COVID-19 vaccine misinformation targeting children, teenagers and parents on social media.

A Report for Governments and the WHO

Feb. 17, 2022
In recent months, as COVID-19 vaccination campaigns started for kids aged 5 to 11 in the U.S. and Europe, well-known purveyors of health misinformation started publishing myths about them, urging parents to not vaccinate their children.

In this report, we feature COVID-19 vaccine false claims targeting children that have been shared to over 938,200 people on Facebook (pages and groups) and Twitter, from October 2021 to February 2022, in English, French, Italian and German.

TheGatewayPundit.com, ChildrensHealthDefense.org, and LifeSiteNews.com in English, FranceSoir.com in French, DataBaseItalia.it and Mag24.es in Italian, Wochenblick.at in German, were among the sites whose false claims were shared on large groups and pages on social media. All have long been identified by NewsGuard as repeatedly publishing false information.
Common myths targeting children, teenagers and their parents on social media include:

- The risks of the COVID-19 vaccines outweigh their benefits for children.
- VAERS data prove that millions of children have suffered from COVID-19 vaccine adverse events.
- COVID-19 vaccines have killed more children than COVID-19 itself.
- COVID-19 vaccines cause antibody-dependent enhancement.
English-language misinformation
False claim: A Louisiana nurse said that the COVID-19 vaccines have killed more children than COVID-19 itself. Yet, there are no confirmed deaths involving children linked to the COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S.

childrenshealthdefense.org

The website of an anti-vaccine nonprofit chaired by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., which has published false and unproven scientific and health information, including about COVID-19 vaccines.

17.5 / 100

Facebook group
7,400 members
A few days later, the same Facebook group posted this false claim again, this time coming from another unreliable news source.
False claim: Data from VAERS, a U.S. database which collects unverified reports of adverse health events reported to have happened following vaccination, prove that thousands of 5 to 11-year-olds have indeed experienced adverse events and 3 have died following COVID-19 vaccination.

Facebook group 18,200 members

January 8, 2022
False claim: COVID-19 vaccines will kill children and are a tool for mass murder.

Facebook page of Wayne Allyn Root, a U.S. libertarian columnist and radio show host.

42,000 followers
False claims: There is no basis for vaccinating children from COVID-19 as stated by Dr. Anthony Fauci, and COVID-19 vaccines might actually kill them.

Facebook group
8,300 members

An anti-abortion website that has repeatedly promoted false claims about abortion, as well as COVID-19 vaccines and the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

17.5 / 100
False claim: VAERS data have shown a “surge in reports of serious injuries,” as 5-year-olds start getting vaccinated.

In fact, VAERS reports are unverified and can be submitted by anyone, including anti-vaccine activists. There are no confirmed deaths involving children linked to the COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S.
Two weeks before, in October 2021, the same Facebook page had posted an article titled “The Race Is on to Get Experimental COVID Shots Into Little Kids — Why?” with a caption saying: “Since the vaccines entered clinical trials, scientists have expressed worries about the ‘ticking time bomb’ phenomenon of ADE, which makes vaccinated individuals more, not less, susceptible to severe illness.”

**False claim:** COVID-19 vaccines cause antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE), which will cause vaccinated individuals to develop severe cases of COVID-19 if they are infected with the COVID-19 virus.
French-language misinformation
False claim: The spike proteins that the body is instructed to create by mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are toxic and often cause permanent damage in the critical organs of children.
It was also shared on the Twitter account of FranceSoir.
by the Twitter account of France-based lawyer Carlo Alberto Brusa, president of the association Reaction19, which specializes in filing lawsuits against governmental measures taken to curb the pandemic.
False claim: Children are 52 times more likely to die following COVID-19 vaccination than unvaccinated children, according to data published by the U.K.’s Office of National Statistics.

Facebook group
20,500 members

Twitter account
26,900 followers

planetes360.fr

A French website that has published articles promoting Russian-backed propaganda and false claims about COVID-19.

5 / 100

February 10, 2022

February 8, 2022
Italian-language misinformation
False claim: Covid-19 vaccine-related myocarditis have a 20 percent mortality rate in children after two years, and a 50 percent mortality rate over five years and will “lead to a massacre.”

Facebook page
306,300 followers

November 9, 2021
False claim: COVID-19 vaccines cause “irreparable” damage to children's brains, hearts and other organs.

Facebook group
8,700 members

February 2, 2022
It was also shared by the official Twitter account of the website, @DatabaseItalia.

February 2, 2022
False claim: Vulnerable children should not be vaccinated as they could get “vaccine damage.” Vaccinating in the first ten years of life is very likely to cause an increase in severe and disabling pathologies.

Facebook group
6,000 members

gospanews.net

An anti-immigration website that says it provides “Christian Journalistic Information.” The site has published pro-Russia propaganda and false claims about politics and health, including COVID-19.

20 / 100

Come Davide contro Golia

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Facebook ha condiviso un link.

24 dicembre 2021

GOSPA NEWS

VACCINI, TUTTI I PERICOLI PER I BAMBINI. Inchiiesta Shock basata solo su Ricerche Scientifiche

Visitare il Centro informazioni sul COVID-19 per risorse sui vaccini.

Ottieni informazioni sui vaccini

December 24, 2021
German-language misinformation
False claim: Vaccination in children risks preventing the formation of innate antibodies and could actually trigger anti-immune diseases.
False claim: The spike proteins that the body is instructed to create by RNA vaccines are toxic and often cause permanent damage in the critical organs of children.

epochtimes.de

The German edition of The Epoch Times, a conservative outlet founded by Chinese-Americans associated with Falun Gong, a spiritual practice. The site frequently publishes false claims.

27.5 / 100

Facebook page
7,300 followers

January 4, 2022
This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard:

- The Misinformation Fingerprints dataset, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online - produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify relevant searches related to misinformation narratives about COVID-19, vaccines, and children.

- The second dataset used was the News Website Reliability Ratings, which consists of credibility ratings for over 7,500 news and information website that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany and Italy, and 90% of engagement in Canada. Each site's rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives an overall designation of green (generally trustworthy) or red (generally not trustworthy) and a trust score of 0-100. NewsGuard's analyst used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that appeared in the results for searches conducted as part of the analysis.

- Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of false claims shared on social media. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.