

# Strictest US Lockdown Can't Stem California COVID Cases

COVID-19 vaccine may have arrived, but government lockdowns are far from over.

On Monday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson reinstated a strict lockdown in the United Kingdom, citing a surge in infections and hospitalizations fueled by what officials say is a more transmissible variant of the coronavirus.

"It is clear that we need to do more to bring this new variant under control," Johnson [said](#). "That means the government is once again instructing you to stay at home."

Lockdowns remain a reality in many parts of the U.S. as well, although many states—Alaska, Florida, Missouri, South Dakota, and Alabama, among them—have abandoned nearly all restrictions.

MultiState, a state and local government relations company, [has a tool](#) that allows readers to track lockdown stringency in U.S. states. The company's methodology relies on reporting on nearly a dozen factors—*Are residents under stay-at-home orders? Are bars and restaurants allowed to operate beyond delivery? What constitutes an "essential" business?*—to determine each state's ranking.

The state's with the lowest "open score" are the following: California (50), New Mexico (49), Washington (48), Illinois (47), Hawaii (46), Oregon (45), Delaware (44), Vermont (43), New York (42), Michigan (41), and Colorado (40).

## Will Lockdowns Never End?

Many believed lockdowns might be nearing an end with the announcement of [effective vaccines](#). Unfortunately, that seems

far from certain.

Lawmakers continue to rely on lockdowns and various other restrictions in an effort to tame the spread of the virus, but these restrictions come [at heavy costs](#) to individuals and economies: job losses, business closures, depression, drug overdoses, and [a massive surge in poverty](#), among them.

This evidence in itself would bring into serious question the ethics of infringing on basic freedoms and fundamental human rights in an effort to slow transmission of a virus. However, lockdowns become even more questionable when one considers [evidence](#) that suggests these draconian restrictions seem to have little impact in slowing the spread of the virus.

The aforementioned United Kingdom, for example, is “reimposing” a lockdown, we’re told. But data show the UK’s lockdown stringency has remained remarkably consistent. The toll of the virus, however, has not.

*Despite the remarkable consistency of the UK’s lockdown stringency, the virus has spread at its own pace.*

*This is just one of countless examples that show there is virtually no correlation in lockdowns/lockdown stringency and lower COVID-19 cases/mortality. [pic.twitter.com/NERupiTplR](https://pic.twitter.com/NERupiTplR)*

*– Jon Miltimore (@miltimore79) [January 5, 2021](#)*

Data in the U.S. tell a similar story.

California, despite having the strictest lockdown in the country, has the most active cases—by far. Sure, California is the most populous state in the U.S., [but the 1.4 million active cases](#) is more than double the next closest state, Florida, which has roughly [609,000 active cases](#). On a per capita basis, Californian’s active cases are about 30 percent higher than Florida, which has virtually no restrictions in

place. (To put it another way, California currently represents nearly 17 percent of *all* active cases in the U.S.)

Similar patterns can be found in other strict lockdown states such as New Mexico, Washington, and Illinois—all of which are witnessing sharp upticks in cases and deaths despite having some of the strictest lockdown policies in the U.S.

Counterexamples, however, can also be found. [Oregon](#), [Vermont](#), [Delaware](#), and others have seen more modest case increases and deaths with the arrival of winter.

## The Takeaway: The Fatal Conceit

The takeaway here isn't that the politicians in Delaware and Vermont had better pandemic plans than lawmakers in California and New Mexico or are achieving better compliance. Indeed, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti recently pointed out the virus is surging in LA County despite "great compliance" with public health recommendations.

*Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti admits that despite "great compliance" with the rules (mask-mandate, lockdowns) and his county doing "everything right," the virus is still virusing.*

*LA County has had 800,000+ cases & 10,000+ deaths.*

*What if "everything right" is just ... WRONG?*  
[pic.twitter.com/zXmQ4sPFym](https://pic.twitter.com/zXmQ4sPFym)

– Scott Morefield (@SKMorefield) [January 3, 2021](#)

The takeaway is that central planners can't manage the coronavirus. Not effectively anyway. They lack the knowledge and the mechanisms of control necessary to control something as complex as a virus. And to be fair, managing a submicroscopic infectious agent that replicates by transmitting itself through living cells is a rather tall

task. (Much more complicated than, say, [delivering the mail](#).)

The inability of central planners to effectively manage the virus needs to be acknowledged. One of the duties of the economist is to offer a dose of reality to those who dream they can create *anything* if they only have enough power.

“The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design,” Nobel Prize-winning economist F.A. Hayek famously explained in [The Fatal Conceit](#).

Lockdowns may not be effective, but that doesn’t mean they are going away. Politicians are incentivized to embrace them, [even if they don’t work](#).

Perhaps the best way to end the lockdowns is for Americans to remember that all people are born with “[certain unalienable Rights](#),” and that government exists only to secure these rights.


Once people remember this basic truth, they can find the courage and fortitude to peacefully resist this historic government overreach that has proven [so harmful](#) to so many.

Fortunately, many are already actively doing so. From [Beverly Hills](#) to Louisville to New York City and [beyond](#), Americans are rediscovering the great tradition of civil disobedience.

“I was not born to be forced,” the great American poet Henry David Thoreau, author of [Civil Disobedience](#), once asserted. “I will breathe after my own fashion.”

It’s a principle we never should have forgotten.

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*This article was originally published on FEE.org. Read the [original article](#).* 

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