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Can Americans Spot Fake Coronavirus News?

As Americans sort out what information about COVID-19 is true or not, most see the virus as a deadly threat and aren't ready to end social distancing for the sake of the economy

Washington, DC, March 28, 2020 — A new Ipsos poll, conducted on behalf of The Daily Beast, examines whether Americans are able to sort through recent false claims made about COVID-19 (three-quarters correctly identify that “anyone who wants a test can get a test” is untrue), while examining attitudes around the virus and its impact on the economy. Though most Americans disagree that it is time to end social distancing to get our economy back on track, there is a wide gulf between Democrats and Republicans on this.

Detailed findings:

1. Most Americans are correctly able to identify misinformation around COVID-19. However, there are some partisan gaps on what information is considered to be true.
 - Overall, majorities correctly identify that the following are false: anyone who wants to get tested can get tested (73%), ibuprofen and aspirin have been proven effective in treating COVID-19 (64%), and the virus will go away on its own in warm weather (51%).
 - There is confusion about the federal government already implementing the Defense Protection Act to make masks and ventilators. At the time this survey was fielded, this was false (it did not happen until late in the day on Friday, Mar. 27), but half believed it to be true.
 - Partisan affiliation affects perceptions of facts. For example, there are more than double the number of Republicans that believe anti-malaria drugs have been approved to treat the virus (32%) than there are Democrats (14%). Among Fox News viewers, even more believe this is true (44%).
 - Also, most Republicans (63%) believe the federal government has invoked the Defense Protection Act for the production of necessary supplies, compared to less than half of Democrats (40%).
2. Across the board, most Americans believe COVID-19 is more deadly than the flu (61%). But when it comes to views around the virus' economic impact and the government's role in stopping it, there is little partisan agreement.
 - Majorities of all demographic subgroups – across age, gender, partisan affiliation, education level, area of residence – believe the virus to be more deadly than the flu. The one exception is among Fox News viewers, where less than half (48%) say it is more deadly, 21% say less, and another 21% say about the same.



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- Over half disagree that the cost to slow the virus' spread is too much for our economy to bear (53%). Also, by a nearly three-to-one margin, more Americans disagree (69%) than agree (26%) that getting people back to work is more important than social distancing. However, there is a nearly 30-point difference between Republicans and Democrats on ending social distancing; fifty-seven percent of Republicans disagree getting people back to work is more important, versus 83% of Democrats.
- More than six in ten Republicans (62%) – and 72% of Fox News viewers – believe the COVID-19 threat has been overstated by the media and Democrats to damage Donald Trump's presidency.
- Eighty-two percent of Democrats believe calling COVID-19 the "China virus" is racist. Just a quarter of Republicans (26%) agree.

For full results, please refer to the following questionnaire.



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1. To the best of your knowledge, are the following statements about the coronavirus or COVID-19 outbreak true or false? *Asterisks (*) indicate the correct answer.*

- a. Anyone who wants to get tested can get tested

	Total (N=1005)	Republican (N=395)	Democrat (N=404)	Independent (N=104)
True	17%	18%	12%	20%
False*	73%	75%	78%	65%
Don't know	10%	7%	10%	15%

- b. A vaccine will be available soon

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
True	20%	25%	14%	21%
False*	42%	36%	49%	44%
Don't know	38%	39%	36%	35%

- c. The virus will go away on its own in warm weather

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
True	13%	16%	8%	11%
False*	51%	46%	60%	40%
Don't know	36%	38%	32%	49%

- d. The FDA has approved anti-malaria drugs to treat the virus

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
True	22%	32%	14%	22%
False*	45%	40%	55%	35%
Don't know	33%	28%	31%	42%

- e. The federal government has implemented the Defense Protection Act to order production of both masks and ventilators ***This was false at the time of fielding*

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
True	50%	63%	40%	52%
False*	23%	18%	32%	15%
Don't know	27%	20%	28%	33%



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f. Ibuprofen and aspirin have been proven effective in treating COVID-19 symptoms

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
True	10%	11%	9%	10%
False*	64%	66%	66%	63%
Don't know	26%	24%	24%	27%

2. Do you believe that COVID-19 is more or less deadly than the flu?

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
More deadly	61%	50%	73%	59%
About the same	22%	27%	15%	27%
Less deadly	11%	17%	7%	10%
Don't know	6%	6%	5%	4%

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Total Agree Summary

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Calling COVID-19 the "China virus" is racist	55%	26%	82%	49%
The federal government should take over key industries, like automotive and retail, to start producing more medical supplies	43%	32%	56%	32%
The cost to slow the spread of COVID-19 is too much for our economy to bear	36%	42%	28%	46%
The media and Democrats are overstating the COVID-19 threat in order to damage Donald Trump's presidency	35%	62%	13%	31%
Getting people back to work is more important than social distancing	26%	39%	14%	39%

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- a. The media and Democrats are overstating the COVID-19 threat in order to damage Donald Trump's presidency

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Strongly agree	15%	29%	5%	12%
Somewhat agree	20%	33%	8%	19%
Somewhat disagree	14%	14%	10%	27%
Strongly disagree	40%	14%	70%	26%
Don't know	11%	9%	7%	16%
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>31%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>54%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>53%</i>

- b. The cost to slow the spread of COVID-19 is too much for our economy to bear

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Strongly agree	10%	12%	7%	16%
Somewhat agree	26%	29%	21%	30%
Somewhat disagree	27%	28%	29%	18%
Strongly disagree	27%	20%	36%	20%
Don't know	10%	11%	7%	15%
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>39%</i>

- c. The federal government should take over key industries, like automotive and retail, to start producing more medical supplies

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Strongly agree	16%	8%	25%	8%
Somewhat agree	27%	23%	32%	24%
Somewhat disagree	25%	27%	23%	25%
Strongly disagree	22%	34%	12%	28%
Don't know	11%	8%	9%	16%
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>32%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>53%</i>

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d. Calling COVID-19 the “China virus” is racist

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Strongly agree	38%	11%	64%	30%
Somewhat agree	18%	15%	19%	19%
Somewhat disagree	12%	16%	9%	14%
Strongly disagree	27%	54%	6%	29%
Don't know	5%	4%	3%	8%
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>82%</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>43%</i>

e. Getting people back to work is more important than social distancing

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Strongly agree	7%	11%	5%	9%
Somewhat agree	19%	28%	9%	30%
Somewhat disagree	27%	28%	23%	34%
Strongly disagree	42%	29%	60%	21%
Don't know	5%	4%	3%	6%
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>39%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>55%</i>

4. When it comes to the COVID-19 outbreak, which of the following is your primary source of news? (Select one)

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
National news (ABC, NBC, CBS)	22%	22%	22%	27%
Local news	20%	22%	19%	28%
Fox News	13%	27%	3%	7%
CNN	9%	2%	16%	7%
Facebook	7%	7%	5%	7%
National newspapers (Washington Post, New York Times, etc.)	6%	4%	8%	5%
MSNBC	4%	*	9%	4%
Twitter	3%	1%	6%	3%
Other	11%	12%	10%	11%
Don't know	4%	4%	2%	2%



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between March 26-27, 2020 on behalf of The Daily Beast. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 395 Republicans, 404 Democrats, and 104 Independents.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Posthoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following ($n=1,005$, $DEFF=1.5$, adjusted Confidence Interval= ± 5.0 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval of plus or minus 5.6 percentage points for Republicans, plus or minus 5.6 percentage points for Democrats, and plus or minus 11.0 percentage points for Independents.

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About Ipsos

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Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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