

# COVID-19 CONSPIRACY BELIEFS, HEALTH BEHAVIORS, AND POLICY SUPPORT

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## CONSPIRACY THEORIES

As the pandemic started in the U.S., conspiracy theories began to spread. This study aimed to understand how belief in conspiracy theories might impact COVID-related health behaviors and policy support.

## GOALS OF THE STUDY

- Explore associations between COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs with SARS-CoV-2 vaccine intentions, cooperation with public health recommendations, and support for public health policies among U.S. adults
- Investigate trusted sources of COVID-19 information to inform strategies to address conspiracy beliefs

## Percentage of participants agreeing with conspiracies

1. Big Pharma is encouraging the spread of coronavirus to make money. **22.1%**
2. Coronavirus was developed by the government as part of a bioweapons program. **20.9 %**
3. The coronavirus is a myth to force vaccinations on people. **14.9 %**
4. 5G is causing the coronavirus. **12.5%**
5. The government could cure coronavirus, but chooses not to for financial gain. **18.7%**
6. There is no such thing as the coronavirus. **13.7%**

## STUDY SAMPLE

- 845 U.S. adults aged 18 or older
- Study was advertised on Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowd sourcing website
- Survey consisted of 109 questions

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33% of participants indicated that they believe in one or more conspiracy theories

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More than 50% of participants were engaging in these health behaviors:

- Washing my hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Staying home as much as possible
- Avoiding public places.
- Staying 6 feet or more away from other people when I go out in public.
- Covering my mouth and nose when I cough and sneeze.

# IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Percentage of participants who trusted information about COVID-19 from different sources:

1. Social Media	29.4%
2. President Trump	40.8%
3. State and local governments	78.6%
4. Anthony Fauci	84.9%
5. My doctors	90.6%

For more information about the study, please see the publication:

Earnshaw, V.A., Eaton, L. A., Kalichman, S. C., Brousseau, N. M., Hill, E. C., & Fox, A. B. (2020). COVID-19 Conspiracy beliefs, health behaviors, and policy support. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, 10(4), 850-856; <https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibaa090>

For more information about COVID-19 misinformation and tips for addressing misinformation, please see the WHO Myth Busters website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

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Participants who believed in one or more conspiracies said they would be

**4x**

less likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

People who believed conspiracies were less supportive of public policies to stop the spread of COVID-19 such as closing schools and workplaces and canceling mass gatherings.

Doctors were among the most trusted sources of COVID-19 information, even among people who believed in conspiracy theories. Doctors were seen as more trust worthy than social media.

Doctors can play a leading role in addressing COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs, which may be helpful in addressing people's concerns about vaccines.

Psychologists and other social and behavioral scientists should continue to find ways to address conspiracy beliefs.