[totally unreliable](#)" — assumed an IFR of 0.9 percent, leading to a forecast of as many as 2.2 million American deaths. State and local officials, acting on these projections, issued shelter-in-place orders, shuttered "nonessential" businesses, and otherwise made life miserable for the people they serve.

Now that the CDC has actual case data, the outlook for coronavirus fatalities appears much less bleak. *Conservative Review's* [Daniel Horowitz](#) observes:

Ultimately we might find out that the IFR is even lower because numerous studies and hard counts of confined populations have shown a much higher percentage of asymptomatic cases. Simply adjusting for a 50% asymptomatic rate would drop their fatality rate to 0.2% — exactly the rate of fatality Dr. John Ionnidis of Stanford University projected.

More importantly ... the overall death rate is meaningless because the numbers are so lopsided. Given that at least half of the deaths were in nursing homes, a back-of-the-envelope estimate would show that the infection fatality rate for non-nursing home residents would only be 0.1% or 1 in 1,000. And that includes people of *all* ages and *all* health statuses outside of nursing homes....

The CDC estimates the death rate from COVID-19 for those under 50 is 1 in 5,000 for those with symptoms, which would be 1 in 6,725 overall, but again, almost all those who die have specific



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comorbidities or underlying conditions. Those without them are more likely to die in a car accident. And schoolchildren, whose lives, mental health, and education we are destroying, are more likely to get struck by lightning.

Skepticism of the CDC's numbers is certainly warranted. The agency is known to have [counted suspected COVID-19 deaths as actual COVID-19 deaths](#), and hospitals have a [significant monetary incentive to do likewise](#). But given that most of the fudging seems to have made the pandemic appear worse than it actually is, when the CDC comes out with figures that seem anything but alarmist, they probably deserve some consideration.

[CNN](#), for whom real or imagined crises are its bread and butter, found a skeptic of a different sort in Carl Bergstrom. "While most of these numbers are reasonable, the mortality rates shade far too low," the University of Washington biologist told the news channel.

Bergstrom based his skepticism on the high COVID-19 death rate in New York City, and certainly if one were to examine solely the data from the Big Apple, the CDC's estimate would look "far too low." New York, however, is an outlier. It is a densely populated city with a very busy public-transportation system. It had some maxed-out hospitals — excellent places to transmit the virus to others — and, thanks to an [order from Governor Andrew Cuomo](#), shoved many COVID-19 patients into nursing homes with predictably deadly results. Look at the rest of the country, particularly outside of nursing homes, and the CDC's estimate seems quite plausible.

Whether correct or not, the CDC's pronouncements are frequently treated as gospel by government officials and the mainstream media. This latest estimate, if received with the same reverence, should put an end to both the hysteria surrounding the virus and "lockdown nation."



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*Michael Tennant is a freelance writer and regular contributor to The New American.*



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