



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 17, 2020

COVID 19: Is the Response Proportional to the Virus?

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The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [has confirmed](#) 4,226 U.S. coronavirus cases as of March 17, with 75 CDC-confirmed deaths. The [Worldometer coronavirus page](#) puts the number of U.S. cases at 5,703, with 97 deaths (this includes non-CDC reporting done by states), and [Johns Hopkins reports](#) 5,218 cases and 92 deaths. So far, this puts the U.S. death rate for COVID-19 at around 1.7-1.8 percent.

How does this compare with the seasonal “flu” in the United States? Exact numbers for the seasonal flu are impossible to get, but [CDC estimates](#) that 36 million-51 million Americans have gotten the flu in the 2019-2020 season, with 22,000-55,000 *estimated* deaths. This would put the U.S. death rate for the seasonal flu at anywhere from 0.04 to 0.25 percent. By this metric, the coronavirus is anywhere from seven to 42 times as deadly as the regular flu.

But are these statistics comparing apples to apples? Note that these are *confirmed* coronavirus cases versus *estimated* flu statistics. There are likely far more people who actually contract coronavirus who don’t get tested because they experience no symptoms, mild symptoms, or because they don’t want to get quarantined. So is the coronavirus more deadly? Maybe, but how much more deadly is not known at this time, and possibly never truly will be.

That being said, is America’s reaction to the COVID-19 “pandemic” appropriate?

[Heather Mac Donald](#), a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, calculated that .000029 percent of the U.S. population has died of coronavirus so far. She noted that the “fear of the disease and not the disease itself” is the real concern: “Even if my odds of dying from the coronavirus should suddenly jump ten-thousand-fold ... I’d happily take those odds over the destruction being wrought on the U.S. and global economies from this unbridled panic.”

That destruction has been immense. Wall Street’s losses are estimated at a staggering \$5 trillion, while economists are predicting that the U.S. economy will drop at least five full percentage points in the second quarter of 2020 as the job losses from measures mandated to slow the impact of the virus hit the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP).

Mac Donald compared the impact of the coronavirus to other causes of death in the U.S., such as traffic deaths. She wrote, “There were 38,800 traffic fatalities in the United States in 2019.... That represents an average of over one hundred traffic deaths every day. If the press catalogued these in as much painstaking detail as they have deaths from the coronavirus, highways nationwide would be as empty as New York subways are now.”

She added, “Shutting down highways would have a much more positive effect on the U.S. mortality rate than shutting down the U.S. economy to try to prevent the spread of the virus.”

Mac Donald compared the coronavirus to the deaths during the 2018-2019 flu season: “There were 34,200 deaths in the United States.... We did not shut down public events and institutions to try to slow the spread of the flu. Yet we have already destroyed \$5 trillion in stock market wealth over the last few



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weeks ... wiping out retirement savings for many.”

She went further, asking rhetorically why similar concerns aren’t being raised about the mounting opioid deaths, the homicide deaths, and the flu deaths.

There is mounting optimism about how long the coronavirus will last before it burns out. A spokesman for China’s National Health Commission, Mi Feng, said on Monday, “Broadly speaking, the peak of the epidemic has passed for China.” This confirms what *The New American* reported on Monday: On February 12, there were 15,200 new cases of the virus reported in all of China. On March 15, there were 16. In total, 3,226 Chinese have died.

The impact of the measures and mandates implemented to mitigate the coronavirus will last far longer. Expect negative job growth for March and well into the second quarter. Expect negative numbers for the economy. Expect the recovery from the stock market implosion to take months, if not years. All installed to neutralize the impact of a virus that will likely kill far less people than the seasonal flu.

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