

Poll shows who Americans trust (and don't trust) for health news

August 22 2023, by Dennis Thompson



Misinformation about health and medicine is rampant in the United

States, with far too many Americans being presented false claims and left wondering what to believe, a new survey reports.

At least 4 in 10 people say they've heard 10 specific false claims about COVID-19, [reproductive health](#) and gun violence, [the KFF survey](#) says. KFF was formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Not many fall for the [fake news](#).

People who said false claims are "definitely true" ranged from as few as 3% who definitely believe COVID vaccines have been proven to cause infertility, to as many as 18% who definitely believe armed school guards have been proven to prevent school shootings.

Unfortunately, roughly half to three-quarters of the public isn't certain whether the 10 false claims are true or not, describing them as either "probably true" or "probably false."

This suggests that these false claims have the power to create uncertainty about complex public [health](#) topics, even when people don't fully buy into what they hear, the KFF report says.

"Most people aren't true believers in the lies or the facts about health issues; they are in a muddled middle," [Drew Altman](#), president and CEO of KFF, said in an organization news release. "The public's uncertainty leaves them vulnerable to [misinformation](#) but is also the opportunity to combat it."

Misinformation on vaccines, birth control, guns

A third of adults said the false claim that COVID vaccines have caused thousands of sudden deaths in otherwise healthy people is "definitely" (10%) or "probably" (23%) true, the survey found.

Black participants were more likely to believe this false statement than white respondents, while Republicans and independents were more likely to do so than Democrats. People with college degrees were less likely than those with a high school education or less to say this is true.

About a third of adults also said the false claim that using [birth control](#) such as the pill or an IUD makes it harder for most women to get pregnant once they stop using them is "definitely" (5%) or "probably" true (29%).

Adults under 65, Republicans, independents and Black and Hispanic adults were more likely to believe this claim than others.

And when told the inaccurate statement that people who have firearms at home are less likely to be killed with a gun, about 4 in 10 (42%) said it was "definitely" (13%) or "probably" (29%) true.

Gun owners were more likely than non-gun owners to believe this false claim, (55% versus 37%).

The survey also revealed varied beliefs and perceptions are what constitutes misinformation.

For example, when asked to describe specific misinformation related to COVID that they've heard, people volunteered statements that were in direct contradiction with one another. These included tidbits about the safety and effectiveness of COVID vaccines and wearing masks to prevent the virus' spread.

Who to trust?

The survey also gauged people's [trust](#) in various sources of [health information](#), and found that doctors are the most trusted. About 93%

said they trust their doctors at least a fair amount.

Traditional news sources also receive a fair amount of trust.

The largest percentages say they would have at least a little trust in health information reported by their local TV news stations (80%); national network news (72%); and their local newspaper (72%).

Cable news fared worse, with smaller shares trusting CNN (58%); MSNBC (52%); Fox News (49%); Newsmax (25%); or One America News Network (OANN) (22%).

About two-thirds of respondents said they have at least a fair amount of trust in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (67%) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (65%) to make the right recommendations when it comes to health issues.

Democrats are more likely than either independents or Republicans to trust federal health agencies. About half of Republicans said they trust both the CDC (49%) and FDA (54%).

Social media sources

Social media sites were considered least trustworthy. About a quarter (24%) of adults said they use social media at least weekly to find health information or advice, including larger shares of Hispanic and Black adults, and people in low-income households.

Of eight specific social media sources, half (52%) would trust information about [health issues](#) they saw on YouTube at least a little.

Fewer said they would trust health information if they saw it on Facebook (40%); X (formerly Twitter) (29%); Instagram (27%), and

other platforms.

Further, fewer than 1 in 10 said they have a lot of trust in health information from any of these social media sources.

The sources people use for their news can influence their susceptibility to misinformation, the survey showed.

Less than half (45%) of adults said that one of the five false COVID and vaccine claims presented in the survey was "definitely" or "probably" true.

But that share rose to 76% of regular Newsmax viewers; 67% of regular OANN viewers, and 61% of regular Fox News viewers.

Similarly, 54% of those who use social media for health information and advice at least weekly said that they have heard at least one of the false COVID and vaccine claims and think it is "definitely" or "probably" true, compared to 40% of those who don't use social media for health advice.

The poll of 2,007 U.S. adults was conducted in English and Spanish between May 23 and June 12. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the full sample.

The new survey is part of a new KFF program area aimed at identifying and monitoring health misinformation and trust in the United States.

KFF also plans a regular "Health Misinformation Monitor" that will document emerging health misinformation, identify its primary sources, and examine the role that [social media](#) and [news](#) outlets play in its spread. The full report can be found [here](#).

More information: The U.S. Surgeon General has more about [health misinformation](#).

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Citation: Poll shows who Americans trust (and don't trust) for health news (2023, August 22)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2023-08-poll-americans-dont-health-news.html>

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