Belief in controversial narratives

“To what extent do you believe the following statement is true?”

Statements:

a) "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) manipulated the death toll of COVID-19 to exaggerate its impact on Americans."
b) "President Trump went to the hospital last year because he suffered a stroke."
c) "Joe Biden is mentally unfit to be the U.S. President."
d) "Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Partisanship</th>
<th>Definitely false</th>
<th>Likely false</th>
<th>Likely true</th>
<th>Definitely true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDC manipulated COVID-19 death toll</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>101 (39.1%)</td>
<td>68 (26.4%)</td>
<td>57 (22.1%)</td>
<td>32 (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>39 (36.1%)</td>
<td>28 (25.9%)</td>
<td>25 (23.1%)</td>
<td>16 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>41 (23.0%)</td>
<td>40 (22.5%)</td>
<td>53 (29.8%)</td>
<td>44 (24.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181 (33.3%)</td>
<td>136 (25.0%)</td>
<td>135 (24.8%)</td>
<td>92 (16.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump suffered a stroke</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>53 (20.5%)</td>
<td>83 (32.2%)</td>
<td>86 (33.3%)</td>
<td>36 (14.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Independent</td>
<td>33 (30.6%)</td>
<td>49 (45.4%)</td>
<td>21 (19.4%)</td>
<td>5 (4.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>95 (53.4%)</td>
<td>57 (32.0%)</td>
<td>19 (10.7%)</td>
<td>7 (3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181 (33.3%)</td>
<td>189 (34.7%)</td>
<td>126 (23.2%)</td>
<td>48 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden is cognitively compromised</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>143 (55.4%)</td>
<td>47 (18.2%)</td>
<td>42 (16.3%)</td>
<td>26 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>29 (26.9%)</td>
<td>26 (24.1%)</td>
<td>25 (23.1%)</td>
<td>28 (25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>19 (10.7%)</td>
<td>20 (11.2%)</td>
<td>43 (24.2%)</td>
<td>96 (53.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191 (35.1%)</td>
<td>93 (17.1%)</td>
<td>110 (20.2%)</td>
<td>150 (27.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>106 (41.1%)</td>
<td>72 (27.9%)</td>
<td>49 (19.0%)</td>
<td>31 (12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>24 (22.2%)</td>
<td>31 (28.7%)</td>
<td>37 (34.3%)</td>
<td>16 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>22 (12.4%)</td>
<td>34 (19.1%)</td>
<td>65 (36.5%)</td>
<td>57 (32.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152 (27.9%)</td>
<td>137 (25.2%)</td>
<td>151 (27.8%)</td>
<td>104 (19.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 %s in this report are row percentages
Awareness of controversial narratives through the internet or social media

STIMULUS EXAMPLE: “Have you encountered this, or similar stories about this issue, on social media or the internet?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Partisanship</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
<th>Probably not</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDC manipulated COVID-19 death toll</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>88 (34.1%)</td>
<td>66 (25.6%)</td>
<td>67 (26.0%)</td>
<td>37 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>43 (39.8%)</td>
<td>34 (31.5%)</td>
<td>23 (21.3%)</td>
<td>8 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>54 (30.3%)</td>
<td>43 (24.2%)</td>
<td>52 (29.2%)</td>
<td>29 (16.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>185 (34.0%)</td>
<td>143 (26.3%)</td>
<td>142 (26.1%)</td>
<td>74 (13.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trump suffered a stroke</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>73 (28.3%)</td>
<td>55 (21.3%)</td>
<td>71 (27.5%)</td>
<td>59 (22.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>37 (34.3%)</td>
<td>34 (31.5%)</td>
<td>25 (23.1%)</td>
<td>12 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>85 (47.8%)</td>
<td>46 (25.8%)</td>
<td>21 (11.8%)</td>
<td>26 (14.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>195 (35.8%)</td>
<td>135 (24.8%)</td>
<td>117 (21.5%)</td>
<td>97 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden is cognitively compromised</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>86 (33.3%)</td>
<td>73 (28.3%)</td>
<td>59 (22.9%)</td>
<td>40 (15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>38 (35.2%)</td>
<td>30 (27.8%)</td>
<td>31 (28.7%)</td>
<td>9 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>50 (28.1%)</td>
<td>31 (17.4%)</td>
<td>49 (27.5%)</td>
<td>48 (27.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174 (32.0%)</td>
<td>134 (24.6%)</td>
<td>139 (25.6%)</td>
<td>97 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>72 (27.9%)</td>
<td>49 (19.0%)</td>
<td>72 (27.9%)</td>
<td>65 (25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>30 (27.8%)</td>
<td>24 (22.2%)</td>
<td>37 (34.3%)</td>
<td>17 (15.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>29 (16.3%)</td>
<td>29 (16.3%)</td>
<td>64 (36.0%)</td>
<td>56 (31.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131 (24.1%)</td>
<td>102 (18.8%)</td>
<td>173 (31.8%)</td>
<td>138 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Belief in controversial narratives, social media users vs. non-users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Social Media Users or not</th>
<th>Definitely false</th>
<th>Likely false</th>
<th>Likely true</th>
<th>Definitely true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDC manipulated COVID-19 death toll</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>133 (30.6%)</td>
<td>108 (24.8%)</td>
<td>116 (26.7%)</td>
<td>78 (17.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>48 (44.0%)</td>
<td>28 (25.7%)</td>
<td>19 (17.4%)</td>
<td>14 (12.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump suffered a stroke</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>140 (32.2%)</td>
<td>154 (35.4%)</td>
<td>103 (23.7%)</td>
<td>38 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>41 (37.6%)</td>
<td>35 (32.1%)</td>
<td>23 (21.1%)</td>
<td>10 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden is cognitively compromised</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>143 (32.9%)</td>
<td>84 (19.3%)</td>
<td>89 (20.5%)</td>
<td>119 (27.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>48 (44.0%)</td>
<td>9 (8.3%)</td>
<td>21 (19.3%)</td>
<td>31 (28.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>114 (26.2%)</td>
<td>113 (26.0%)</td>
<td>120 (27.6%)</td>
<td>88 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>38 (34.9%)</td>
<td>24 (22.0%)</td>
<td>31 (28.4%)</td>
<td>16 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Awareness of controversial narratives, social media users vs. non-users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Social Media Users or not</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
<th>Probably not</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CDC manipulated COVID-19 death toll</strong></td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>137 (31.5%)</td>
<td>117 (26.9%)</td>
<td>117 (26.9%)</td>
<td>64 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>48 (44.0%)</td>
<td>26 (23.9%)</td>
<td>25 (22.9%)</td>
<td>10 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trump suffered a stroke</strong></td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>152 (34.9%)</td>
<td>113 (26.0%)</td>
<td>93 (21.4%)</td>
<td>77 (17.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>43 (39.4%)</td>
<td>22 (20.2%)</td>
<td>24 (22.0%)</td>
<td>20 (18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biden is cognitively compromised</strong></td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>131 (30.1%)</td>
<td>110 (25.3%)</td>
<td>112 (25.7%)</td>
<td>82 (18.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>43 (39.4%)</td>
<td>24 (22.0%)</td>
<td>27 (24.8%)</td>
<td>15 (13.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud</strong></td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>99 (22.8%)</td>
<td>85 (19.5%)</td>
<td>146 (33.6%)</td>
<td>105 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>32 (29.4%)</td>
<td>17 (15.6%)</td>
<td>27 (24.8%)</td>
<td>33 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics

“What is your year of birth?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Aggregated by decade)</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>93 (17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>96 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>102 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>78 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>114 (21.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>59 (11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What is your gender?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>300 (55.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>243 (44.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification 1</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>220 (40.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>143 (26.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>144 (26.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>18 (3.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?”
(Ask only Independent/No preference/Other participants in Party Identification 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification 2</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>38 (7.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>35 (6.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>97 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>8 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>178 (32.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What is your racial or ethnic background? (Check all that apply)"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>309 (56.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>75 (13.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>61 (11.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a</td>
<td>50 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>33 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>6 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>544</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What is the highest level of education you have completed?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school degree</td>
<td>17 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)</td>
<td>199 (36.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college but no degree</td>
<td>97 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree in college (2-year)</td>
<td>64 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)</td>
<td>102 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>45 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>10 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>10 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>544</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methodology**

This is the second of a six-part series of reports tracking the diffusion of misinformation in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Data in this wave were collected from an online panel of American adults, collected by Qualtrics. Data were collected from 9th to 26th September 2020. The sample size was 544 (margin of error ≈ 4%). The sample was 45% female. The average age was 48.2 (SD = 17), with a range of 18 to 88. The sample was 56.8% white, 14% African American, and 9% Latino.