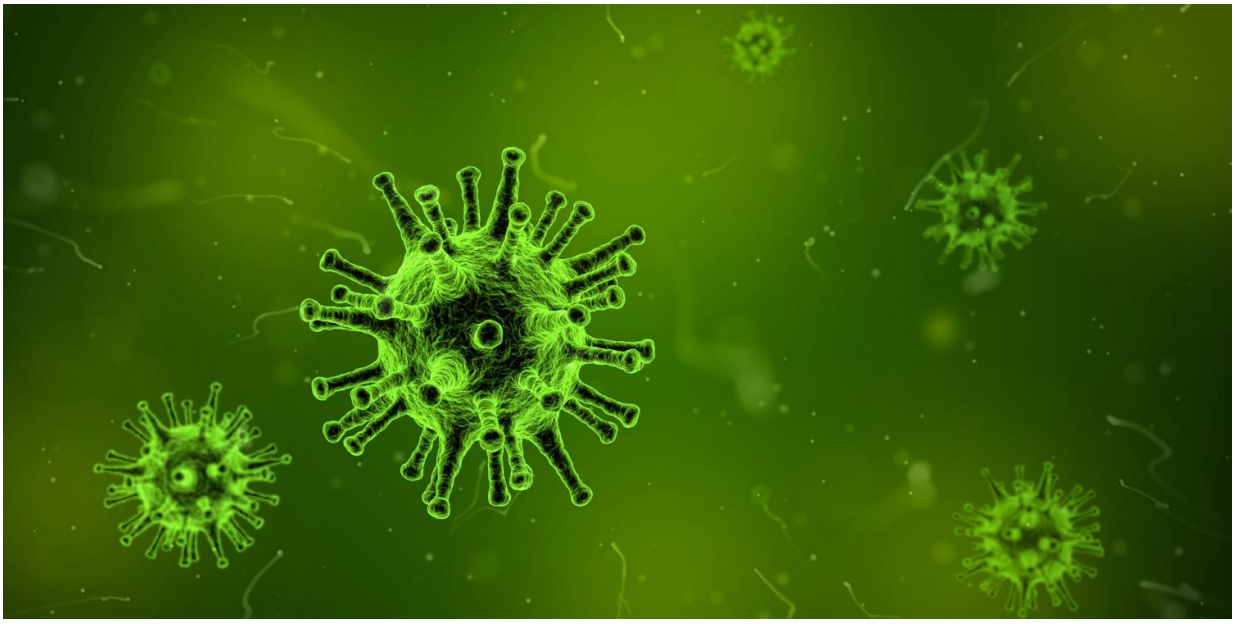
What do Australians really think about coronavirus?

May 4 2020, by Leilah Schubert



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Understanding how Australians are coping with the threat of COVID-19, and their level of concern, is the focus of new research from the Business Intelligence and Data Analytics (BIDA) Research Centre at the University of Technology Sydney.

The study reveals the majority of Australians are highly concerned, rating the threat of COVID-19 around eight out of 10, however, around

9% have a low level of concern and rate the virus 'no worse than the flu."

"We also found that young people were less concerned, and felt less at risk of contracting the virus. This might mean they are more tempted to break the lockdown and jeopardize the community," says lead researcher Dr. Antonio Borriello from UTS Business School.

The researchers surveyed more than 2000 residents from across all states and territories about their feelings and perceptions of COVID-19, including how aware they are of the virus, and whether they consider it a serious threat.

"The survey showed differing perceptions across age groups, employment status, location and gender," says Dr. Borriello.

"We believe the policies adopted by the federal and state governments to address the pandemic can be more effective when backed up with measures targeted to these different population categories," he says.

The results have been made available via an open access dashboard, developed by Dr. Borriello, where the public can explore the responses in detail and see how their perceptions compare to others.

"The dashboard allows people to compare their own feelings and concerns with those of other Australians across a range of fields, and to have a clearer picture of how others feel in this pandemic," Dr. Borriello says.

The survey examined five key areas:

- How concerned people are about the virus
- How knowledgeable they are about the virus
- Whether they consider it a serious threat

- The perceived risk of contracting the virus
- Whether older people should be more concerned

The results show Australians have a high level of knowledge about the virus, with an average awareness score of 8.31 out of 10.

"With significant media saturation we expected there would be a high degree of awareness about the virus," says Dr. Borriello.

"Older Australians had a higher score than younger citizens and women had a higher awareness rating than men, so there may be room to improve awareness among younger people," he says.

The majority of participants reported feeling moderately concerned about their personal risk of contracting the virus, with an average score of 7.20.

However around half of the respondents were unsure about their risk, and more than 13% strongly believed that they are unlikely to contract COVID-19.

"Women and those currently employed reported perceptions of having a higher risk of contracting the virus than other segments of society," says Dr. Borriello.

There was very little difference in concern about the virus between states, with the minimum score recorded for South and Western Australians and Northern Territorians of 7.96 and a maximum score of 8.18 for those living in the ACT.

More information: Explore the dashboard: app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjo … LTUyNzgwN2JlODc5MSJ9

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