

# covidinfos.net

An anonymously run aggregation website created during the COVID-19 pandemic that has published exaggerated and unsubstantiated information about the dangers of lockdowns.



**Proceed with caution: This website fails to adhere to several basic journalistic standards.**

**Score: 52/100**

## Ownership and Financing

The website does not reveal its ownership. The About page states that it was created by “a handful of concerned citizens” (“une poignée de citoyens concernés”). After publishing articles regularly in April, May, and June 2020, the site in July 2020 described itself as “dormant,” although some content continued to be posted.

The site does not run advertising.

## Content

The website does not conduct original reporting, and instead reposts articles and videos on the pandemic from other sources. “We simply republish articles from all over the world that are related to the pandemic, its coverage in the media, governments’ reactions, lockdowns, restrictions of freedoms and the way with which they are imposed upon the people, as well as opinions from international experts that French media deliberately choose to ignore,” the About page states. (“Nous nous contentons de relayer des articles venus du monde entier qui ont un lien avec l’épidémie en cours, son traitement dans les médias, les réactions des gouvernements, les confinements, les restrictions de libertés et la manière dont elles sont imposées aux populations, les avis d’experts internationaux que les médias français choisissent sciemment d’ignorer”).

Content, which is exclusively devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic, is organized into sections including Words of Experts (Paroles d’experts), Lockdown (Confinement), and Videos. Most articles are critical of the lockdown measures that have been carried out by governments around the world to curb the spread of the virus, warning that concerns about the pandemic are alarmist and dangerous.



Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)



Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)



Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)



Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)



Avoids deceptive headlines (10)



Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)

Clearly labels advertising (7.5)



Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)



The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

Typical headlines have included “Stop panicking and put an end to the lockdowns! requests Dr Scott Atlas” (“Stoppez la panique et mettez un terme aux confinements !’ demande le Dr. Scott Atlas”); “We are miles away from a new wave, according to Dr. Freund” (“On est à des kilomètres d’une nouvelle vague’ estime le Dr. Freund”); and “The 2009 Arte documentary ‘Fear profiteers - A controversial virus’ tells us everything about today’s crisis.” (“Le documentaire Arte de 2009 ‘Profiteurs de la Peur – Un virus fait débat’ nous dit tout de la crise d’aujourd’hui”).

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#### Credibility

The website republishes content, with credit, from both reputable sources such as Le Point, France TV, and The New York Times, as well as from sites that NewsGuard has found to be unreliable, such as far-right French site Medias-Presse.info.

The site itself has published some unsubstantiated and misleading content. For example, in June 2020, CovidInfos.net republished excerpts from an article that was first published on FranceSoir.fr titled “Lockdown: a human, sanitary and economic aberration according to Dr Delépine” (“Le confinement ‘aberration humaine, sanitaire, économique’ selon le Dr. Delépine”). The article claimed that countries with more stringent lockdown measures have actually increased the risk of contracting the disease, recording “an excess of direct deaths” (“surplus de mortalité directe”).

“The direct mortality of Covid19 is way higher in countries that enforced blind and authoritarian lockdowns... than in those that enforced targeted quarantines (for carriers of the virus only) and trusted their citizens,” the article stated. “Without any sanitary measure, like in the Netherlands, we could have had 6,100 less Covid19 direct deaths.” (“La mortalité directe du Covid19 est beaucoup plus élevée dans les pays qui ont pratiqué le confinement aveugle (...) et autoritaire (...) que dans ceux qui ont pratiqué la quarantaine ciblée (réservée aux seuls porteurs de virus) et fait confiance à leurs citoyens” - “Sans aucune mesure sanitaire, à l’instar des Pays-Bas, nous pourrions avoir eu 6100 morts directes du Covid19 en moins”).

There is no evidence that lockdowns have resulted in more COVID-19 deaths, and studies and experts have linked lockdowns to a reduction in transmissions. A study published in June 2020 in the scientific journal *Nature*, which looked at 11 European countries' efforts at curbing the spread COVID-19, found that "major non-pharmaceutical interventions and lockdowns in particular have had a large effect on reducing transmission." The study added, "We find that, across 11 countries, since the beginning of the epidemic, 3,100,000 ... deaths have been averted due to interventions."

In a fact-check of the story when it first appeared on *France-Soir*, *Le Monde* quoted Patrick Pintus, economics professor at the University of Aix-Marseille, who stated: "There is no element that allows us to say that there is a direct causal link between lockdowns and mortality." ("Il n'y a aucun élément qui permet de dire qu'il existe un lien de cause à effet entre confinement et mortalité").

A May 2020 article suggested that the COVID-19 virus was no deadlier than the seasonal flu. The article, which reposted excerpts of an interview with a medical doctor named Pietro Vernazza in the Swiss magazine *Saldo*, quoted Vernazza saying: "I have said that the mortality rate of Covid-19 is about the same as that of the seasonal flu. I was heavily criticized for that. But I still believe today that this is not wrong." ("J'avais dit que le taux de mortalité du Covid-19 était de l'ordre d'une grippe saisonnière. J'ai été sévèrement critiqué pour cela. Mais je crois encore aujourd'hui que ce n'est pas si faux").

Although comparing disease death rates is complicated by issues such as asymptomatic cases, there is no basis for the claim that COVID-19 is less deadly than the seasonal flu, and there is evidence that the opposite is true. A May 2020 study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found that in the U.S., weekly death tolls from COVID-19 in April 2020 were 20 times higher than the deadliest week of an average flu season. In March

2020, the World Health Organization stated on its website: “Mortality for COVID-19 appears higher than for influenza, especially seasonal influenza.”

In response to an inquiry from NewsGuard, the WHO stated in July 2020: “Even though we do not yet know the precise CFR (case fatality ratio) or IFR (Infection fatality ratio) for COVID-19, the bottom line is that there is a significant number of people who die....” The WHO added that “the crude clinical case fatality rate currently (17 July) is about 4% (total deaths divided by total cases),” while that of the seasonal influenza “varies year to year but is estimated at about 0.1%.”

In a July 2020 phone interview with NewsGuard, Sibylle Bernard-Stoecklin, a French epidemiologist at Sante Publique France, said: “The impact in terms of lethality of the COVID-19 epidemic is not at all comparable to that of the seasonal flu.” (“L’impact en termes de mortalité de l’épidémie de COVID-19 n’a rien a voir avec celui de la grippe saisonnière”).

Because CovidInfos.net has published numerous articles making misleading or unsubstantiated claims about the alleged effects of the lockdowns and the dangers of COVID-19 disease, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not gather and present information responsibly.

Headlines on the site are typically accurate and reflect the content of the story.

CovidInfos.net does not articulate a correction policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the website.

The website generally does not purport to publish straight news, and clearly states its agenda on its About page, which says that it was created “by a handful of citizens concerned about the alarmist coverage of the coronavirus epidemic in France, the highly anxiety-provoking nature of the news presented in the media, their one-sidedness and the complete absence of contradictory speeches, opinions or information.” (“Le site Covidinfos a été créé par une poignée de citoyens concernés par le traitement catastrophiste de l’épidémie de Coronavirus en France, le caractère

hautement anxiogène des informations présentées dans les médias, leur unilatéralité, l’absence totale de discours, d’opinions ou d’informations contradictoires”).

Because the site is clear about its agenda and does not present itself as a straight news site, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion irresponsibly.

CovidInfos.net did not respond to two messages sent through its online content form, seeking comment on the articles cited above and the absence of corrections.

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#### Transparency

The website does not reveal its owner and does not indicate who is in charge of content.

Articles, which generally link to the original source, are not bylined, and the site does not provide contact or biographical information for its content creators.

CovidInfos.net did not respond to two messages seeking comment on the lack of information regarding the site’s ownership, editorial leaders, and content creators.

Readers can contact the site via an online form available on the About page.

The site does not run advertising.

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#### History

The website was created in April 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, registration records show.

In July 2020, a note on the site’s About page stated that the site was “dormant.” (“Le site est actuellement en ‘sommeil’). “Life has more or less resumed, and we do not have the time or energy to publish content daily anymore,” the note said. “The story is far from over, and the future will most certainly bring us many responses that are lacking today.” (“La vie a plus ou moins repris son cours et nous n’avons plus le temps ou l’énergie de publier quotidiennement... L’histoire est loin d’être terminée et l’avenir nous apportera sûrement beaucoup des réponses qui nous font défaut aujourd’hui”). Nevertheless, the site continued to publish some articles.

Written by: [Chine Labbe](#)

Edited by: [Eric Efron](#), [Yves Clarisse](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard:[Click Here](#)

## Sources

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Ownership and  
Financing

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<https://www.facebook.com/covidinfos.net>

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Content

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Credibility

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Transparency

<https://covidinfos.net/contact/>

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History

<https://whois.net/>