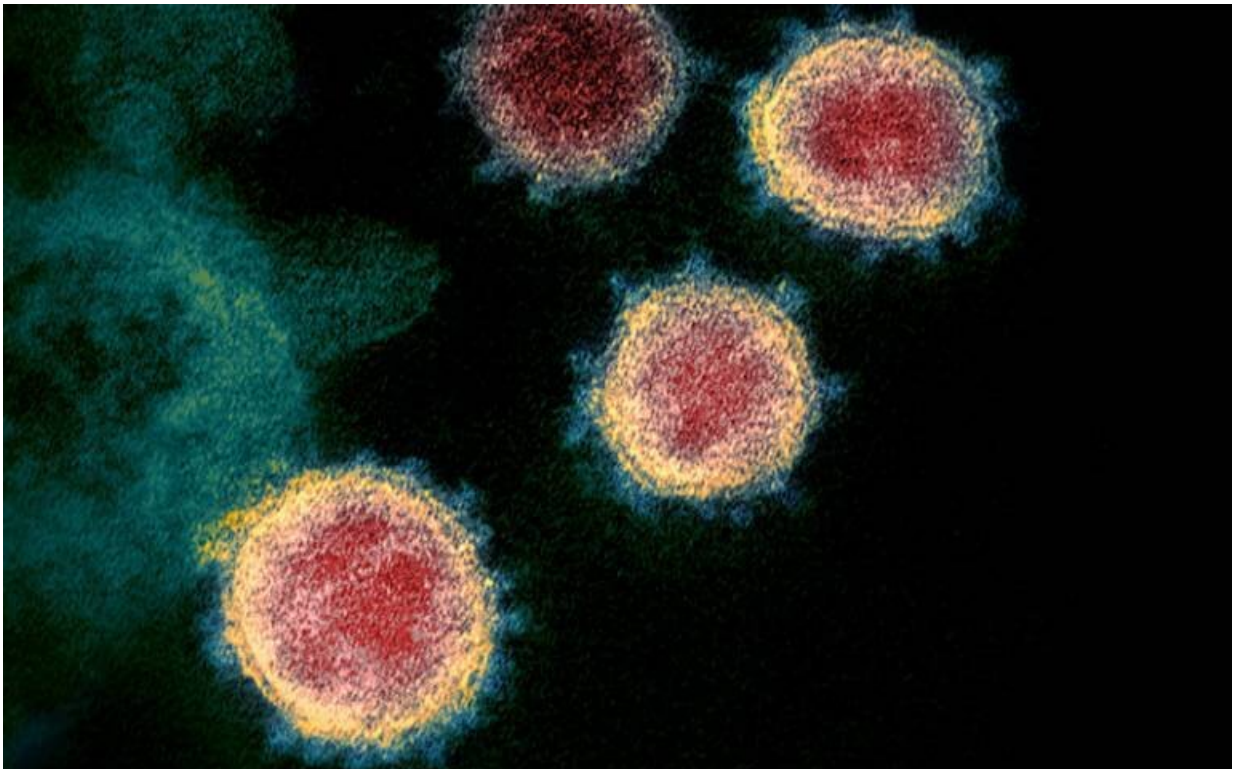


Majority feel they're well informed on COVID-19

December 18 2020



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Almost nine in ten (85%) people rate their own knowledge about COVID-19 as 'good' or 'very good', up from 72% in March, find UCL researchers as part of the COVID-19 Social Study.

This contrasts with just 5% who think they have poor or very poor knowledge, down from 10% in March, the start of the first lockdown.

Throughout the pandemic, self-rated knowledge has consistently been highest amongst adults over the age of 30 (86% vs 74% of adults aged 18-29) and slightly higher amongst people with physical health conditions (87% vs 81% of those without conditions), who may feel they are more at risk from the [virus](#) and therefore want to understand it more.

Launched in the week before lockdown started, the ongoing UCL COVID-19 Social Study is funded by the Nuffield Foundation with additional support from Wellcome and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It is the UK's largest study into how adults are feeling about the lockdown, government advice and overall wellbeing and [mental health](#) with over 70,000 participants who have been followed across the last 38 weeks.

Lead author, Dr. Daisy Fancourt (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care), said: "Knowledge of COVID-19 among the general public is an important factor in combatting the virus. With this in mind, it's encouraging to see that the majority of people rate their own knowledge of COVID-19 as "good" or "very good."

"If people are well-informed about the virus, particularly how it spreads and how dangerous it can be, they are more likely to take the necessary precautions to prevent catching or spreading it themselves.

"However, this is a complex virus and it is likely that people are overestimating their own knowledge of COVID-19 and this, coupled with the small but not insignificant proportion of the population who rate their [knowledge](#) poorly, means that public health messaging around the virus and its effects must be maintained. In particular this messaging needs to stress the importance of following the rules closely rather than

bending rules or making modifications even if they might seem safe."

The study also found that half (50%) of participants are worried about their family or friends, an increase from a low of around 43% in the summer, but not as high as it was at the start of lockdown (70%).

Worries are higher amongst people with a diagnosed mental illness (60% currently worried vs 50% of people without a [mental illness](#)) and women (60% currently worried vs 40% of men).

The study team is also running the COVID-MINDS Network: an international network of over 130 longitudinal mental health from over 70 countries. Through the network, dozens of scientists and clinicians are coming together internationally to collate results from mental health studies running in countries around the world and compare findings. The initiative is supporting the launch new mental health studies in other countries and show whether actions taken in specific countries are helping to protect mental [health](#).

More information: Understanding the psychological and social impact of the pandemic. www.covidsocialstudy.org/

Provided by University College London

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