



Amid vaccine mandates, fake vaccine certificates become a full blown industry

Black market for fake vaccine certificates booms

Check Point Research (CPR) continues to monitor the black market in which fake COVID-19 vaccine certificates are being sold to anyone willing to pay.

- **Black market for fake vaccine certificates expands globally, now selling certificates in 29 countries, 9 of which are new Including: Austria, Brazil, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Singapore, Thailand, UAE**
- **On August 10, CPR saw roughly a 1000 vendors on Telegram. Now, CPR sees north of 10,000 vendors claiming to offer fake vaccine certificates, marking a 10x increase**

- **Prices globally range from US\$85-US\$200. Following Biden's vaccine mandate announcement "Registered" CDC vaccine card in the US has risen from US\$100 to US\$200 and Telegram group members in the US risen from 30K to over 300,000**

Vaccine mandate policy drives fake vaccination card market

More countries across the world are adopting the vaccine mandate policy following its successful implementation in European markets such as France, Greece and Italy. In the US, President Joe Biden's vaccine mandate is the next step in the fight against the Delta variant in the country, and part of the overall effort to bring the pandemic under control. Biden stated, "We're going to reduce the spread of Covid-19 by increasing the share of the workforce that is vaccinated in businesses all across America."

The new mandates affects hundreds of public and private companies and tens of millions of American workers. Prior to the announcement, we observed Telegram groups having as many as 25,000-30,000 subscribers and followers. Biden's announcement resulted in an immediate acceleration in the number of subscribers and followers, with some groups even peaking at a follower size as large as 300,000, a number we have not previously spotted. This roughly marks a 12x increase.

In this blog, we share how the adoption of the vaccine mandate policy in various countries has led to a boom in the black market for fake vaccine certificates.

The black market's evolution since the beginning of the pandemic

Back in December 2020, CPR spotted hundreds of adverts in the Darknet offering supposed vaccines for sale. The hundreds of adverts presented, back then, a 400% increase compared to previous months. In March 2021, while the global roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations started to accelerate, the number of adverts tripled to over 1,200 with sellers based in the U.S. and European countries such as Spain, Germany, France and Russia. Prices for fake 'vaccine passports' were US\$250 each, while fake negative COVID-19 test results cost just US\$25 each.

In our last report back in August 2021, we shared that fake 'vaccine passport' certificates were on sale for US\$100-US\$120, with majority of sellers from European countries. Also on sale: The EU Digital COVID certificate, CDC and NHS COVID-19 vaccine cards, and fake PCR COVID-19 tests. The number of advertisement groups and their sizes have multiplied by a hundred percent since the beginning of 2021.

In August 2021, CPR saw the number of sellers to number around 1,000. Today, the number of sellers has grown exponentially to north of 10,000, marking a 10x increase.

Table 1: The black market since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Date of report	What's on sale	Volume of advertisement	Countries in which it was sold	Selling and distribution platform	Prices
December 2020	Covid-19 Vaccines	A few hundreds	Mostly US sellers	Darknet	\$250
March 2021	Forged negative COVID-19 test results and fake vaccine certificates	Darknet advertisements for COVID-19 vaccines have increased by over 300% in past three months	Sellers based in the U.S. and European countries including Germany, France Russia and Spain	Darknet and hacking forums	\$135-\$150 for fake vaccination certificate
August 2021	Fake 'vaccine passport' certificates: EU Digital COVID certificate, CDC and NHS Covid vaccine cards and fake PCR COVID-19 Tests	Volume of advertisement groups and groups sizes publishing sellers multiplied by hundreds percent since the beginning of 2021	Fake certificates from all around the world, where the majority are coming from Europe, countries such as France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland related certifications.	Darknet and Telegram groups	\$100-120 for fake vaccination certificate

<p>September 2021</p>	<p>Fake 'vaccine passport' certificates: EU Digital COVID certificate, CDC and NHS Covid vaccine cards and fake PCR COVID-19 Tests</p>	<p>Increase in the number of offers by 300% in the period from Jan 2021 to March-April, Mostly attributed to changes in EU countries towards the vaccine.</p> <p>Now we see the same effect happening in groups related to the CDC / USA vaccination certificates</p>	<p>Fake certificates from all around the world including: Australia, Brazil, Cyprus, Finland, India, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Thailand, UAE, UK, Ukraine and the US.</p>	<p>Telegram Groups and bots</p>	<p>Approx. \$100 for fake certificate</p>
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Table 2: What's on sale, which countries and what the prices are

Country	Price
Australia	110AUD
Austria	€ 150
Brazil	\$80
Canada	120\$
Cyprus	€ 150
Finland	€ 150
France	€ 150
Greece	€ 150
India	75\$
Indonesia	80-100\$
Ireland	€ 150

Italy	€ 150
Latvia	150 – 200€
Lithuania	€ 150
Malta	€ 150
Netherlands	€ 150
Poland	€ 150
Portugal	€ 150
Romania	€ 150
Russia	5000-9500 RUB
Singapore	€ 250
Spain	€ 150
Sweden	€ 150
Switzerland	€ 150
Thailand	80\$
UK	100-150€
Ukraine	€ 150
United Emirates	\$200
US	\$150 – \$200

Sellers faking certifications from more countries in Europe and APAC

The more a need grows, and demand follows, the more sellers will expand their operations. We are reporting today that sellers are offering fake certifications from more countries, including:

- Europe: Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Greece, Finland, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Ireland, Malta, UK, Ukraine

- APAC: Australia, Indonesia, India, Singapore, Thailand

Tell us what you need and we'll get it for you

This is not the first time our researchers have reported this troubling trend that is developing globally. We have spotted and have been following this growing “industry” since the pandemic outbreak in 2020. However, it seems that as the pandemic reaches new peaks, so does this market as it continues to improve its capabilities, expand its distribution, and increase its followers.

Currently, our researchers have spotted new techniques that sellers are using to sell more. For example, in Austria, we have found a Telegram bot that creates fake certificates for free! All one needs to do is fill in the relevant details and a pdf file will be shared with them containing all their filled data, such as in the case attached- a negative PCR test.

Wherever there's demand, there's supply

Following the Jewish New Year celebration, it was reported that many pilgrims visiting Uman and Ukraine for the holidays tested positive for COVID-19, and in order to fly back to Israel, used fake test results bought from a Telegram group that created and sold fake COVID-19 certifications.

According to police officials, over 200 Israelis who returned from an annual Jewish pilgrimage in Ukraine used forged negative coronavirus tests, despite at least some of them actually having tested positive for the virus. The price tag for this “service” was 100NIS and included the option to create a fake vaccination certificate or COVID 19 card indicating the owner had recovered from COVID-19 for the price of approximately US\$94.

Recommendations for awareness

- As a general statement: genuine health related certificates are not sold over the Internet. Anybody who is offering to sell such document over the internet are clearly doing so illegally. We recommend people not engage with sellers publishing on such groups or marketplaces anywhere across the web.
- Every country should internally manage a central repository of tests and vaccinated people, which can and should be securely shared between relevant authorized bodies within the country.
- All ‘green passes’ and vaccination certificates should be managed and encrypted in a secure way by the relevant official bodies within each country, as well as a QR code that can be scanned for authentication purposes.

- Countries should cooperate and share info regarding such data and create a secure repository with encryption keys to allow people to roam using legit only certifications and to be able to detect forged and fake ones