

**Controversial narratives 2020**  
**Wave I (N = 597)**  
**Aug 20<sup>th</sup> - Sep 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Belief in controversial narratives**

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

**Statements:**

- a) "Kamala Harris is not a natural-born citizen, and therefore not eligible to be the Vice President of the US."
- b) "Dr. Anthony Fauci funded the lab that is responsible for the spread of the Covid-19 virus."
- c) "Joe Biden and his family have illegal business ties with China."
- d) "Joe Biden is mentally unfit to be the U.S. President."
- e) "Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud."

Narratives	Partisanship	Definitely false	Likely false	Likely true	Definitely true
Harris was not born in the US	Democrat	190 (68%)	36 (13%)	34 (12%)	21 (7%)
	Independent	41 (41%)	31 (31%)	17 (17%)	11 (11%)
	Republican	61 (28%)	73 (34%)	42 (19%)	40 (19%)
	Total	292 (49%)	140 (23%)	93 (16%)	72 (12%)
Fauci funded the Wuhan lab	Democrat	175 (62%)	38 (14%)	34 (12%)	34 (12%)
	Independent	49 (49%)	27 (23%)	19 (19%)	5 (5%)
	Republican	79 (37%)	63 (29%)	47 (22%)	27 (13%)
	Total	303 (51%)	128 (21%)	100 (17%)	66 (11%)
Biden has illegal foreign ties	Democrat	146 (52%)	86 (31%)	31 (11%)	18 (6%)
	Independent	19 (19%)	36 (36%)	34 (34%)	11 (11%)
	Republican	20 (9%)	47 (22%)	66 (31%)	83 (38%)
	Total	185 (31%)	169 (28%)	131 (22%)	112 (19%)
Biden is cognitively compromised	Democrat	167 (59%)	52 (19%)	34 (12%)	28 (10%)
	Independent	23 (23%)	32 (32%)	23 (23%)	22 (22%)
	Republican	25 (12%)	23 (11%)	51 (24%)	117 (54%)
	Total	215 (36%)	107 (18%)	108 (18%)	167 (28%)
Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud	Democrat	149 (53%)	46 (16%)	57 (20%)	29 (10%)
	Independent	29 (29%)	33 (33%)	26 (26%)	12 (12%)
	Republican	26 (12%)	37 (17%)	68 (31%)	85 (39%)
	Total	204 (34%)	116 (19%)	151 (25%)	126 (21%)

## Awareness of controversial narratives

STIMULUS EXAMPLE: “Have you encountered this, or similar stories about this issue, on social media or the internet?”

Joe Biden's Claims of Cognitive Tests Unclear as Campaign Hides Results  
[/politics/2020/...](#)



Joe Biden's Claims of Cognitive Tests Unclear as Campaign Hides Re...  
Joe Biden said that he has taken a cognitive test, but his campaign will not specify what exactly that means.

Narratives	Partisanship	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably yes	Definitely yes
Harris was not born in the US	Democrat	72 (12.1%)	32 (5.4%)	69 (11.6%)	108 (18.1%)
	Independent	39 (6.5%)	23 (3.9%)	24 (4.0%)	14 (2.3%)
	Republican	50 (8.4%)	54 (9.0%)	57 (9.5%)	55 (9.2%)
	Total	161 (27.0%)	109 (18.3%)	150 (25.1%)	177 (29.6%)
Fauci funded the Wuhan lab	Democrat	137 (22.9%)	57 (9.5%)	52 (8.7%)	35 (5.9%)
	Independent	48 (8.0%)	27 (4.5%)	21 (3.5%)	4 (0.7%)
	Republican	81 (13.6%)	54 (9.0%)	49 (8.2%)	32 (5.4%)
	Total	266 (44.6%)	138 (23.1%)	122 (20.4%)	71 (11.9%)
Biden has illegal foreign ties	Democrat	150 (25.1%)	61 (10.2%)	41 (6.9%)	29 (4.9%)
	Independent	44 (7.4%)	26 (4.4%)	20 (3.4%)	10 (1.7%)
	Republican	55 (9.2%)	40 (6.7%)	63 (10.6%)	58 (9.7%)
	Total	249 (41.7%)	127 (21.3%)	124 (20.8%)	97 (16.2%)
Biden is cognitively compromised	Democrat	132 (22.1%)	45 (7.5%)	68 (11.4%)	36 (6.0%)
	Independent	44 (7.4%)	23 (3.9%)	25 (4.2%)	8 (1.3%)
	Republican	50 (8.4%)	46 (7.7%)	55 (9.2%)	65 (10.9%)
	Total	226 (37.9%)	114 (19.1%)	148 (24.8%)	109 (18.3%)
Mail-in ballots cause voter fraud	Democrat	92 (15.4%)	44 (7.4%)	81 (13.6%)	64 (10.7%)
	Independent	48 (8.0%)	16 (2.7%)	25 (4.2%)	11 (1.8%)
	Republican	34 (5.7%)	36 (6.0%)	66 (11.1%)	80 (13.4%)
	Total	174 (29.1%)	96 (16.1%)	172 (28.8%)	155 (26.0%)

## Demographics

“What is your year of birth?”

Age (Aggregated by decade)	Counts
18-20	25 (4.1%)
21-30	103 (17.2%)
31-40	108 (18.1%)
41-50	101 (16.9%)
51-60	89 (14.9%)
61-70	108 (18.0%)
71-80	52 (8.7%)
81-90	11 (1.8%)
Total	597

“What is your gender?”

Gender	Counts
Female	309 (51.7%)
Male	289 (48.4%)
Other	2 (.3%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (.15%)
Total	597

“Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?”

(Ask only Independent/No preference/Other participants in Party Identification 1)

Party Identification 1	Counts
Democrat	240 (40.2%)
Republican	171 (28.6%)
Independent	157 (26.2%)
No preference	15 (2.5%)
Other	7 (1.1%)
Total	597

“Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?”

Party Identification 2	Counts
Democrat	41 (22.1%)
Republican	45 (24.3%)
Neither	92 (49%)
Don't know	7 (3.7%)
Total	185

“What is your racial or ethnic background? (Check all that apply)”

Race/ethnicity	Counts
White	370 (61.9%)
Black or African American	77 (12.8%)
Hispanic or Latino/a	50 (8.3%)
White, Hispanic or Latino/a	38 (6.3%)
Asian	33 (5.5%)
Other	8 (1.3%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	8 (1.3%)

“What is the highest level of education you have completed?”

Education Level	Counts
Less than high school degree	12 (2.0%)
High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)	171(28.6%)
Some college but no degree	181 (30.3%)
Associate degree in college (2-year)	37 (6.1%)
Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)	120 (20.1%)
Master's degree	57 (9.5%)
Professional degree	12 (2.0%)
Doctoral degree	7 (1.1%)
Total	597

## Methodology

This is the first 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 20th Aug to 7th Sep. The sample size was 597 (Margin of error  $\approx$  4%). The sample was 52% female. The average age was 47.45, with a range of 18 to 88. The sample was 63% white, 13% African American, and 15% Latino/a.