

The 2020 rabbit hole: Why conspiracy theories draw people in | First Draft

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Conspiracy theories have simmered on the fringes of society for years. But in 2020 they found new audiences: Celebrity chef Pete Evans welcomed foodies to vaccine conspiracy theories in Australia, while UK health care workers started anti-vaccine Facebook Groups where some falsely claimed the Covid-19 vaccine was “poison.” Anti-5G figures including British conspiracy theorist David Icke became household names as people vandalized phone masts across Europe; yoga influencers and suburban women in the US adopted QAnon beliefs and wellness bloggers made them pretty in pastels.

The pandemic created the ideal framework for mass distrust of institutions, thrusting these years-old, baseless beliefs into the mainstream. According to studies and surveys, a significant number of people globally found a tidy home in conspiracy theories promising to connect the dots between 2020’s turbulent events and their lives.

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