

More than 5% of Britons have had SARS-CoV-2: study

June 4 2020



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Between five and six percent of Britain's population had been infected with SARS-CoV-2 by the last third of April, according to a new study from the University of St Andrews.

Research by Professor Hill Kulu and Peter Dorey, from the ESRC Centre for Population Change and School of Geography and Sustainable Development, found that England had higher [infection rates](#) than Scotland and Wales and that in London more than 10% of the population may have been infected.

Overall, infection rates were highest in urban regions and lowest in [small towns](#) and [rural areas](#).

Their estimates of the cumulative infection rate are based on the COVID-19 deaths reported by ONS and NRS by the first third of May.

Further [statistical analysis](#) showed that the virus infection rates were higher in areas with [high population density](#) and levels of deprivation. The results suggest that people from lower socioeconomic groups in urban areas, including those with minority backgrounds, were most affected by the spread of coronavirus in March and April.

Professor Kulu said: "Our analysis shows that the cumulative infection rate may have been slightly smaller or larger, but very unlikely less than 3% or more than 12% unless our current knowledge on death rates from COVID-19 are seriously biased.

"Clearly, we are far from achieving the 'herd immunity' rapidly as some have hoped. The good news is that because the coronavirus is not widely spread, and the number of active cases has declined during the lockdown, its suppression and control is possible with various public health measures before the cure and vaccine become available.

"We know that the virus has hit hardest people from lower socioeconomic and ethnic minority backgrounds in the cities, potentially due to the nature of their employment; many of them are in occupations exposed to the virus, such as transport and sales workers. It is important

to ensure that our key workers, whichever sector they work, are really properly protected."

Peter Dorey said: "Our analysis showed that there are some areas in London where cumulative infection rate was between 15 and 20%. In contrast, some remote and rural locations have not yet seen any infections."

"Infection Rates from COVID-19 in Great Britain by Geographical Units: A Model-based Estimation from Mortality Data," by Hill Kulu and Peter Dorey, is published on SocArXiv.

More information: Hill Kulu et al. Infection Rates from Covid-19 in Great Britain by Geographical Units: A Model-based Estimation from Mortality Data, (2020). [DOI: 10.31235/osf.io/84f3e](https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/84f3e)

Provided by University of St Andrews

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