
European Science-Media Hub

Trending mis- and disinformation topics around COVID-19 on social media – January 2021



Analysis Overview:

Time range: 01/01/2021 - 31/01/2021

Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Websites, Blogs

Number of false claims: 100

Number of fact-checks: 51

Content Analysis - Main findings

Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in January 2021:

The vast majority of false **claims (42)** have been targeting the **COVID-19 vaccine**:

- It is deemed dangerous, even **poisonous**.
- People attribute **deaths** and serious **side effects** to the vaccines and some go as far as to claim that **Pfizer** halted its vaccine production due to these deaths.
- The **Moderna** mRNA vaccine is an **operating system**.
- The vaccine is **radioactive**, or a **biological warfare** weapon.
- It has 50 times more **adverse symptoms** than the **flu** vaccine, even after only the first dose.
- **Merck** pharmaceutical allegedly scrapped its vaccine efforts because **natural immunity** was preferable to a vaccine.
- **Religious fanatics** claim it is **a sin** to take the vaccine, while others, like a Jewish rabbi, claim that the vaccine will *“make you gay”*.
- There is **no real need** for the vaccine; it **does not work**, thus **natural immunity** should be the only way out of this predicament.

Content Analysis - Main findings

Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in January 2021:

Test-related claims (14):

- **PCR tests** produce too many **false positives** and are used by the governments to inflate COVID-19 case numbers.
- The **WHO** arguably admitted that the high number of **PCR test cycles** is to be blamed for the false results.
- **PCR tests** are **weapons** for crooked governments who want to **control** the population.

Mask related claims (13):

- Many people are still not convinced that the mask is an **effective method of COVID-19 prevention**.
- Masks either do not work or cause harm to people wearing them, especially children.
- The WHO allegedly advised against the use of masks.
- **Fauci's paper** claimed that masks inflicted bacterial **pneumonia** to people during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic.

Content Analysis - Main findings

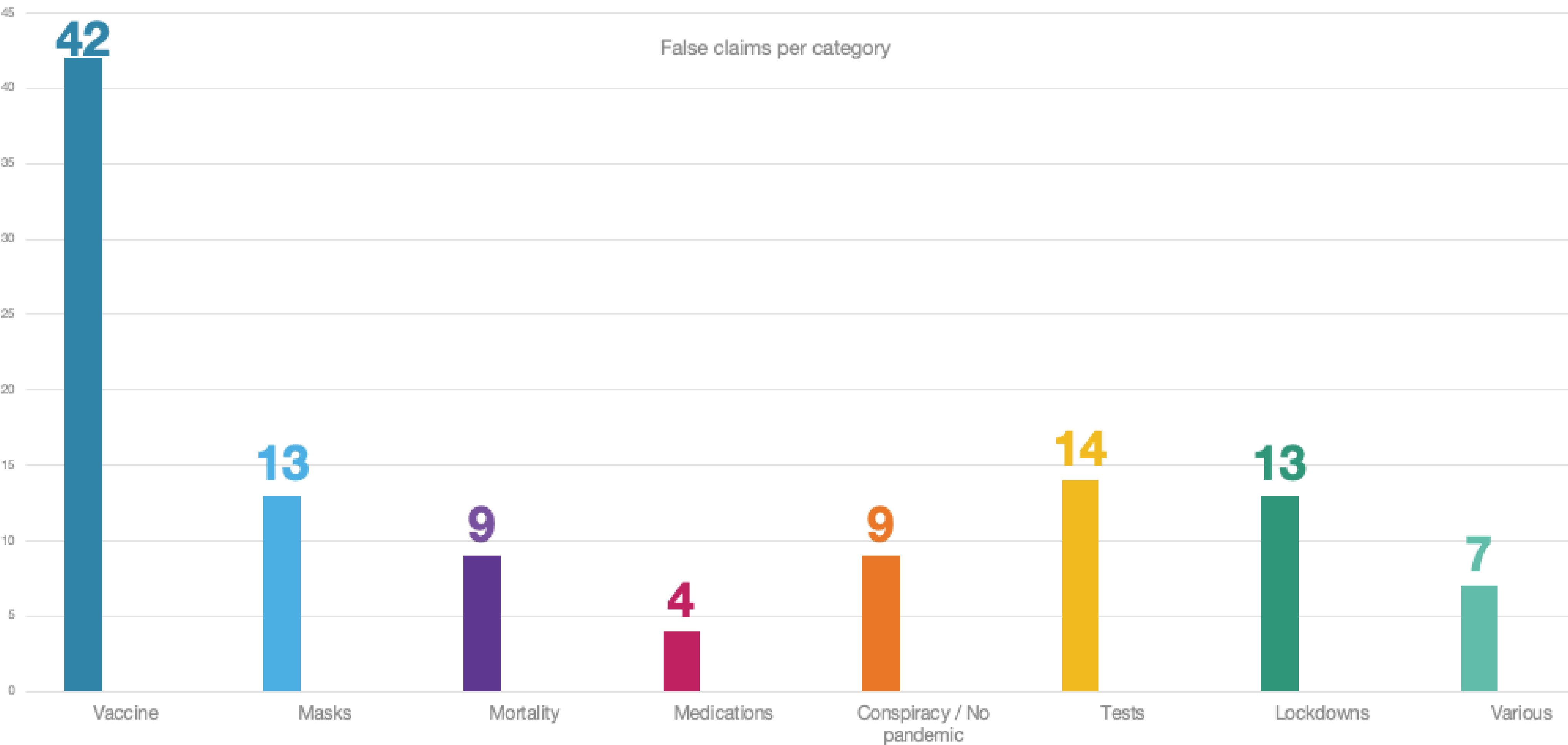
Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in January 2021:

Other claims:

- The rise of COVID-19 cases proves that **lockdowns** don't work.
- COVID-19 **cases and deaths** are fraudulently **inflated** by governments to support continuous lockdowns.
- Several **medications** proven not to work against COVID-19, like **hydroxychloroquine**, have been approved for use.
- **Mortality numbers** are highly **exaggerated** (like in the case of Britain). Statistics are used to impose a **state of fear** and force people to be vaccinated, wear masks, and stay in confinement.
- **Fake pandemic:** The COVID-19 crisis serves as part of a **global conspiracy** to control the population.

Content Analysis - False claims

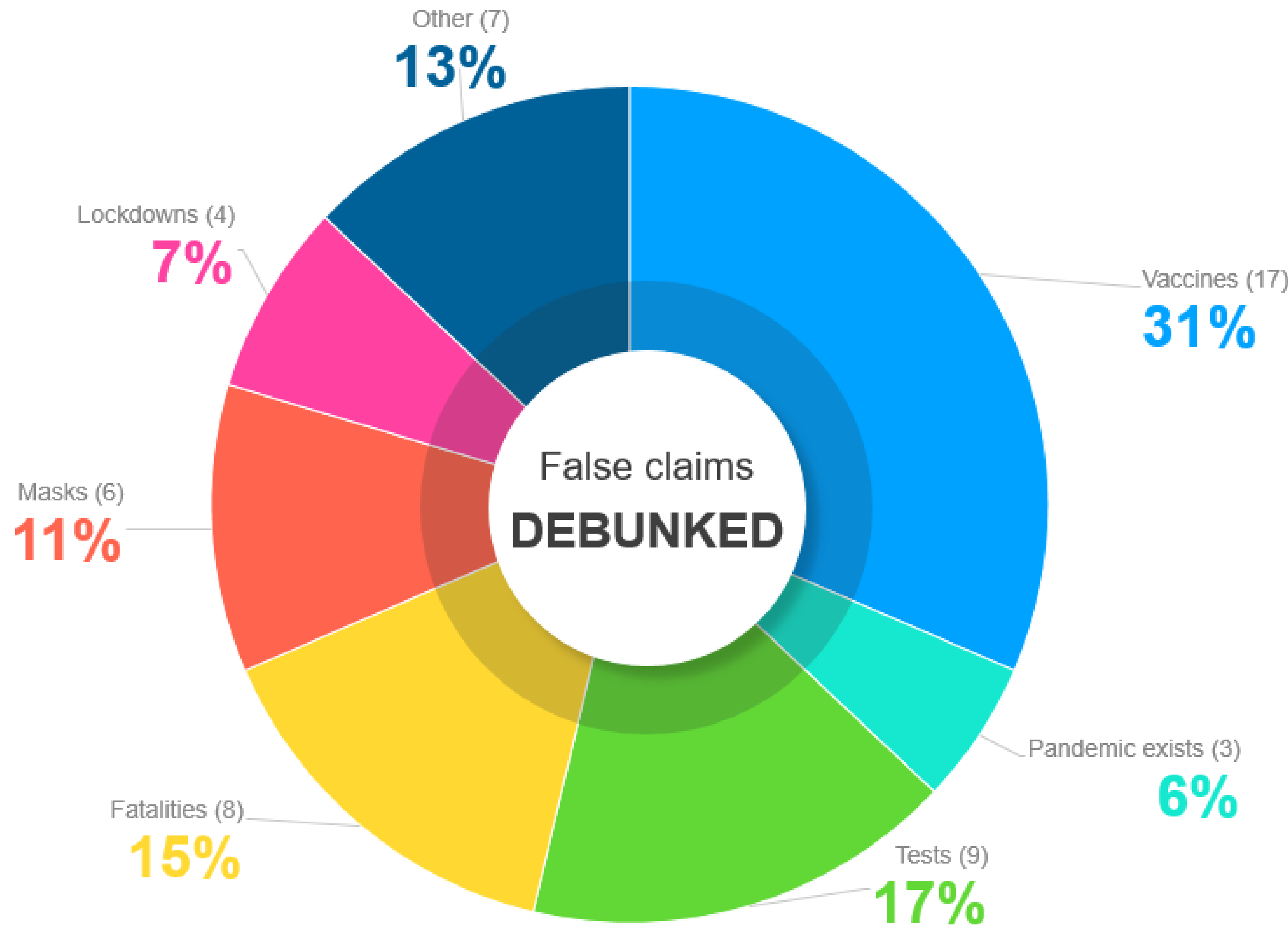
Total items: 100



COVID-19: Main mis- and disinformation themes

Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims

Total items: 51



Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- Fact-checks during January focused mostly on **vaccine related mis- and disinformation**, debunking claims about the **death** of several people following their inoculation, as these deaths are not proved to be related with the vaccine.
- **Vaccine production** was not stopped due to deaths.
- The vaccine's **ingredients** are **not radioactive** and there are no traces of meat inside.
- **Vaccine immunity** is preferable to natural immunity and **Merck** was misquoted as saying this when it abandoned its new vaccine project.
- The **virus** has indeed been **isolated** and hence the vaccine has been made possible.

Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- Many claims against **PCR tests** are also debunked (cycles, false positives, sequencing, antibodies etc.).
- There is no evidence that a **papaya** would test positive in a PCR test.
- As for **mortality rates**, the **deaths from COVID in UK** exceed all deaths from the great plague, AIDS, and terrorism combined since 1945. More people are dying now in the **UK** than in previous years.
- Many false claims regarding suitable **medication** are also being challenged. For instance, a **concoction** including ginger, garlic, and onions has not proven to be effective without the use of proper medicines.

Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- As regards to **mask-related claims**, a German study does not prove that **masks** harm **children**.
- The **WHO** did not advise **against** the use of masks.
- There are several studies concluding that **masks are a useful weapon** against the spread of COVID-19.
- Last but not least, **Fauci's paper** did not claim that masks caused bacterial pneumonia during the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918.

Content Curation – Data/Sources



Time range of selected content: 1-31 January



Out of the initial bulk, 151 results have been singled out



Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Websites



Main keywords: covid19, lockdown, covid-19, coronavirus, nomask, masks, vaccine, 5G, pandemic, plandemic