

# Why Did the CDC Drastically Alter COVID Guidance?



One day I'm reading an internal memo [commissioned](#) by the Democratic Party to provide advice to dealing with Covid policy. The next day I'm reading headlines about how the CDC has drastically altered its advice on how to deal with Covid.

Is there a relationship? At this point, only the hopelessly naive would think otherwise.

Let's look at the [memo](#) produced by Impact Research. Some excerpts:

- Democrats have a tremendous opportunity to claim an incredible, historic success – they vaccinated hundreds of millions of people, prevented the economy from going into freefall, kept small businesses from going under, and got people back to work safely. Because of President Biden and Democrats, we CAN safely return to life feeling much more normal – and they should claim that proudly.
- Six in ten Americans describe themselves as “worn out”

by the pandemic. The more we talk about the threat of COVID and onerously restrict people's lives because of it, the more we turn them against us and show them we're out of touch with their daily realities.

- [I]t means recognizing that the threat of COVID is no longer what it was even a year ago and therefore should not be treated as such – shutdowns, masks, and lockdowns were meant to save lives when there was not yet a vaccine that could do that. Voters know we now have the tools in the toolkit to be responsible in combatting and living with COVID – vaccines and boosters to minimize illness, and masks and social distancing around vulnerable groups.
- They think the virus is here to stay, and 83% say the pandemic will be over when it's a mild illness like the flu rather than COVID being completely gone, and 55% prefer that COVID should be treated as an endemic disease. And that's what most Americans are dealing with – a disease with fatality rates like the flu – because most of us took the personal responsibility to protect ourselves and our families by getting vaccinated.
- **Stop talking about restrictions and the unknown future ahead.** If we focus on how bad things still are and how much worse they could get, we set Democrats up as failures unable to navigate us through this. When 99% of Americans can get vaccinated, we cause more harm than we prevent with voters by going into our third year talking about restrictions. And, if Democrats continue to hold a posture that prioritizes COVID precautions over learning how to live in a world where COVID exists, but does not dominate, they risk paying dearly for it in November.

A few points. There is no strong evidence that “shutdowns, masks, and lockdowns” saved lives which is perhaps why the memo backs away slightly from the claim with the words “meant to.” Good intentions, but ruined lives.

This memo is not epidemiology but politics, most strongly illustrated by the idea that polling should make the difference as to whether a pathogen is pandemic or endemic. The constant incantation of “vaccines” here has nothing to do with the known data: they have nowhere stopped infection or spread, a point which the memo obscures with the line about how they “minimize illness.” They minimize serious outcomes for some strains so long as they last.

From a policy point of view, there are two main features that stand out: Covid is here to stay and “most people in the U.S. will eventually get COVID-19” (thereby hinting at the reality that vaccines are not effective in the way that Biden/Fauci/Walensky promised) and therefore the focus should be on protecting the vulnerable.

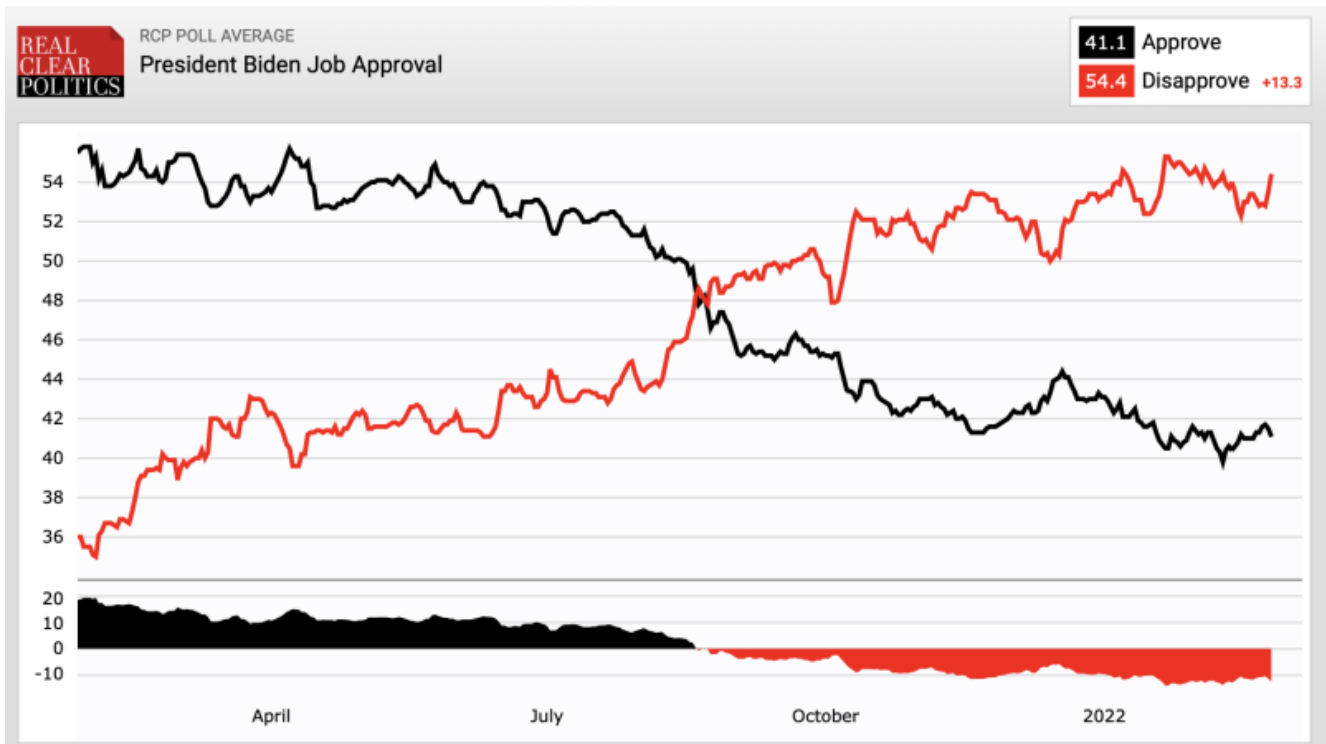
There is nothing new about this. It was always true! You can shout “Omicron” all day but it was also true with Alpha and Delta as well. The virus should have been treated rationally the entire time and policies that have wrecked public health should have been off the table from 2020. The memo writers did not cite the Great Barrington Declaration but they might as well have.

As for how the Democrats somehow prevented an economic freefall, the worst economic outcomes are very clearly in Democratic-controlled states that retained restrictions for nearly two years in some places, including keeping schools closed. There is a reason for the [mass migration](#) that this has inspired.

If we are looking for thriving economies, look to the states that never closed up or opened earliest: South Dakota, Florida, Texas, Georgia, and so on. So none of this is remotely true but, hey, this is politics, right?, so it doesn't have to be true.

The real problem that the Democrats need to solve is revealed

in this chart:



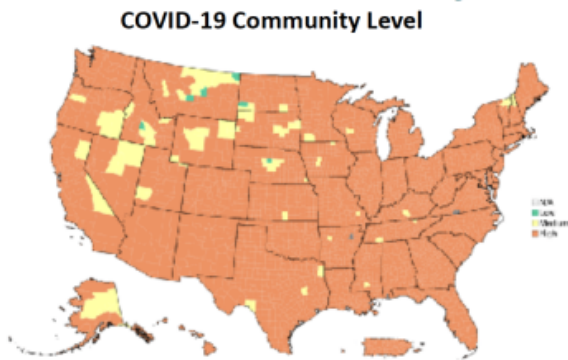
Now, let us consider the dramatic turnaround at the CDC that came out the very next day. The full PDF is embedded below.

Here are the talking points handed to the director. It's not just about masking, which is being relaxed. The CDC says there needs to be a dramatic shift away from endless monitoring of cases that are overwhelmingly mild and instead focus only on actual sickness that lands people in the hospital and threatens life. We need to stop obsessing about cases and start looking mainly at "medically significant disease." The focus should be on "protecting the most vulnerable."

This makes all of us want to say, shout, scream: THANK YOU!

In order to justify this change, the CDC posts four sets of charts on Covid prevalence during episodes of the pandemic. The last chart illustrates the point that an exclusive focus on controlling the spread is utterly preposterous at this point. Under the old protocols, the whole country should be back in lockdown. It's unimaginable what attempting this now would cause.

# COVID-19 Community Levels on January 15, 2022



	% of Counties	% of Pop.
Low	0.2%	0.0%
Medium	3.2%	0.5%
High	96.5%	99.5%



	% of Counties	% of Pop.
Low	0.3%	0.0%
Moderate	0.0%	0.0%
Subst.	0.1%	0.0%
High	99.6%	100.0%

To be sure, all of this is enormously frustrating for those of us engaged in this battle for two years. Instead of focusing on getting sick people well, the CDC experimented with wild guidelines that imagined some kind of society-wide solution that seemed designed to crush the virus while vast amounts of social and economic activity were shut down by law. This necessitated a crushing of freedoms, including of travel, association, commerce, religion, and, eventually even speech.

The CDC nowhere admits this much less apologizes for it. Two years in, the CDC seems to have rediscovered the traditional practice of public health, and has justified this new wisdom based on changed conditions, while never even bothering to claim that its previous measures and guidelines achieved anything along the way.

We've seen a massive collapse in public health, economic vitality, and essential rights, while closing schools and wrecking education and so much more, all in the name of virus control, even as the evidence is now overwhelming that the entire enterprise was not only a distraction from what should have happened (therapeutics and protecting the vulnerable) but also an astonishing failure.

Why the change? It had to happen at some point. The entire machinery of lockdowns and mandates were destined to fail. As to the timing of the reversal, it's hard to resist the speculation that it is entirely political. See the memo above.

Still, there is a worrisome aspect to the CDC's announcement. They reserve the right to do it all over again. "We want to give people a break from things like mask-wearing, when these metrics are better, and then have the ability to reach for them again should things worsen," she said.

[Scientific-Rationale-summary-COVID-19-Community-LevelsDownload](#)