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Fact Check: Have 966 People Died After Receiving the COVID vaccine?

BY **ED BROWNE** ON 3/8/21 AT 10:08 AM EST

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The U.S. COVID vaccine rollout has seen over 90 million people receive at least one dose, according to [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) data as of March 7.

Scientists told *Newsweek* on February 24 that serious side-effects from the vaccine [were rare](#) at a time when 65 million doses had been given. Some examples of common reported side-effects include pain at the site of injection and tiredness.

There also have been reports of people dying after receiving a

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REPORTING SYSTEM (VAERS) REPORTING DATABASE. VAERS IS A U.S.-BASED early warning system for vaccine side-effects.

Healthcare professionals are required to report certain adverse events that occur after vaccines to the system, but it is not designed to give information on what caused the events, such as deaths.

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The Claim

Far-right U.S. news outlet *The Epoch Times* reported on March 6 that 966 people had died after having the Pfizer or Moderna COVID vaccines.

The report said it had drawn the data from VAERS reports between December 14, 2020 and February 19, 2021.

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According to the report, 472 people died after receiving a Moderna vaccine, while 489 died after receiving a Pfizer vaccine. Additionally, five people died after receiving a jab from an unknown manufacturer.

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The report also included data on age group and gender. It showed the largest proportion of deaths—29 percent—occurred in people ages 80 to 89. It also showed males accounted for 55 percent of deaths to 43 percent of females. It said the deaths had occurred between 0 and 49 days after vaccination, with 94 unknown.

The article has been shared on [Twitter](#), and users have gained hundreds of retweets and likes from posting a screenshot of the VAERS data reported by *The Epoch Times*.

The Facts

There are hundreds of reports of people having died after getting a COVID vaccine, but that does not necessarily mean the vaccine was the cause.

Using WONDER, the CDC's VAERS database search tool, *Newsweek* gathered adverse report data specifically on deaths following a COVID vaccine from Moderna or Pfizer. It is important to note that our data contained VAERS reports processed as of February 26.

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the COVID vaccine as the only vaccine in the dataset. We specified Pfizer and Moderna as the vaccine manufacturers. We also chose our symptom onset interval as "All days," which ranges from 0 to over 120 days. We did not specify gender or age in the overall results. Our time frame ran from the earliest possible dates, "before 1990," to ensure every COVID vaccine was included.

Our VAERS result showed 970 people died after being given a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine shot. Of those deaths, 495 occurred following a Moderna shot, and 475 occurred following a Pfizer shot. *Newsweek* contacted Pfizer and Moderna for comment.

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The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) Results

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Messages:

- VAERS data in CDC WONDER are updated every Friday. Hence, results for the same query can change from week to week.
- These results are for 956 total events.

Symptoms	Vaccine Manufacturer	Events Reported	Percent (of 956)
DEATH	MODERNA	495	51.78%
	PFIZER\BIONTECH	475	49.69%
	Total	970	101.46%
Total		970	101.46%

Note: Submitting a report to VAERS does not mean that healthcare personnel or the vaccine caused or contributed to the adverse event (possible side effect).

Top Options Notes Citation Query Criteria

Notes:

Caveats: VAERS accepts reports of adverse events and reactions that occur following vaccination. Healthcare providers, vaccine manufacturers, and the public can submit reports to VAERS. While very important in monitoring vaccine safety, VAERS reports alone cannot be used to determine if a vaccine caused or contributed to an adverse event or illness. The reports may contain information that is incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, or unverifiable. Most reports to VAERS are voluntary, which means they are subject to biases. This creates specific limitations on how the data can be used scientifically. Data from VAERS reports should always be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

A screenshot of the data Newsweek received based on a WONDER search of the VAERS database. It shows a total of 970 deaths following a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Data contains VAERS reports processed as of February 26. This search query was run on March 8.

CDC

This differs slightly from *The Epoch Times'* data, which showed 489 people had died after receiving a Pfizer shot and 472 died after receiving a Moderna shot. However, the final result is close.

It is unclear why data seen by *Newsweek* differed from *The Epoch Times'* data. This might be because the data had been updated since *The Epoch Times* ran its VAERS query. The outlet did not specify when it ran its data query, but the CDC website states that its VAERS data on WONDER is updated every Friday. *The Epoch Times* did not specify whether it had used WONDER.

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The Ruling

Mostly True.

The VAERS database is dense with data and the WONDER system might return slightly different statistics depending on how the user wants the data to be displayed, even if the search parameters are kept the same. *Newsweek* could not independently replicate the exact method *The Epoch Times* used to gather its data, but our VAERS death results were very close to those reported by the outlet.

However, it is false to say that COVID vaccines have caused 966 deaths, because the VAERS database is not designed to give this information. For example, in the dataset published by *The Epoch Times*, one of the people who died after getting a vaccine had also been injured in a car crash between getting the jab and the date of their death, but the case was still included in the dataset.

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VACERS HAS NOT detected patterns in cause of death that would indicate a safety problem with COVID-19 vaccines."

Kent Woods, former chief executive of the U.K. Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, previously told *Newsweek* that a person suddenly dying after having a vaccine is not proof that the vaccine caused the death.

Newsweek, in partnership with NewsGuard, is dedicated to providing accurate and verifiable vaccine and health information. With NewsGuard's HealthGuard browser extension, users can verify if a website is a trustworthy source of health information. Visit the [Newsweek VaxFacts website](#) to learn more and to download the HealthGuard browser extension.

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A member of staff uses a needle and a vial of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in Cardiff, South Wales, on December 8, 2020. More than 90 million Americans have received a vaccine.

JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP/GETTY

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G **guest**

18 March, 2021

"For example, in the dataset published by *The Epoch Times*, one of the people who died after getting **a vaccine** had also been injured in a car crash between getting the jab and the date of their death, but the case was still included in the dataset." In the example above ... if you change "a vaccine" to Covid-19, the case would have been a covid-19 death according to cdc count guidelines. They can't have it both ways and expect confidence in the stats of either vaccine deaths or covid deaths. Also, shame on the cdc for not tracking adverse reactions. Self reporting is not sufficient.

Reply  105  7

G **Greg** > guest

12 April, 2021

Kind of like a motorcycle rider who was killed in a motorcycle accident being included in

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vaccine at all and I will continue to live my life as normal as possible.

Reply  59  4

S**StillSmat**

13 March, 2021

A friend's grandmother died alone after receiving the 1st dose vaccine and while waiting for the 2nd dose. She hadn't seen her family in a year. The real question is not whether vaccines cause death, but whether it's worth it to wait a year in isolation for a vaccine (that may or may not ever come) if you were going to die anyway... Except now you die alone, scared, and depressed. It's inhumane. Secondly, I just love how scientists are deciding they want to be scientists again, now that their hysteria is lessening. They are coming back to logic and reason (in the form of awareness of correlation being distinct from causation) to defend vaccines, but didn't do the same with respect to "deaths correlated to covid do not imply deaths caused by covid." *(Edited)*

Reply  70  6

P**PumpkinPie** > StillSmat

10 April, 2021

It is not worth NOT seeing your loved ones because of a disease they may or may not get, because tomorrow might not come for a lot of people. Was it worth it to "protect" the ones you love by never visiting them and then they end up dying from other things? I realize people may see things differently with elderly loved ones in their homes, but it's just not worth it.


Reply  16  3

N**Nomisnala** > StillSmat

31 March, 2021

I do not find that accurate. Scientists and actuaries have looked at many factors including all causes of death, to weed out the effect of covid-19 on the death total. They also look at the effect of isolation on the death total including deaths due to suicide and depression. They also look at the diminished number of deaths due to car accidents etc. due to less automobile mileage. The deaths via accident correlate well with the decrease in total miles driven. Scientists did not abdicate their roles in understanding this data. It is easy to make a point with simple statistical manipulation, detailed analysis is necessary to understand the true picture.

Reply  5  3

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T**TakadaHiroshi**

22 March, 2021

First of all VAERS data take years to become comprehensive since low rates of reporting

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vaccine unless we want to recognize the survival rate upon getting Covid is 99%. Vaccine have dangers and we don't know what they are for the Covid vaccine. It is experiment vaccine and should be positioned that way. It is fun and games to be a armchair scientists or political wonk when you didn't spend an entire weekend consoling a widow.

Reply  66  7

N **Nomisnala** > TakadaHiroshi

31 March, 2021

the overall survival rate in the U.S. is 98.1 percent, and it is better in those in younger age groups and worse in those in the older age groups. It may indeed be 99 percent or greater in the younger age groups, but it is worse than 98.1 percent in the older age groups. For most seasonal flu's except for 1957, 1968 and 1917-1919, the survival rate is over 99.8 percent. The 1957-58 flu, and the 1968 flu, although bad did not have survival rates as low as covid-19. We did not have any anti-virals in 1957-58 or 1968.

Reply  2  3

 1 reply


s **Survivor/Widow** > TakadaHiroshi

3 May, 2021

I'm a survivor of Covid and a widow from Covid. I took the vaccine because having Covid was the worse (2weeks) I have ever felt in my 65 years including c-sections and other surgeries. Third week I was being treated for pneumonia and burying a husband of 47 years. I am the consoling widow you referenced. You either mask up around me or stay 6 feet away. Any closer w/o a mask and I'm spraying the air around you and me with bleach water. It's my 100% right to fight from getting Covid again or experiencing a loss of a loved one.

Reply  3  5

 1 reply

 Show 3 more replies

Laurence Ho

24 March, 2021

The numbers produced by Epoch Times and Newsweek were so close yet the latter tries to paint them as different saying that the former was incorrect. And why do they have to paint any conservative news outlet as being far-right?

Reply  54  4

i **Interesting** > Laurence Ho

27 March, 2021

Good observation, its there job to try to discredit any body that is conservative, that is why they use these terms

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12 March, 2021

I'm an 82 y/o Caucasian male, with no known major health issues (mini heart attack last December, with no meds but 2 months cardio re-hab)

I received the Moderna vaccine shot on Feb. 2, 2021.

Two days later, I began getting what my PC Doc said were "typical" responses to the vaccine. She said I was not contagious but should not take the second shot until I was fully well again.

I've never been as sick for as long and as of today am still just 90% healed. I still have cognitive focus issues, sore throat, poor energy, constant headache and nap-needing!

Though not contagious I experienced the same issues that my 25 y/o grandson endured while quarantined with tested positive Covid 19. His lasted almost 2 weeks; mine is still active!...**See more**

Reply 94 10

S StillSmat > RVChuck

13 March, 2021

Thank you, my dad is in your age bracket and recently had a mini heart attack after inflammation caused by a virus (non covid, but an actually serious virus). He is not interested in the vaccine but I was thinking he may want to get it. I think I'll trust his instinct.

Reply 19 2

B BlueTree > RVChuck

14 March, 2021

The age you are, you are prone to having a lower immune system. When was the last time you had a vaccination? Vaccinations can be harder on older people because unfortunately it is the age that hinders them. Depending on your immune system, if you've had cardiac issues in the past, it is no wonder that your body is trying to build up antibodies as well as you trying to get back to complete health from your cardiac event/rehab. You do realize that with every vaccine, a small amount of the virus is injected into your body to build up antibodies to fight against it right? Given your age, and probably lower immune system, it is taking you longer to build back up. It is YOUR choice, but I wouldn't just give up on getting your second vaccine. You posted this 2 days ago, and I don't know the window of time to get your second, but I imagine you would have already had to have gotten it anyways. Either way, good luck.

Reply 5 14

3 replies

[SUBSCRIBE FROM \\$4 >](#)**K Koofasa**

29 March, 2021

Newsweek twisted itself into a pretzel to avoid admitting almost a thousand people have died after taking the vaccine. Hiding data or making it difficult to find is deceptive and the fact that the CDC doesn't say one word about this topic tells me it is a bigger deal than we know. After all the FDA still hasn't approved these vaccines except for emergency use.

Reply  28  2**Q question**

8 March, 2021

If you get the vaccine and die from a car accident, Newsweek says it shouldn't be counted as an adverse reaction...

But if you test positive for Covid-19 and die in a car accident or from a gun shot within 30 days it's most definitely counted as a Covid death...

Reply  246  43**K Koofasa** > question


29 March, 2021

Indeed, George Floyd died of Covid.

Reply  16  5**N Nomisnala** > question

31 March, 2021

I do not think that is absolutely correct. Deaths from covid are often classified by biopsy, or deaths after hospitalizations for covid. When someone is hit by a car and dies the death is usually attributed to the car accident. Data collected during drug studies are different. All cause deaths and apparent adverse events are reported, to later be figured out. If a patient dies of any cause during a drug study it is reported into data related to that drug study. That is not how county medical examiners count the cause of death.

Reply  8  19 1 reply Show 6 more replies**R RedPuzzle**

8 March, 2021

Interesting exercise (VAERS data- same database)

Data from January 2011 to present

10 years of data

14 total Flu vaccines

Total number of deaths: 425

[SUBSCRIBE FROM \\$4 >](#)Reply  104  5**p** **pianoplayer** > RedPuzzle 

9 March, 2021

966 is that Ok collateral damage? 425 is that Ok? Kudos to Newsweek for actually bringing this up and verifying the claim.

Reply  10  4 3 replies**p** **pateriot** > RedPuzzle 

17 April, 2021

wait 10 years and THEN tell us how many people have died from the mRNA vaccine as well as the other ones.

Reply  7  Show 2 more replies**c** **CCpearl** 

9 March, 2021

The article stated "one of the people who died after getting a vaccine had also been injured in a car crash between getting the jab and the date of their death, but the case was still included in the dataset." There are Drive Up vaccination sites all over the country. It is extremely reckless to give a vaccine then send them on their way when they can suffer an adverse reaction and get into an accident. Not only harming themselves but others. Vaccine reactions and injuries are real. They are listed on the vaccine inserts.

Reply  54  10**B** **BigJohn** > CCpearl 

9 March, 2021

If there are drive up vaccination sites people would still have to wait the 15 minute observation period to see that they don't go into anaphylactic shock. I had to go into a facility to be vaccinated. There are no drive up vaccination places in my area. It's harder to observe people in their cars. It wasn't a long process though. They just asked a few questions, stuck my arm and had me sit in a waiting room with a bunch of other people who had just been vaccinated. We were told to wait 15 minutes before we left. The whole process took about 20 minutes, but prior to going I had pre-registered and answered a bunch of questions online. Severe reactions are rare. The process wasn't bad at all but next time I'm wearing a short sleeve shirt. I wore a dress shirt and tie last time and had to disrobe in front of everybody to get stuck and this was in a big open tornado shelter where they were vaccinating a pretty big crowd of people. *(Edited)*

Reply  8  3 2 replies






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I have received both doses of the Moderna vaccine and was required to wait on each occasion for AT LEAST 15-minutes afterwards, and there were nurses and doctors standing by. Recipients were then interviewed to see how they were feeling and, also, given instructions regarding potential after-effects. (I felt lightheaded so was directed to wait an additional half hour before driving.) Also, what isn't mentioned here, is that prior to receiving the vaccine, one must fill out a highly detailed form providing his or her medical history; i.e., whether she or he has previously experienced allergic responses to vaccines (or has any other allergy), also whether the applicant has current health complications (and there's a long list of those, including respiratory and heart issues). Any death is tragic, but when we reflect on the number of deaths as a direct result of the coronavirus--as opposed to deaths of those who died after having taken the vaccine--it's reasonable to conclude that, statistically, the vaccine does not, in itself, cause harm, and has (in fact) saved innumerable lives. If we wish to register our opinions and protest, then let's collectively demand of our elected officials that they study closely the latest [independent] research and science from the world's most reliable scientific and medical sources and act accordingly. Personal anecdotes that lack medical substantiation (and further study into hundreds, thousands of other cases) cannot provide guidance. *(Edited)*

Reply  5  3

 1 reply

 Show 1 more reply

-
- C** ⋮
12 March, 2021
So a person dies from pneumonia with covid "complications" and its a covid death. A vaccine kills a person, and "that does not necessarily mean the vaccine was the cause" haha
Reply  119  14
- R Rando** > C ⋮
1 April, 2021
Covid19 often causes pneumonia, so yes, directly related. If the vaccine caused pneumonia and you die from it, then I don't think anyone would challenge you on saying the vaccine was the cause. The problem is there isn't enough data yet to directly link the side effects individuals died from after the vaccine shot to the shot itself.
Reply  8  4
 1 reply
- J John** > C ⋮
29 March, 2021
If an 85 year old gets vaccinated and dies 2 months later. Did they die of the vaccine or did they die because they were 85 and was going to die anyway? That is the problem trying to

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2 replies



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BY TOM ROGERS

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