



# The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things

*Barry Glassner*

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There has never been another era in modern history, even during wartime or the Great Depression, when so many people have feared so much. Three out of four Americans say they feel more fearful today than they did twenty years ago. *The Culture of Fear* describes the high costs of living in a fear-ridden environment where realism has become rarer than doors without deadbolts. Why do we have so many fears these days? Are we living in exceptionally dangerous times? To watch the news, you'd certainly think so, but Glassner demonstrates that it is our *perception* of danger that has increased, not the actual level of risk. *The Culture of Fear* is an expose of the people and organizations that manipulate our perceptions and profit from our fears: politicians who win elections by heightening concerns about crime and drug use even as rates for both are declining; advocacy groups that raise money by exaggerating the prevalence of particular diseases; TV newsmagazines that monger a new scare every week to garner ratings. Glassner spells out the prices we pay for social panics: the huge sums of money that go to waste on unnecessary programs and products as well as time and energy spent worrying about our fears.

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