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Inside Track

CDC Quietly Slashed Data on Covid Death Toll



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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) slashed its reported Covid-associated death tallies in all age groups, including children, on March 16, citing an “accidental” coding error. No formal announcements have been made.

In a March 18 statement to Reuters, the agency said that it made “adjustments” to its Covid Data Tracker’s mortality data because “its algorithm was accidentally counting deaths that were not COVID-19-related.”

The outlet reported that the “adjustment” resulted in the removal of 72,277 deaths previously reported across 26 states, including 416 pediatric deaths.

That latest number suggests that the CDC overcounted Covid deaths in children by 24 percent.

“Data on deaths was adjusted after resolving a coding logic error. This resulted in decreased death counts across all demographic categories,” the CDC explained on its site.

More than 967,000 people in the U.S. had died of Covid, per the CDC’s Covid tracker, as of March 16, and 921 of those were under the age of 18, meaning children accounted for 0.17 percent of all U.S. Covid deaths.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of such medical metrics, since they serve as a foundation for scientific advice, such as recommending Covid vaccination. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky cited the tracker’s death total in November of 2021 while pushing for an expert panel to advise her agency to recommend Pfizer Covid shots for children five to 11 years old.

The agency responsible for public health advice has been struggling with producing reliable data on the pandemic. Moreover, from the very onset of the pandemic, the CDC appears to have been contributing to botching the Covid statistics.

In August 2020, then-CDC Director Robert Redfield acknowledged during a U.S. House hearing that the Covid death count might be inflated because hospitals receive a monetary gain by classifying deaths as



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being Covid-related even if the virus didn't cause the death. In July 2020, Brett Grior of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department said he believes that financial incentivization could have resulted in higher reported Covid death rates.

By Veronika Kyrylenko

UN Chief: “Addiction to Fossil Fuels Is Mutually Assured Destruction”



AP Images

At the beginning of *The Economist's* Seventh Annual Sustainability Week on March 21, UN Secretary-General António Guterres once again pushed the climate-change panic button. The fearmongering speech included the UN chief claiming that the goal of keeping the planet's temperature rise under 1.5° Celsius was “on life support” and “in intensive care” owing to a variety of issues, including Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine.

Guterres warned that the “all-of-the-above” strategy that many economies are currently employing to replace Russian oil in protest to its war with Ukraine is having deleterious effects on the fragile goals of COP26, and that the efforts of nations to keep a steady energy supply risk exploding so-called global warming beyond society's ability to manage.

“Countries could become so consumed by the immediate fossil fuel supply gap that they neglect or knee-cap policies to cut fossil fuel use,” Guterres told the summit.

The secretary-general also compared the specter of climate change to nuclear annihilation, saying, “This is madness. Addiction to fossil fuels is mutually assured destruction.”

“We must tell it like it is. The world emerged from Glasgow [COP26] with a certain naive optimism” about achieving its goals, Guterres told a virtual gathering. “Keeping 1.5 alive requires a 45 percent reduction in global emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by mid-century. That problem was not solved in Glasgow.”

“According to present national commitments, global emissions are set to increase by almost 14 percent in the 2020s,” Guterres said. “Last year alone, global energy-related CO₂ emissions grew by 6 percent to their highest levels in history. Coal emissions have surged to record highs. We are sleepwalking to



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climate catastrophe.”

This newest dire prognostication by Guterres came only three weeks after the secretary-general called the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership.” In that speech, the secretary-general concluded that “delay means death.”

By James Murphy

Gates Foundation Spends Millions to Transform Agriculture, Fails



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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is behind two highly funded initiatives in the third world — one aimed at transforming agriculture in Africa and the other with the goal of advancing “gender equity.” The former, however, is taking heat for its apparent failure to produce the intended results after 15 years.

The Gates-led Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) was supposed to increase incomes and food security for millions of smallholder farmers. But according to an independent evaluation done in December of 2021 by consulting firm Mathematica, there is no evidence of progress toward these goals.

In a formal response, AGRA countered that the finding is “an expected outcome and a true reflection of the realities that farmers, AGRA, and other institutions that support farmers today live with daily.”

This is in contrast to previous language from AGRA, in which the group promised it would “double yields and incomes for 30 million farming households by 2020.” The failure to live up to that promise comes despite AGRA having raised over \$1 billion, two-thirds of it from the Gates Foundation.

The failings of AGRA are similar to those of the Gates Foundation’s effort to “save American schools.” According to a 2016 evaluation by the think tank RAND, that seven-year, \$500-million initiative designed and partly funded by the Gates Foundation “failed to produce the desired dramatic improvement in outcomes across all years.”

AGRA is based in Kenya and is registered as a tax-exempt nonprofit in the United States. It encourages African countries to pass business-friendly policies and scale up markets for patented seeds, fossil-fuel



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based fertilizers, and other industrial inputs the group claims are necessary to ramp up food production.

Critics of AGRA say the organization's strategies "continue to impoverish smallholder farmers" by "promoting green revolution technologies that do not improve [African] soils." They also are concerned with AGRA's promotion of seed privatization legislation, which creates penalties for open-source seed sharing — which detractors say would hurt small-scale farmers while benefiting large corporations.

By Luis Miguel

New Zealand Lifts Most Covid Restrictions as Cases Skyrocket

New Zealand has lifted most of its Covid-19 restrictions, including vaccine mandates and passports, even as the island nation experiences its highest rates of infection since the pandemic began.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made the announcement March 23, saying she was describing "the next set of changes to our COVID settings in New Zealand."

Those changes include eliminating all caps on attendance at outdoor gatherings and increasing the limits on indoor gatherings under the country's strictest regimen from 100 to 200. Vaccine mandates for public and private employees, except those in healthcare, elder care, corrections, and border enforcement, will be repealed. Vaccine passes will also be a thing of the past.

Ardern asserted that her restrictions, instituted in March 2020, when the country of five million had a grand total of five Covid-19 cases, had "been successful" in stemming the tide of infections. But, she added, "it has also been bloody hard."

It has certainly been hard on ordinary Kiwis, who were forced to lock down, get shot up with experimental vaccines, present and scan vaccine passports to enter businesses and other public places, and endure economic devastation. The Associated Press noted March 23 that "international tourism used to account for about 20% of New Zealand's foreign income and more than 5% of GDP but evaporated after the South Pacific nation imposed some of the world's strictest border controls after the pandemic began."

According to the AP, with New Zealand today experiencing "some of its highest rates of coronavirus infections and hospitalizations since the pandemic began, with an average 17,000 new infections being reported each day," Ardern has decided it's time to relax her allegedly "successful" mandates.

Ardern, a member of the Labor Party, is in much the same position as Democrats in the United States, trying to thread the needle between appealing to voters who are fed up with her destructive dictates and her far-left allies who want her to crack down even harder.

By Michael Tennant



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