

Why Young Adults Are the Most Frightened of COVID

Nearly [3 million Americans are being vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 each day, but the “return to normal” may not be as close as many hope.

A new survey shows many Americans have concerns about interacting with others once the pandemic is over.

“A YouGov poll of more than 4,000 people finds that two in five (39%) Americans say they are very or fairly nervous about the idea of interacting with people socially again,” [writes](#) YouGov data journalist Jamie Ballard.

While the high percentage of Americans expressing angst about socializing after the pandemic comes as a surprise, the breakdown along age groups is even more surprising.

“Among 18-to 24-year-olds, 50% say they are nervous about it. A similar number of 25-to 34-year-olds (47%) feel the same way,” Ballard writes

In other words, nearly half of Americans between 18 and 34 are concerned about returning to a normal social life after the pandemic. In contrast, just 31 percent of those over 55 responded that they are nervous about interacting with people again.

The contrast is noteworthy because it’s widely understood that young people are far less likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID. But how less likely?

Our World in Data has a chart breaking down the case fatality rates in South Korea, China, Italy, and Spain. The data show the case fatality rate is about 0.2 percent for people in their 20s and 30s, a tiny fraction compared to people over 60.

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

“The death rate in New York City for adults aged 75 years and older was around 2,344 per 100,000 people as of March 28, 2021,” researcher John Elflein [notes at Statista](#).

That is about 500 times higher than the death rate (5 per 100,000) for people in the 18-24 age range.

Nationwide, [research from the Heritage Foundation](#) shows that adults aged 25-34 account for less than three thousand of the official 565,000 COVID-related deaths in the U.S. (Many of these deaths, it should be noted, are linked to comorbidities.)

This data should come as no surprise. Nearly a year ago, Stanford University’s Dr. John Ioannidis noted COVID’s infection fatality rate is “[almost zero](#)” for people under 45.

Look at these charts. Now guess which age group is the most frightened of COVID-19?

Hint: It’s not the people over 35. pic.twitter.com/0aM11lg0zg

– Jon Miltimore (@miltimore79) [April 1, 2021](#)

An Inverse Relationship

All the official data point in the same direction: young people have the least to fear from COVID-19. Yet the YouGov poll also shows they are the most afraid.

This is odd. As influencers noted on Twitter, the level of comfort people feel in returning to normal life is inversely correlated to their level of actual risk.

The level of comfort is inversely correlated to the level of risk. <https://t.co/Khg1rfQA0b>

– Noam Blum (@neontaster) [March 30, 2021](#)

This invites an important question: why are young people more afraid? One obvious answer is young adults might simply be unaware their risk of serious illness is low.

As I recently noted, Americans in general [are wildly misinformed](#) about the risk of hospitalization from COVID-19, with roughly a third of Americans believing the chances of being hospitalized with the virus are *50 percent*. (In actuality, it's closer to one percent.)

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Studies have shown that U.S. media essentially created [a climate of fear](#) by publishing a flood of negative news in 2020. Indeed, an [Ivy League-led](#) study concluded that 91 percent of U.S. articles in major media were negative in tone, nearly double when compared to non-U.S. media. The negative news, the researchers noted, continued even when the coronavirus was ebbing and when positive medical breakthroughs were being achieved.

“Stories of increasing COVID-19 cases outnumber stories of decreasing cases by a factor of 5.5 even during periods when new cases are declining,” researchers noted.

Media may only be one part of the equation, however. Digital technology may be another.

‘Young People Less Likely to Die From COVID’

While writing this article, I had to find statistics on the risks of COVID for young adults. To find the information, I did what I normally do: I went to Google and typed in keywords for what I was looking to find—“young people less likely to die from Covid.”

I was expecting to find on top a bunch of articles and research showing that young people have relatively little to fear from the coronavirus. That's not what happened. Here are the top results I got:

[Coronavirus and COVID-19: Younger Adults Are at Risk, Too | Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

[What Young, Healthy People Have to Fear From COVID-19 | The Atlantic](#)

[Data reveal deadliness of COVID-19, even in young adults | University of Minnesota CIDRAP](#)

[Young people are at risk of severe Covid-19 illness | NBC](#)

[Dying Young: The Health Care Workers in Their 20s Killed by COVID-19 | KHN](#)

Top Google results when I searched

"Young people less likely to die from covid"
pic.twitter.com/8iHksNNLbF

– Jon Miltimore (@miltimore79) [April 1, 2021](#)

This is a big deal. We live in a digital world, and Google is the biggest search engine on the planet, processing more than [3.5 billion searches](#) every day.

Millions of people probably use Google every day to find information about the coronavirus. But instead of finding articles that point out [coronavirus is hundreds of times more deadly for people over 60 than people under 40](#), anyone who Googled about young people and risks from coronavirus would find a bunch of super-scary headlines.

Again, this isn't to say young people face no risk from COVID. But the medical reality is that children and young adults are

more likely to die from [the seasonal flu](#), pneumonia, or [a car crash](#) than COVID-19.

Clearly most Americans aren't aware of this.

The Price of the Disconnect

The YouGov poll results show there is a disconnect between perception and reality when it comes to COVID-19. Unfortunately, this disconnect has real-world consequences.

“Those who overestimate risks to young people or hold an exaggerated sense of risk upon infection are more likely to favor closing schools, restaurants, and other businesses,” the authors of a recent Franklin Templeton/Gallup study [concluded](#).

This is important because these restrictions are quite serious. Closing parts of the economy is no small matter. These actions are associated with numerous unintended consequences—job losses, [mental health deterioration](#), increased [global poverty](#), surging [loneliness](#), health procedures deferred, and more. Meanwhile, the documented benefits of these restrictions remain elusive.

In 2020, we witnessed unprecedented infringements on fundamental civil liberties. And it all stemmed from fear.

Worse, despite the presence of numerous successful vaccines and crashing case numbers, the alarm bells keep sounding.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky is warning of “impending doom,” while others warn we must begin planning for a [“permanent pandemic.”](#) *The New York Times* is using Florida, which lifted all pandemic restrictions last summer, as [a cautionary tale](#) by using rather tortured analysis.

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Considering all this, it's no surprise that many young people are terrified of the virus. But we'd do well to remember that fear is the pathway to subservience.

"If you want to control someone, all you have to do is to make them feel afraid," the author Paulo Coelho wrote in *The Devil and Miss Prym*.

It's time to stop being afraid. And the first step comes through understanding.

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

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