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Commentary

One of the 'Greatest Failures in Modern History': Peer-Reviewed Journal Destroys Lockdowns



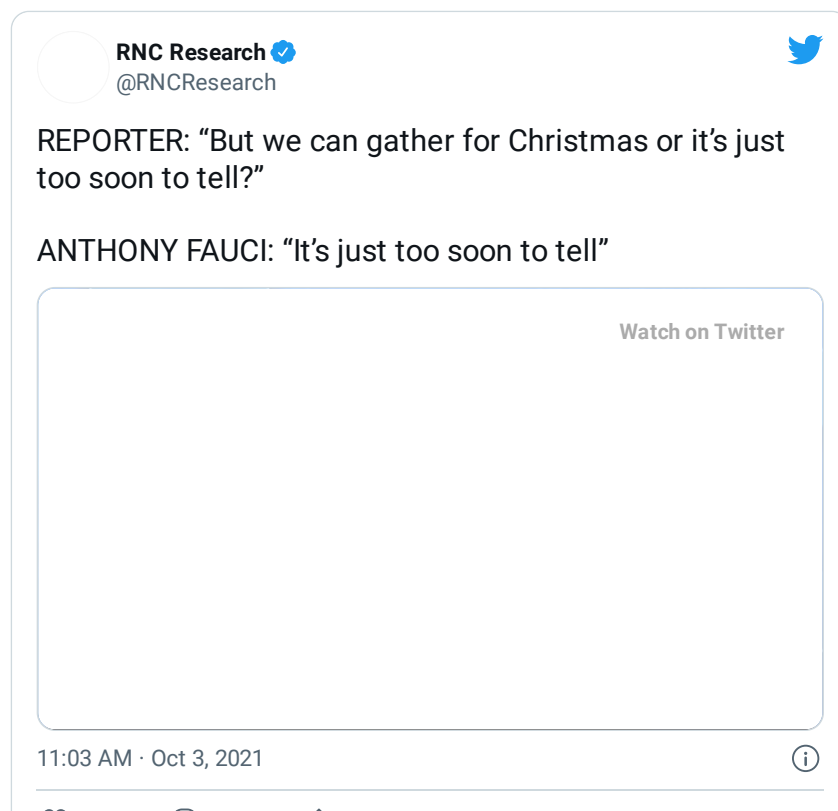
 By [C. Douglas Golden](#) • October 6, 2021 at 11:53am

On CBS News' "Face the Nation," Dr. Anthony Fauci — the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, America's COVID guru and arguably the most powerful unelected, unconfirmed bureaucrat in recent U.S. history — [informed Americans](#) it was "just too soon to tell" whether we'd be able to have Christmas gatherings.

This answer to a question posed by host Margaret Brennan was vaguely reminiscent of one Fauci gave last November when he was asked by CNN's Jake Tapper [whether Christmas gatherings](#) would be out of the question.

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"Yes, I'm — well, I think that, if we get most of the country vaccinated in the second, third quarter of the year, and the vaccine continues to prove its efficacy, and people adhere to those fundamental measures, I think we can start approaching the degree — it's not going to be a light switch, Jake."



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Steve Guest  
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CNN's Jake Tapper this morning: "Christmas is probably not gonna be possible."

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A year has passed, vast strides have been made against the coronavirus — both in vaccinations and treatment therapies. Deaths [are way down](#). But Fauci’s fundamental position, and that of other lockdown-and-social distancing czars, doesn’t seem to have changed: Keeping Americans locked down, masked and socially distanced is still the only option.

Have lockdowns been a disaster?

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OWN

“15
days

[to flatten the curve](#)” joke here.

To the Fauci crowd, the end of this all is somewhere in the middle distance. Next January. Maybe May. When 70 percent of adults are vaccinated. Make that 85. Or [98 percent](#), if you’re President Joe Biden. We can all get our lives back if we do what they say for just a little longer. Just a little while longer.

According to the author of one paper, however, all [the lockdowns](#) have potentially been for naught.

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In a peer-reviewed [study](#) published Sept. 29 by the International Journal of the Economics of Business, Douglas W. Allen, an economics professor at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada, argued that: “It is possible that lockdown will go down as one of the greatest peacetime policy failures in modern history.’

“An examination of over 100 Covid-19 studies reveals that many relied on false assumptions that over-estimated the benefits and under-estimated the costs of lockdown,” Allen wrote in the paper (which he originally [published in April](#)). “The most recent research has shown that lockdowns have had, at best, a marginal effect on the number of Covid-19 deaths. Generally speaking, the ineffectiveness stemmed from individual changes in behavior: either non-compliance or behavior that mimicked lockdowns.”

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It didn’t matter how stringent the lockdown was, either. Why? Allen noted that much of the decision-making was based on the so-called [Imperial College model](#) or models like it. The Imperial model concluded “that epidemic suppression is the

However, there were multiple problems with the model, Allen wrote.

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It assumed a viral reproduction number and fatality rate that were too high — as well as not being age-dependent. It was also based on the assumptions that “hospital capacity was assumed fixed and unchangeable” and “individuals in the model were assumed to not change behavior in the face of a new virus.” None of these panned out.

In addition, a study of European lockdown policies found no reduction in mortality in countries with more stringent [lockdowns](#) and a study in the United States found only a [“modest” reduction](#) in transmission in locales that locked down.

There were also costs beyond lost GDP, Allen wrote, including lost educational opportunities, increased mortality from unemployment and deaths “due to despair” (suicides, drug overdoses), an increase in domestic violence and medical treatments and examinations that were postponed.

Allen then proposed a different way of looking at the costs and benefits of COVID lockdowns, courtesy of a thought experiment from professor Bryan Caplan of George Mason University: “Suppose you could either live a year of life in the COVID era with lockdowns (e.g. like what happened in the U.K.), or 12-X months with the virus but no lockdowns (e.g. like what happened in Sweden or Florida). What value of X would make the AVERAGE person indifferent?”

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“For any random individual, X could take on a wide range of values. For some this past year has been horrific, and perhaps they would have preferred it never happened. Perhaps they suffered violence or abuse that was fueled by frustration and alcohol while locked down during a long stay-at-home order. Or perhaps they lost a business, a major career opportunity, or struggled over a long period of unemployment and induced depression,” Allen wrote.

“For these people, X equals 12 — they would have paid 12 months of their life to have avoided this past year. Others might have been willing to pay even more. For the vast majority of populations, Covid-19 was not a serious health risk. Lockdowns provided no benefits and only costs. Thus, for the vast majority, X likely takes on a value in the order of a few months.”

Caplan posited that $X =$ two months would be “a conservative estimate. That is, on average, two months would be sacrificed to have avoided lockdown.”

Allen used the model on Canada and found “the costs were at least thirty-five times higher than the benefits. The reasonable conservative case is that the cost/benefit ratio is around 141, which means that by any cost/benefit standard, lockdown has been a public policy disaster.”

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“Furthermore, if the fall of 2021 results in many cases resulting from the more transmissible delta variant among a shrinking number of unvaccinated people, then the expected benefits of lockdown policies become even smaller. Lockdowns are not just an inefficient policy, they must rank as one of the greatest peacetime policy disasters of all time.”

Few individuals, of course, are so associated with the lockdowns as [Dr. Fauci](#). Not that he has that power, mind you, but the Napoleon of the novel coronavirus pronounces his social distancing recommendations as ex cathedra statements, and the mainstream media treat them likewise. If you ask questions, you’re a science denier.

No, Fauci may not have been the actual authority imposing the lockdowns, but it’s undeniable that his recommendations have been treated as gospel by blue-state public health officials. His hands are all over this — and he’s not letting go, as

[The lockdowns](#) are finally being re-evaluated — and not just by Allen or Caplan — but you're going to keep seeing some minor-key variation on them pop up for quite some time.

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If the COVID bogeyman goes away, so does a lever of arbitrary power. It doesn't matter how destructive that power is when it's exercised. For some, just being able to exercise it is enough.

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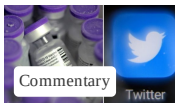
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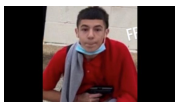
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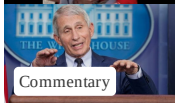
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