
European Science-Media Hub

Trending mis- and disinformation topics around COVID-19 on social media – December 2020



Analysis Overview:

Time range: 01/12/2020 - 31/12/2020
Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, websites, blogs
Number of false claims: 70
Number of fact-checks: 37

Content Analysis - Main findings

Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in December 2020:

The vast majority of **false claims (39)** have been targeting the **COVID-19 vaccine**:

- It is unsafe, potentially harmful. Others argue that it is genetically manipulating human DNA, as it contains nano-particles or microchips. The name of Bill Gates continues to be involved in these theories.
- The vaccine causes female sterilisation or genetic mutations.
- The vaccine is part of a wider conspiracy to control global population (depopulation).
- Prominent political figures were not actually vaccinated, either because the cap was seen left on the syringe or because the needle disappeared.
- Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla or Bill Gates allegedly refuse to take the vaccine, while the latter also refuses to vaccinate his children.
- The elderly woman who received the first vaccination in the UK was allegedly an actress and the whole procedure has been a publicity stunt.
- As part of an ongoing pro-Kremlin propaganda, there are also claims that the Russian vaccine 'Sputnik' was the first successful attempt to create a COVID-19 vaccine. It is also the safest, hence some European countries want to use this instead.
- Last but not least, some fanatic religious figures claim that the vaccine is the "Mark of the Beast".

Content Analysis - Main findings

Featured **false claims** related to COVID-19 in December 2020:

Mask-related claims (19):

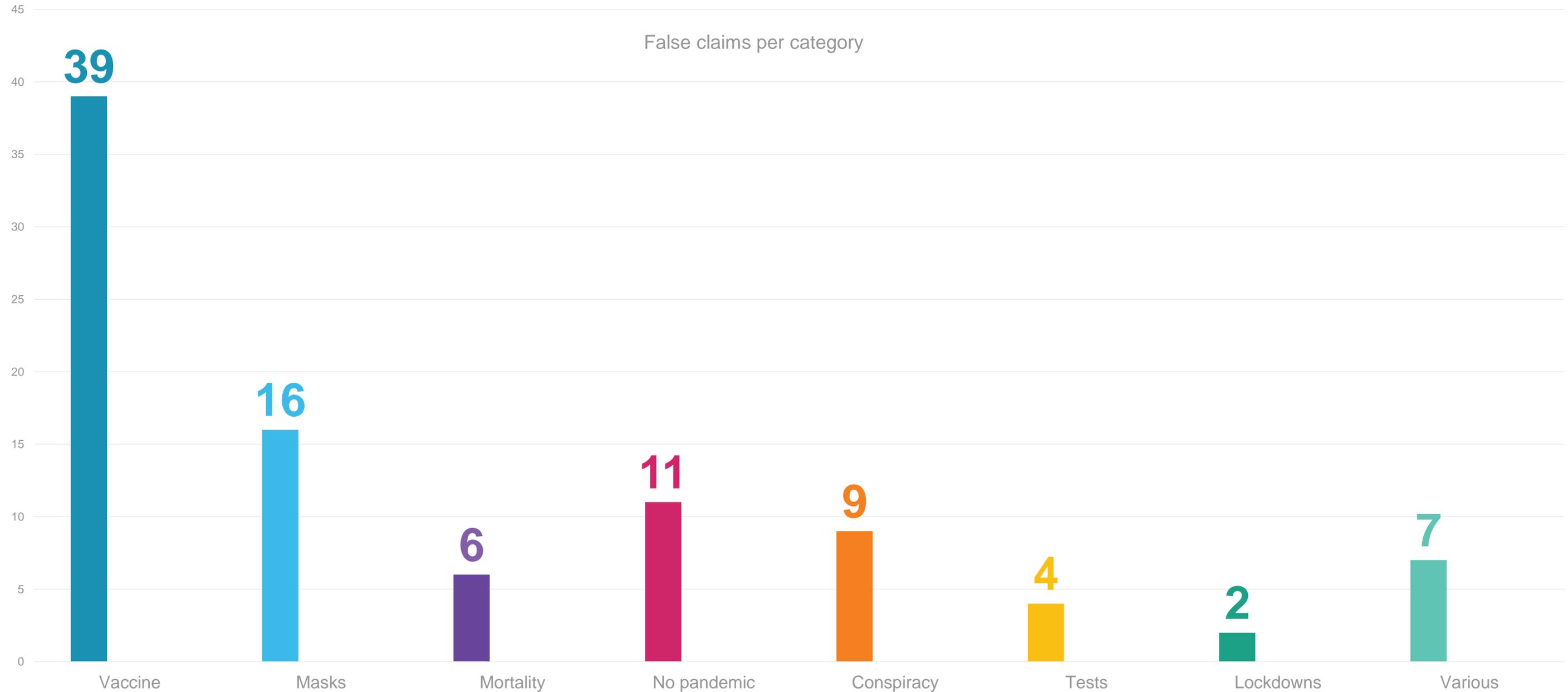
- The **effectiveness or purpose of masks** in controlling the spread of the virus **is disputed**. Like lockdowns, face masks do nothing to prevent the spread of the virus. Healthy people do not need them.
- Masks simply do not work. Even worse, **masks may inflict harm**, like **bacterial pneumonia**, to those wearing them.

Other claims:

- Several people continue to claim that the **mortality rate of COVID-19 is very low**, especially among younger people, therefore downplaying the need for lockdowns or extra measures.
- People insist **lockdowns have not worked** as a measure to counter the spread of COVID-19 and governments should not implement them.
- **PCR tests** either do not work or **are very inaccurate**. For example, this time a Coca Cola sample has been found positive in a PCR test.
- The whole pandemic is part of a **global conspiracy**. The elites are using masks, lockdowns and other restrictive measures **to control us** and **enforce the vaccine** upon the population.

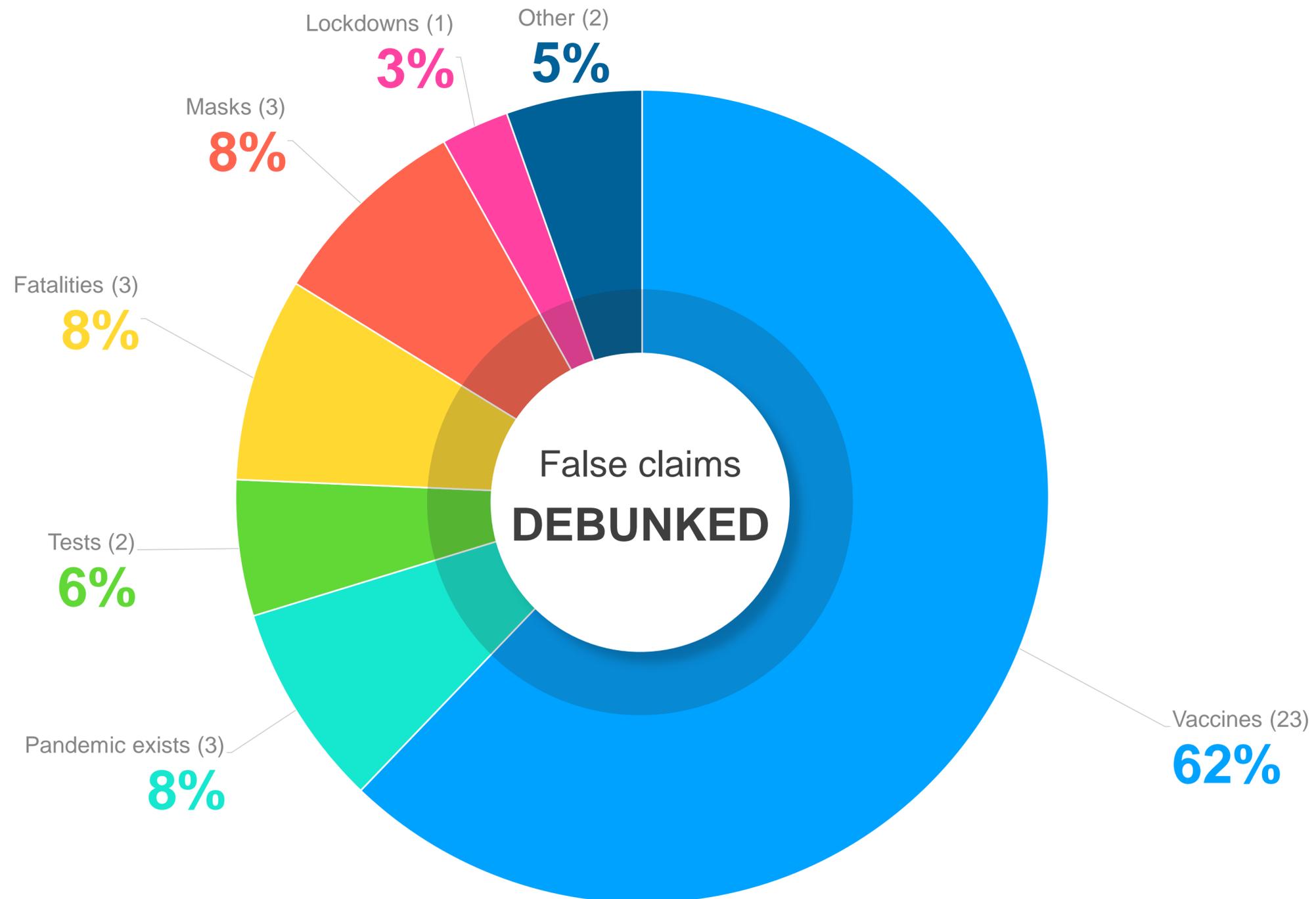
Content Analysis - False claims

Total items: 70



Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims

Total items: 37



Content Analysis - Fact-checkers' debunked claims



Fact-checks during December 2020 focused mostly on **vaccine related mis- and disinformation**, debunking claims about the **vaccine's ingredients** (nanoparticles are solely used to transport RNA molecules and there is a no microchip to be injected into people).



Vaccines cause **no female infertility** and there is no evidence of potential mass genocide. Bill Gates and Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla stated they will wait for their turn to be vaccinated. Some syringes have indeed '**disappearing needles**' for reasons of hygiene, not for fake vaccinations. No **vaccination passports** are planned, contrary to certain claims.



In general, vaccines are an important weapon in our arsenal but the use of masks or other preventive measures should not be excluded, especially in the beginning. This does not mean that vaccines are not effective. The next most debunked narrative is the claim that **there is no pandemic**, or that COVID-19 has low mortality rates. Other fact-checks focused on **the effectiveness of PCR tests and face masks**.

Content curation – Data/Sources



Time range of selected content: 1-31 December 2020



Out of the initial bulk, 107 results have been singled out



Sources: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, websites, blogs



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