

**Gaslighting:** *a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group, making them question their own ... judgment. Using denial, misdirection, contradiction, and misinformation, gaslighting involves attempts to ... delegitimize the victim's beliefs.*

Over the last year, in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been assaulted with numerous assertions that “it’s just the flu”, “masks don’t work” and even that it’s all a “left wing” conspiracy to emasculate the population by destroying the economy making us all dependent on Big Brother.

Here in Weld County, led by the elected officials, these claims have found fertile ground as the various executive orders that have been issued by Governor Polis have been rejected, with officials instead claiming to protect individual responsibility.

Essentially, the Weld County Commissioners have initiated a COVID-19 “food fight” against the State of Colorado without actually offering any solutions to residents. In fact, Commissioner Scott James explicitly advocated (with his “attack the dial” campaign) that people should attempt to undermine the State’s COVID metrics by having non-infected persons be tested to artificially reduce the infection positivity rate without actually reducing the pandemic risks. <https://tinyurl.com/yyfkxjtq>

So, how has Weld County actually been doing in addressing COVID-19 infections and deaths? Has their approach actually been protecting residents as effectively as other Front Range counties? Or, is the BOCC merely “gaslighting” in which they try to make us “think” their actions are effective, while actually sacrificing our vulnerable populations?

The following analysis is taken directly from the CDPHE data portal.

Look first at one of the CDPHE metrics that is used to evaluate the status of the pandemic, the “positivity rate”, the fraction of COVID-19 tests that are positive. Despite

James' attempt to falsify the positivity data, the evidence is that Weld County's COVID management approach falls short, compared to other Front Range counties. The most recent results show that Weld County has the WORST positivity rate in the Front Range, with only Adams County being somewhat similar, while nearby Larimer and Boulder Counties are far better.

County	Two Week average Positivity rate, %	Over 65 %
Weld	8.1	12.5
Adams	7.9	10.8
Douglas	6.4	12.5
Arapahoe	5.7	13.5
Broomfield	5.7	14.4
Jefferson	5.3	17.0
Denver	5.2	12.1
El Paso	5.2	13.2
Larimer	5.2	16.4
Boulder	4.0	14.9
Pueblo	3.8	19.0
Source: CDPHE, 1/19/2021		Source: State Demographer Office

Note that one of the frequently offered excuses for the poor Weld County results, that the population is older, is not supported by the information from the Colorado State Demography Office, which shows that Weld's over 65 population is similar to or smaller than all other Front Range Counties except Adams, with both Larimer and Boulder having a larger over-65 population.

Another metric of interest is the 14 day Cumulative Incidence Rate. Because persons infected with COVID-19 remain contagious for 10-14 days, this rate, normalized for population, is a direct indicator of prevalence--how many contagious persons are in the population. Knowing the prevalence allows a person to choose where to spend their time because they are able to better judge their risk of coming in contact with infected persons.

County	2 Week Cum. Inc. Cases per 100,000	Daily Risk of COVID contact, 10 persons per day	Weekly Risk of COVID contact, 10 persons/day, 7 days
Weld	499	9.5	50.4
Arapahoe	490	9.4	49.8
Adams	487	9.3	49.6
Denver	483	9.3	49.3
Douglas	435	8.4	45.8
El Paso	432	8.3	45.5
Jefferson	410	7.9	43.8
Larimer	377	7.3	41.1
Broomfield	367	7.1	40.3
Boulder	333	6.5	37.4
Pueblo	295	5.7	33.9

Source: CDPHE, 1/19/2021, 50% effective surveillance

Again, Weld County has the worse performance in the Front Range, with a Cumulative Incidence of 499 cases per 100,000 people. This means that about 1% of Weld County residents are likely to be contagious, while in Larimer and Larimer Counties, the prevalence is about 25 and 35% lower, respectively. In day-to-day terms, if you are out and about in Weld County, and have significant contact with 10 people each day, you will have approximately a 10% chance that one of them will be positive each day, or about 50% chance in a week. Depending on your particular situation, the reduction in risk by spending time in Larimer and Boulder counties could be significant.

In summary, the existing data on COVID-19 cases demonstrates that despite what the Weld County elected officials would have you believe, their approach is inferior to other counties in the Front Range.

It's time to end the Weld County gaslighting.