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[Home](#) > Coronavirus: Civil Liberties Once Given Away, Won't Come Back

Opinion

Coronavirus: Civil Liberties Once Given Away, Won't Come Back



by
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Since the first days of the COVID19 outbreak, the UK mainstream media has demonstrated a level of hysteria rarely seen. On point has been the Daily Mail, with a constant barrage emotive headlines warning of 'killer diseases' and '[deadly bugs](#)' [1].

But just how deadly is COVID19?

This is still somewhat of an unknown. At the time of writing, there have been 106,465 reported cases with 3,600 deaths and 60,228 full recoveries.

Mortality seems, from the figures released so far, to be around 3%. But the UK's Chief Medical Officer suggests that at the end of the day it will be [more like 1%](#) [2].

So COVID19 does seem to have a higher mortality rate than influenza, assuming all infections are being reported. Some suggest that a significant number of cases are not being reported because in many people the symptoms are so slight, which might explain the apparent discrepancy between the mortality figures we've seen so far and Professor Whitty's estimate.

Of the 3,600 deaths of COVID19 reported globally, 2 have been from the people living in the UK. By comparison, 6,600 people died from influenza in the UK in 2019 - not an exceptional year by any means, and anywhere between 290,000 and 650,000 globally.

Annually there are something like 10 million new [Tuberculosis infections reported](#) [3], resulting in an estimated 1.3 million deaths. Each year. Somewhat higher than the 1-3% estimate for COVID19.

Yet we have no calls for [mass quarantine](#) [4], bans on international travel, cancellations of sporting events, [closure of schools](#) [5] and universities or the [shutdown of the global economy](#) [6] for flu or TB.

Not all areas of the global economy are suffering, by the way. The vaccine industry seems to be doing very well as the search for a '[lucrative jab](#) [hots up](#)' [7].

Justification for the disproportionate response to COVID19 comes from the precautionary principle. Indeed, we have to [pray for the precautionary principle](#) [8], according to one opinion columnist in the New York Times.

Yet while governments globally have been quick to jump on the precautionary principle to deal with COVID19, in [other policy areas](#) [9], the precautionary principle seems to be ... inconvenient.

It should be clear, then, that rather than acting through concern for public health, governments are using a hyped up 'pandemic' to drive forward with the types of anti-civil liberty policies which they have been trying to convince us of for some time.

In this, the corporate media is once again fully complicit. Those media commentators who seem to have lost their minds the most are given free reign to ask what price we are willing to pay to save the lives of those who will be dead soon anyway, or [to argue](#) [10] that the virus "kills mostly the old who, let's face it, are more likely to be climate sceptics".

Such comment is clever psychology: so offensive to the majority that it drives the demands for 'something to be done'.

Combined with Daily Mail inspired fear-porn, such inflammatory coverage, amplified on social media, is building the public consent needed to drive through restrictions on civil liberties which could very quickly be reminiscent of Soviet Russia.

Michael Portillo recently claimed ^[11] that democracies will not tolerate draconian restrictions in the longer term. But in the present political climate, with a public left compliant following a three year Brexit battering, it would perhaps be wise to take a more objective look at COVID19 before we hand our governments the level of control over our lives they seem to be increasingly hungry for.

If history tells us anything, it's that once a government claims power, it rarely willingly gives it back.

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[3] https://www.who.int/gho/tb/epidemic/cases_deaths/en/

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[7] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/coronavirus-vaccine-race-volunteers-to-be-infected-in-the-uk-ck0s72x8k>

[8] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/opinion/coronavirus-science.html>

[9] <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/jul/28/rollout-of-5g-and-the-risk-of-harm>

[10] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-has-a-silver-lining-cz8wpc6xj>

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