**Why do people believe in conspiracy theories?**

First of all, it's not just a few loners on the internet—prior research indicates that half the American public believes in at least one conspiracy theory in any given year.

Potential existence of conspiracies can allow people to have a positive feeling about the society they live in when that social system is threatened. This way if something happens that is out of line with their views (like the election of Donald Trump was for many), people can blame a few bad apples instead of coming to feel like their whole country is against them. Although Russia's interference in the United States 2016 presidential election is proving to be true—a conspiracy that may soon enter history as fact.

Here are some of the most common conspiracy theories of the recent past:

**Secret Group Controlling World** - this conspiracy proposes that a secret group called the Iluminati has been really controlling the world and is looking to create a one world government. Their end-goal is supposedly to create the New World Order, which will dissolve national boundaries and people's identities, while allowing for total authoritarian control.

A version of this theory also sees other groups in a similar position of world domination - the Freemasons, the Jewish people, the Bilderberg Group or the “globalists" that are often invoked in rightwing media outlets like Alex Jones and Breitbart News. President Trump himself mentions “globalists" and invokes fighting against insidious “elites" as a battle cry for his base.

**Big Pharma is withholding the cure for cancer**

A long-standing favourite among conspiracists suggests medical professionals, led by major pharmaceutical companies, discovered the cure for cancer but have not made it available to the wider public. The argument goes that given the amount of money generated by cancer treatment around the world, a cure would seriously impact revenue for drugs companies - not to mention put many doctors and researchers out of business.

“While Big Pharma has not made itself many friends among the public, there is no evidence that such a vast conspiracy is possible as it would require the participation of thousands if not millions of people in both for-profit and non-profit sectors,” says [Big Think](https://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/the-10-most-popular-conspiracy-theories).

In fact, “it makes more sense that selling the cure would actually make more money”, it says.

[Forbes](https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2018/09/10/some-think-big-pharma-is-suppressing-a-cure-for-cancer-heres-why-that-could-never-happen/#614698d7419c) reports that “medical insurance companies and the federal government would love nothing better than to substitute a $100 cancer treatment for one that costs $1,000,000 like CAR-T immunotherapy”.

Furthermore, adds the finance magazine, “Cancer researchers are human. Humans cannot keep important secrets. Cancer cures cannot be suppressed, not even for one month.”

**Lizard People aka “Reptilians" Are Running the World** - this is a very sci-fi, Hollywood variation on secret groups controlling us, famously championed by David Icke, a professional conspiracy theorist from Britain, who is also a big player in the “truther" movement. The idea also has support from 12 million Americans, according to a 2013 national survey. What they believe is that the top echelon of our government is actually controlled by shape-shifting reptilian aliens, who have been lording power over humans to make them into mindless slaves for their own purposes.

**9/11**

On 11 September 2001, four planes were hijacked by al-Qaeda and two of them were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, killing 2,996 people.

However, some believe that the attack was an inside job, orchestrated in order to cement the US’s place as the top global power or to secure the oil reserves in the Middle East.

Another theory is that the building’s owners were responsible for the event (they stood to gain $500m in insurance profits).

**Frozen: The Movie or Cryogenics?**

What if we told you The Walt Disney Company created the movie Frozen to alter Google's search algorithm so that when people looked up some variation of "Disney Frozen," information about the movie—and not about Walt Disney himself being cryogenically frozen—would come up?

Screen Rant writes that cigarettes used to be cropped out of Disney's hands in an attempt to keep up with the Mouse House's family-friendly branding, so while creating a hit movie to mess with an internet algorithm sounds nutty, it kind of also makes sense.

**JFK Assassination**

51% of Americans believed that there was a conspiracy behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in a [large national survey](https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/04/12-million-americans-believe-lizard-people-run-our-country/316706/) in 2013. The popularity of this particular theory stems from the horrific murder in 1963 of President Kennedy and the subsequent lack of a clear, satisfying explanation for who was really behind it.

While the shooter Lee Harvey Oswald got the official blame, parties as divergent as the CIA, KGB, or the mob have been implicated in the public consciousness. The particulars of the theory focus on analyzing whether there was just one gunman and if more shots were fired than officially claimed.

**COVID-19 is Fake**

The most radical theory about COVID-19 is denialism: the virus does not exist or is not as dangerous as is commonly believed. For some deniers, COVID-19 cannot be caught at all because germ-based transmission itself is a myth. For others, it is just a “common cold” and its alleged lethal effects are overplayed. Powerful individuals and organisations (such as Bill Gates or Big Pharma) are considered responsible for the hype, with motives ranging from making money to suppressing freedom. Another popular theory denies that the virus passed from non-humans to humans accidentally. It was, instead, intentionally crafted by the Chinese in a lab in Wuhan. Other theories blame the quick and devastating proliferation of the virus on genetically modified crops or to the roll out of 5G technology.