

# Americans Have No Clue What the True COVID Numbers Are

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✓ Fact Checked

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Data from a poll done six months after the start of the pandemic were called "nothing short of stunning" as they revealed dramatic misunderstandings of the risk of dying from COVID-19, which "sadly, comes as no surprise"
- › Evidence suggests the number who misunderstand the risks from COVID-19 have not demonstrably changed in the past seven months; based on data from a small CNN poll, from 40% to 53.2% believe the infection is a broad risk for the population
- › The two identified culprits behind misunderstanding the basic facts were information on social media and partisan bias; yet, since social media posts are highly censored, it isn't likely "misinformation" that is driving misunderstandings
- › The first poll called the misinformation "blinded from science," which may have been driven by inconsistent statements from the same experts during a single interview. It is important to seek out verifiable news and independent research

Knowledge gives you the power to make informed decisions based on evidence. A bank will not lend money to an entrepreneur without a business plan. Companies that operate without a budget will fail.

You would not consent to fly in a plane with a pilot who didn't have his license. You wouldn't knowingly hire an attorney who didn't pass the bar. You wouldn't get into a

taxi with a driver who couldn't drive.

And yet, many have been making health decisions based on misconceptions, misinformation and sometimes outright lies. A report<sup>1</sup> released in 2020, six months into the pandemic, revealed that most Americans had significant misconceptions of the risks involved from COVID-19. Months later, evidence suggests not much has changed.

## **Firm Calls Results 'Nothing Short of Stunning'**

Six months after the start of the pandemic, investment management organization Franklin Templeton Investments, in collaboration with Gallup,<sup>2</sup> released a report about Americans' understanding of the COVID-19 infection. The research focused on fundamental and undisputed facts of the risk for individuals and did not address any information that might be seen as controversial, such as treatment options and lockdown policies. In the report, the firm wrote:<sup>3</sup>

*"Six months into this pandemic, Americans still dramatically misunderstand the risk of dying from COVID-19 ... These results are nothing short of stunning. Mortality data have shown from the very beginning that the COVID-19 virus age-discriminates, with deaths overwhelmingly concentrated in people who are older and suffer comorbidities.*

*This is perhaps the only uncontroversial piece of evidence we have about this virus. Nearly all US fatalities have been among people older than 55; and yet a large number of Americans are still convinced that the risk to those younger than 55 is almost the same as to those who are older."*

The Franklin Templeton-Gallup Economics of Recovery Study of Americans found there were misconceptions in the general population about the risks associated with infection. The analysts then separated the beliefs and compared those to the actual data. This is from the report:<sup>4</sup>

- On average, Americans believe that people aged 55 and older account for just over half of total COVID-19 deaths; the actual figure is 92%.
- Americans believe that people aged 44 and younger account for about 30% of total deaths; the actual figure is 2.7%.
- Americans overestimate the risk of death from COVID-19 for people aged 24 and younger by a factor of 50; and they think the risk for people aged 65 and older is half of what it actually is (40% vs 80%).

When the data were broken down by age groups they found that most people under age 65 really had no concept of the actual number of deaths for their age group:<sup>5</sup>

Age	Percent worried about serious effects	Percent of actual total deaths
18-24	59.1%	0.1%
25-34	67.1%	0.7%
35-44	69.3%	1.9%
45-54	67.9%	5.0%
55-64	69.8%	12.2%
65+	77.6%	80.0%

*“The discrepancy with the actual mortality data is staggering: for people aged 18–24, the share of those worried about serious health consequences is 400 times higher than the share of total COVID deaths; for those age 25–34 it is 90 times higher.”*

Writing in Wirepoints,<sup>6</sup> Mark Glennon commented on the findings saying, “The only

good news there is that folks 65 and older are much more aware of the heightened risk for their own age group.”<sup>7</sup>

The report<sup>8</sup> identified two major culprits of the fundamental misunderstanding of basic facts from a COVID-19 infection. Those culprits were misinformation predominantly shared on social media and the partisan bias for Democrats to “mistakenly overstate the risk of death from COVID-19 for younger people.” Templeton’s chief investment officer Sonal Desai, Ph.D., commented:<sup>9</sup>

*“This, sadly, comes as no surprise. Fear and anger are the most reliable drivers of engagement; scary tales of young victims of the pandemic, intimating that we are all at risk of dying, quickly go viral; so do stories that blame everything on your political adversaries.*

*Both social and traditional media have been churning out both types of narratives in order to generate more clicks and increase their audience.”*

## **Recent Evidence Suggests Nothing Has Changed**

The data for the Templeton-Gallup study were gathered between July 2, 2020, and July 14, 2020, and were based on a sample size of 10,014 U.S. adults.<sup>10</sup> As disturbing as these misperceptions reported in the news and shared on social media may have been in the first six months of the pandemic, later evidence suggests not too much has changed.

February 10, 2021, CNN reported<sup>11</sup> that 25% of the people surveyed thought there was a small risk to returning to prepandemic levels of activity and 66% reported there was a large or moderate risk. The poll was taken between February 5, 2021, and February 8, 2021, and “based on a nationally representative sample of 1,030 people age 18 and older.”<sup>12</sup>

From this small sample, CNN found that the group least likely to view COVID-19 as a risk were people aged 18 to 29. However, the percentage of individuals in this age

group was nearly equal to that found in the Templeton-Gallup Study done seven months earlier.<sup>13</sup>

In the Templeton-Gallup Study,<sup>14</sup> 59.1% of 18-to-24-year olds were worried about serious side effects, while in the CNN poll,<sup>15</sup> 58% of 18- to 29-year-olds were worried about serious side effects. Yet, the percent of death in that age group is also nearly identical: 0.1% in July 2020<sup>16</sup> and 0.4% in August 2021.<sup>17</sup>

The partisan divide identified in the Templeton-Gallup Study can also be found in vaccination rates around the country. In other words, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to be fully vaccinated.<sup>18</sup> This follows along with data found in the CNN poll,<sup>19</sup> which revealed that 76% of the people who had been vaccinated continue to see COVID-19 as a high risk.

Based on the percentage of individuals who are vaccinated in the U.S., there continues to be nearly a majority of Americans who are operating under the misconception that the infection has a broad effect on every age group. According to Mayo Clinic's COVID-19 tracker<sup>20</sup> approximately 52.7% of adults in the U.S. were fully vaccinated on August 31, 2021.

The Washington Post<sup>21</sup> reported August 2, 2021, that 70% of adults had received at least one shot. Extrapolating this information, if 76% of those who are vaccinated believe that COVID is a broad risk for the population, this means from 40% to 53.2% of the country continues to hold this belief.

From the small CNN<sup>22</sup> sample, it appears the percent who are worried about serious side effects across a broad age range may not have dropped significantly since the first six months of the pandemic, and 18 months later people continue to operate under misconceptions.

## **Those Who Didn't Take the Jab Think It Is the Greater Risk**

Another published poll by<sup>23</sup> conducted from July 15, 2021, to July 27, 2021, found that

67% of adults have received the COVID vaccine and 3% say they will get it as soon as they can. This number has remained relatively unchanged since a previous poll in June 2021.<sup>24</sup> Of those who responded, 10% want to “wait and see” how the vaccine performs and 14% say they will “definitely not” get a vaccine. This number has also remained relatively steady since December 2020.

A fourth poll<sup>25</sup> found that vaccinated individuals are nearly twice as likely to worry about the new COVID variants over those who were unvaccinated. Additionally, the same poll shows that many of the unvaccinated adults believe the shot is a bigger risk than the infection, which is opposite from the 88% of vaccinated adults that believe the infection is a larger risk than the vaccine.

The majority of unvaccinated adults believe that the news media have “generally exaggerated” the seriousness of the pandemic, which is likely the result of publishing broad data without accurately representing the number of individuals who are seriously ill or who have died.

President Biden is quoted in The Washington Post<sup>26</sup> reiterating the same data from health experts in the U.S. Biden said:<sup>27</sup> “If you’re unvaccinated, you are much more likely to, one, get COVID-19; two, get hospitalized; and, three, die if you get it. This is a tragedy.”

However, this is opposite of data from other reporting countries such as Israel and Scotland, where half or more of those hospitalized in August and September 2021 were vaccinated.<sup>28,29,30,31</sup>

When misinformation is being spread from the top down, it’s easy to understand how Americans continue to believe the infection is killing equal numbers in each age group. While any death from this infection is one death too many, so is any death from heart disease, lung cancer, car accidents and drownings.

Yet, people have not stopped eating poorly, smoking, driving cars and swimming. Nor has the government mandated these activities stop.

## **If the Pandemic Is so Bad, Why Censor Social Media?**

The debate over social media censorship is raging.<sup>32,33,34</sup> At no time in history could you imagine that people would support censoring ideas in a country built on freedom of speech.<sup>35</sup> Your rights to free speech and “peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances,”<sup>36</sup> are your First Amendment rights. And yet, some news media and opinion writers have long lists of utopian-like advantages to censorship that include:<sup>37,38,39</sup>

- Reducing conflict and avoiding panic in emergencies
- Adding layers of security to internet platforms
- Stopping perceived “false” content and influencing public opinion
- Keeping the local population under control
- Protecting social media users

The issue with these purported advantages is that someone must be responsible for determining what should be censored, what is false information and in what direction public opinion should be influenced – not to mention how to decide what events would warrant “controlling” the population, and what the control measures might be. In other words, censorship ensures that the opinion of a few will influence the majority. And that’s what has happened in the past 18 months.

As has been demonstrated, many Americans are unaware of the real numbers behind the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, it appears that the only people being censored in social media are those who oppose the vaccine, who want to ensure proper treatment for those infected and who share their physical health challenges after taking the genetic therapy injection.

In other words, Americans are still uneducated by the news media or information posted in social media about the number of people who died from the COVID-19 infection and about proper treatment. The information being censored, and called false content, has enabled the government to reduce conflict by reducing debate over

vaccines, masks and treatment protocols, as well as helped keep local populations under control.

These are the very same so-called “advantages” listed for censorship which have been used to manipulate your behavior and influence your thoughts. Ironically, one of the arguments against censorship is that:<sup>40</sup>

*“It reduces the overall intelligence of the general public. Censorship requires that the general population be under tight controls so that specific outcomes are achievable every time. It is an attempt to prevent individuals from discovering what the truth of any situation happens to be.*

*Even an attempt at suggesting that content is fake or untrustworthy ... is a way to create censorship from an official capacity.”*

Unfortunately, it’s clear that much of the population doesn’t realize what their acceptance of censorship is doing to them. It’s not just about losing your freedom of speech and right to think freely; allowing censorship at the levels you’re now seeing also reinforces your compliance while it represses your access to truths – truths that could save your life.

## **Blinded From Science or Lies?**

As was written in the report from the Franklin Templeton-Gallup Study, the American public has been “blinded from science,” and more often than not, it has been done using lies. In fact, some of the inconsistent statements made by health experts are positioned in the same statements or interviews.

For example, in an interview with MSNBC, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the president of the U.S., exhibited his unique brand of justifying behavior as he talked about the virus and the shot program, saying:<sup>41</sup>



***"The delta variant is the totally dominant variant now in this country. More than 80 or 85%, and in some areas 95%, but even more importantly it is clear now that when there are breakthrough infections, namely people who are vaccinated but still get infected with the delta variant, which happens because no vaccine is 100% effective.***

***We've learned clearly now, without a doubt, that people who are vaccinated get a breakthrough infection, actually have enough virus in their nasopharynx, that they can actually transmit it to other people and have documented transmission to other people."***

From here he advises all people who have been vaccinated to wear a mask indoors to prevent the spread of the infection. His explanation is that the Delta variant has "changed the entire landscape." However, as we know from other viruses, the coronavirus will continue to mutate and change, which means, from Fauci's explanation, people will always be wearing masks to prevent the spread of a continually mutating virus.

The interviewer points out that as the virus continues to change, it means we won't be able to "turn the page on coronavirus, because there might be new variants ..." <sup>42</sup> to which Fauci responds, "It doesn't have to be if the overwhelming majority of the people in this country get vaccinated. We could nail this down by just crushing it." <sup>43</sup>

So, within the space of four minutes Fauci said that without a doubt, people can get infected after vaccination and carry enough virus to transmit the infection – BUT – if the overwhelming majority of people are vaccinated the virus would be crushed.

This highlights the need to seek out verifiable news reports and independent research evidence. However, it isn't enough to know it yourself. In this period in history, it is everyone's responsibility to share the truth in a nonadversarial way that helps to educate your family, friends and neighbors without alienating them.