
European Science-Media Hub

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

Analysis Overview:

Time range: 01/03/2021 - 31/03/2021

Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Websites, Blogs

Number of false claims: 97

Number of fact-checks: 43

Content Analysis - Main findings

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

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

- In **Australia**, 80% of the inoculated **Army** personnel suffered severe **side-effects**.
- An **Australian** government Minister suffered **infection** due to the vaccine.
- The UK government is said to be fiddling with **statistics** to cover up for vaccine-related **deaths**.
- The **Astra Zeneca** vaccine was **banned** in 17 countries and SE Asia
- Boxing legend **Marvin Hagler** died from the vaccine.
- Astra Zeneca means '**Weapon that Kills**'.
- The **mRNA** vaccine promotes **cancer**.
- A **WHO yellow vaccine passport** is required for international **travel**.
- The COVID-19 vaccine was made **mandatory** in the Republic of **Congo**.

Content Analysis - Main findings

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

Lockdown-related claims (4):

- Prolonged **lockdowns** are used to push **vaccination**.
- New **variants** are used as a pretext to continue lockdowns.
- People claim that lockdowns are a **psychological attack**.
- Others claim lockdowns are a “**crime**”.

Mask related claims (15):

- People claim that face masks **do not work**.
- Even the **CDC** admits they do not help against COVID-19.
- Masks are **harmful**, especially as the individual inhales plastic particles.
- They are only used to “**suppress the people**”.
- **Double masks** are double **stupid**.

Content Analysis - Main findings

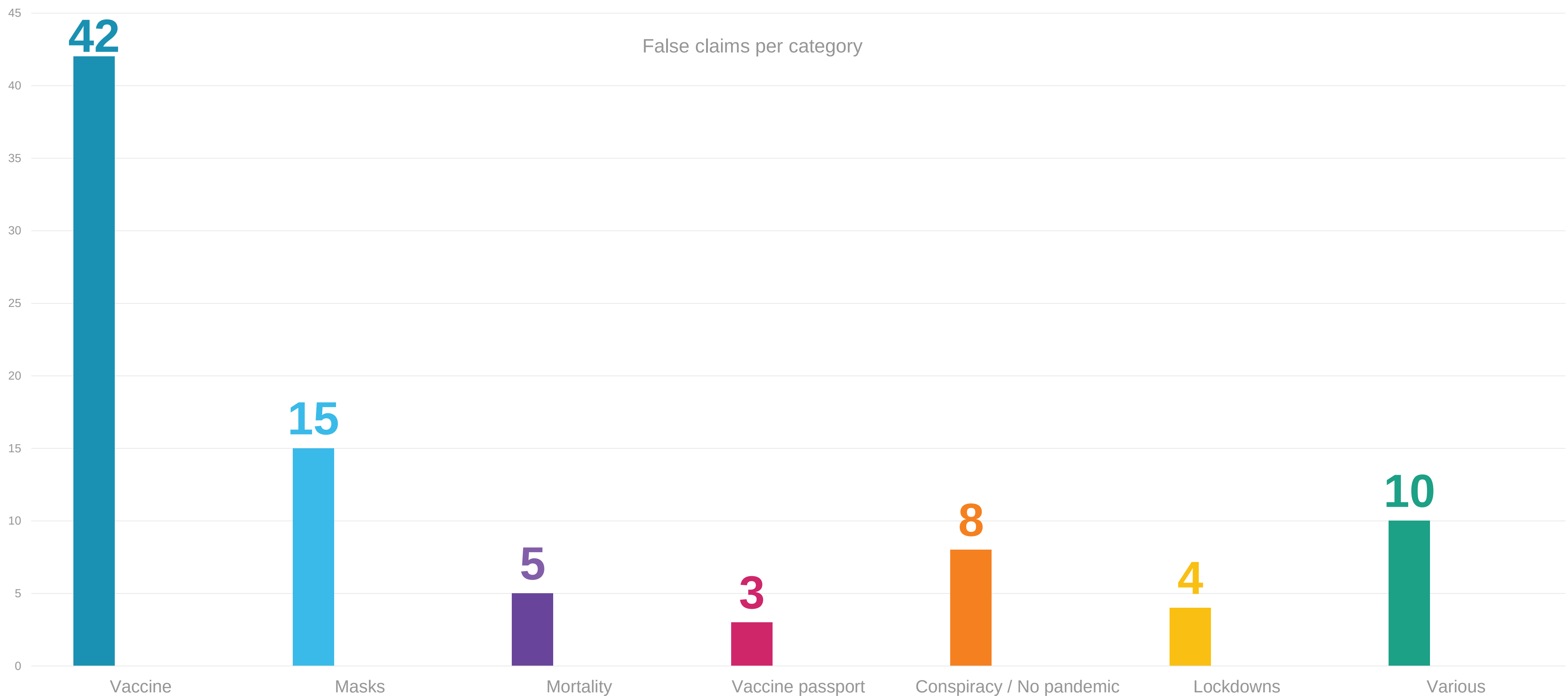
Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in March 2021:

Other claims:

- Covid-19 is a major **health scam**, pushed by the media
- **Pineapple extract** can dissolve the spike proteins of the virus.
- The **US democrats** are using the **relief package** to benefit themselves with bonus money.
- **Anthony Fauci** funded the Chinese **lab in Wuhan**, which allegedly leaked the virus, thus sponsoring the pandemic.
- The famous actor **Tom Hanks** died from COVID-19.
- Images of **huge crowds** from **Montreal** and **Bucharest** supposedly depict freedom protests against the pandemic.
- A woman is captured touching a **special forces policeman** in a protest.
- **PCR tests** are a **scam**.
- More **testing** means more **cases**.

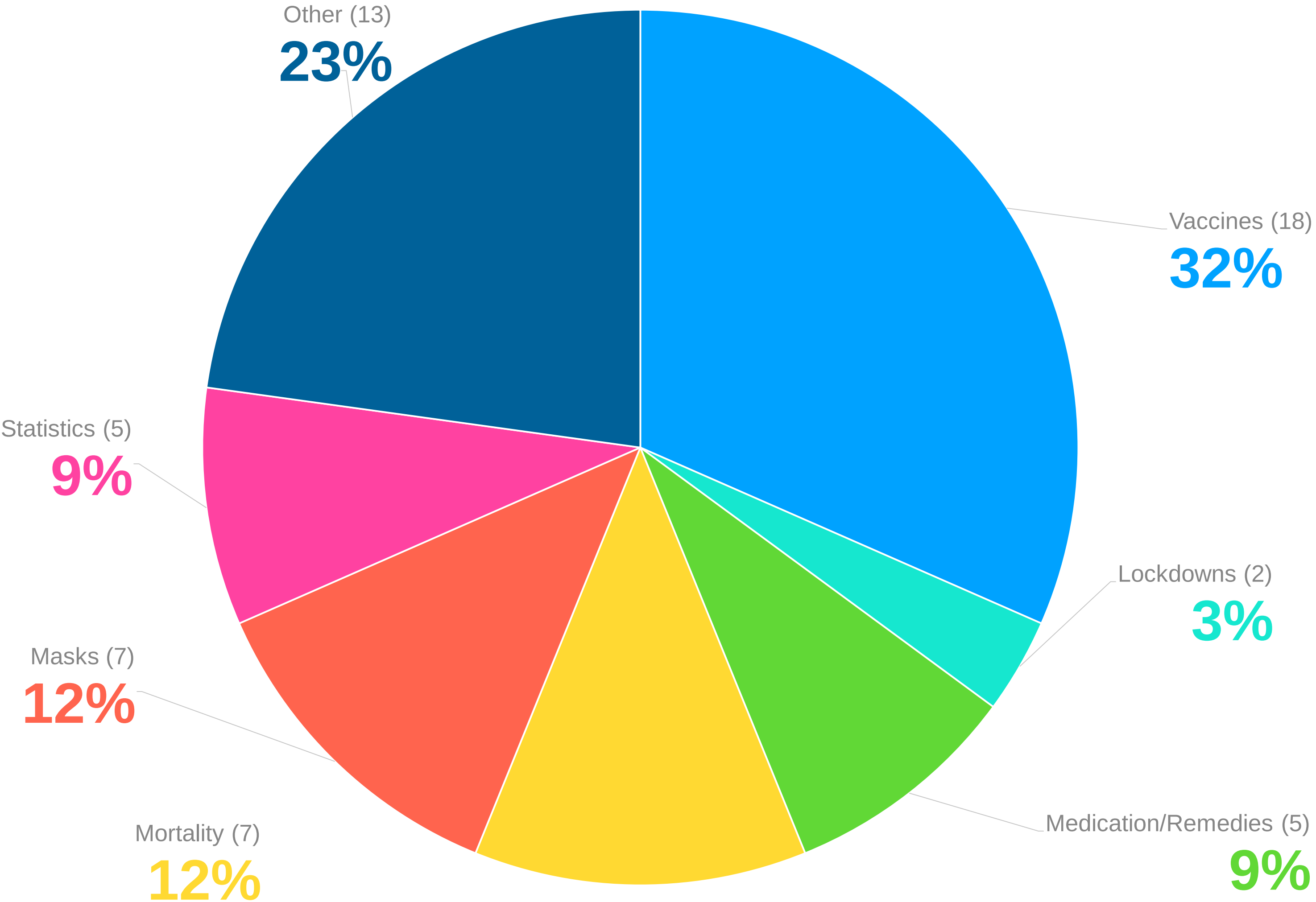
Content Analysis - False claims

Total items: 97



Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims

Total items: 43



Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- Fact-checks during March focused mostly on **vaccine related mis- and disinformation**, debunking claims that the COVID-19 vaccine program is a **medical experiment**.
- An **Australian Minister's skin infection** was unrelated to the vaccines.
- The **death** of famous **boxer Marvin Hagler** was falsely attributed to vaccine side effects.
- The **Astra Zeneca** vaccine was **not banned** in 17 countries.
- A study did not link **mRNA** vaccines with **cancer**.
- The **Australian military** denies severe **side-effects** to a substantial proportion of vaccinated army personnel.
- A WHO **vaccine certificate** is not required for international **travel**.
- The '**real**' meaning of **Astra Zeneca's name** is misleading.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is **not obligatory** in **Congo**.

Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- **Pineapple extract** is not a proven COVID-19 remedy.
- A touching photo depicting a **special unit police officer** and a **woman** is in reality taken from a **2013 rally in Bulgaria**.
- The **Romanian rally** picture is also mis-attributed and has circulated before.
- A picture of a huge crowd in a **Montreal rally** is in fact taken from a **US anti-gun violence** rally.
- The **US Democrats** did not sneak money from the **COVID relief** plan.
- Famous actor **Tom Hanks** did not die from COVID-19 or from any other cause, as he is still alive.
- The medical journal Lancet did not admit the '**uselessness of PCR test**' for COVID-19
- **Anthony Fauci** did not fund the **WUHAN lab** in China, thus being responsible for the spread of the pandemic, as reports claim.

Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



- The **US COVID relief plan** does not cost 5.750 per capita as is falsely claimed.
- A study did not state, as claimed by **Italian** media, that the COVID-19 virus needs to **freely circulate**, thus **social distancing** should be eliminated.



- As regards to **mask-related claims**, a **CDC study** rejecting the **effectiveness** of face masks is not accurately reported.
- Contrary to some claims, the **WHO** does support **mask-wearing** as a protection from COVID-19.

Content Curation – Data/Sources



Time range of selected content: 1-31 March



Out of the initial bulk, 140 results have been singled out



Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Websites



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