Worries about catching COVID-19 stay low as lockdown eases

15 June 2020

Credit: [Free-Photos](#) [Source: Pixabay](#) (CC.2.0) *Taken pre-lockdown in 2016

Despite the relaxation of lockdown measures enabling many people to return to more normal activities, worries about catching the virus show little sign of changing, finds UCL's COVID-19 social study.

During lockdown there has been a steady decline across the UK in worries about COVID-19. At the beginning, half of adults were worried about catching the virus and becoming seriously ill, and now just 35% are worried and only 15% are seriously worried, according to the ongoing study of over 90,000 adults carried out since the start of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic.

The ongoing study, which was launched in the week before lockdown, 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.

The study shows that worries about catching the virus and becoming seriously ill from it are similar across age groups, even though younger adults are at far lower risk of serious complications from the virus. Worries are also higher in people of lower household income and people diagnosed with a mental health condition.

The figures also show that levels of depression and anxiety continue to fall and were lower in the past week than in the previous 12 weeks of lockdown, although still above usually-reported averages.

Lead author, Dr. Daisy Fancourt (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "These data suggest that most people are not very worried about catching COVID-19, even though they are now leaving their homes more. But whilst these worries are still much lower than they were at the beginning of the lockdown, catching the virus is still a bigger stressor amongst those surveyed than finance, potential unemployment, or worries about access to food. Whilst younger people are less at risk from the virus, it's possible that their worries stem from fears of spreading the [virus](#) to others who are older or more vulnerable."

Respondents were also asked how much confidence they had in their Government's handling of the COVID-19 epidemic from one (not at all) to seven (lots). The study finds that the difference in confidence between the governments of the devolved nations and the UK Government continues to grow with English confidence currently under 3.5, whilst remaining steady at around 5 for Scotland and 4.5 for Wales and Northern Ireland. Confidence continues to be lowest amongst those under 30, and is also lower amongst those in urban areas.

Levels of "complete" compliance with lockdown measures have also fallen further, with a greater decrease and lower levels in people with higher household incomes, people in England (compared to Scotland or Wales), and people in cities.

However, "majority" compliance remains relatively steady, with around 90% of people surveyed still showing a large degree of compliance with the rules.

Happiness levels have shown some modest improvement since lockdown easing began, but remain fairly similar across the past eight weeks. Happiness levels have been higher across lockdown in older adults, those living with others, those with higher household incomes, those without any diagnosed mental health conditions and in people living in rural areas.

More information: Ongoing COVID-19 Social Study - UK: redcap.idhs.ucl.ac.uk/surveys/?s=48Y3T88CYK

Provided by University College London

APA citation: Worries about catching COVID-19 stay low as lockdown eases (2020, June 15) retrieved 26 May 2022 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-covid-lockdown-eases.html