

COVID-19 INSIGHTS

A weekly digest of key messages from
behavioural insight studies across Europe

Insights Unit

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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

World Health
Organization

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| The majority of people (69%) are not experiencing physiological symptoms of anxiety when thinking about Covid-19 (such as loss of appetite, nausea, dizziness or sleep disturbance). However, 29% are experiencing some physiological anxiety symptoms, and 2% are experiencing symptoms indicative of dysfunctional anxiety. Physiological anxiety is worse in younger adults, people with mental illness, and those living with children. | |
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| Adherence to self-protection measures, trust in stakeholders and acceptance of strict (but not overly strict) preventive regulations is high. As restrictions begin to be lifted, acceptance of strict regulations is slightly decreasing. Most of the respondents (reduced in second wave - from 84% to 76%), agree that the measures taken by the Georgian government against COVID-19 are adequate. | |
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| <i>Key message</i> | |
| The commitment to recommended behaviour in the context of the pandemic is widespread, revealing social motives among the respondents (caring for others and following the law) for self-isolation. There is a tendency to not support maintaining restrictions. On average the respondents estimate their knowledge of the coronavirus at the level of "4" on a scale of "5", but the real awareness differs from the declared one. The main negative consequence of the pandemic from the point of view of healthy behaviours is decreasing physical activity. | |

Background

An increasing number of WHO Europe Member States are requesting social, cultural, and behavioural insights (BI) into how people respond to the information and restrictions that are a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. A WHO BI tool for rapid, flexible and cost-effective monitoring of public knowledge, risk perceptions, behaviours and trust has therefore been developed and is now available to countries in the WHO European Region to make their COVID-19-related response relevant and actionable. This tool is available <http://www.euro.who.int/en/covid-19-BI>.

Unfortunately, not all Member States have the resources to run and administer the survey from this tool. As a stopgap, we have collected a list of national surveys, based on or closely related to the WHO BI tool. These surveys are collecting information in a rigorous and ethical manner and are publishing their data openly and regularly (at least weekly).

This digest provides a weekly overview of these surveys, along with key findings for each week. The list is growing each week, as new surveys and results come online. Our hope is that some trends that are identified elsewhere might also prove to be useful in different national contexts.

If you would like more information about the results of a particular survey, please feel free to email the relevant contact person as indicated in the document.

If you have any comments about this weekly summary (for instance, on how to improve it), please contact Nils Fietje (fietjen@who.int)

Many people are contributing to the development of this document. We are incredibly grateful for their support during these busy times.

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COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO-DEU)

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Description: | Serial cross-sectional monitor of public perceptions of risk, protective and preparedness behaviours, public trust, acceptance of measures, knowledge, misinformation, health and non-health related consequences of the COVID-19 crisis in Germany. |
| Participants: | 1000 Germans, 18-74 year olds, online panel, representative for age and gender, federal state. |
| Country: | Germany |
| Topics covered: | Public perceptions of risk, protective and preparedness behaviours, public trust, acceptance of measures, knowledge, misinformation, health and non-health related consequences |
| Start date: | 02 March 2020 |
| Frequency: | Weekly |
| Survey URL: | https://www.corona-monitor.de |
| Results URL: | https://projekte.uni-erfurt.de/cosmo2020/archiv/ |
| Conducted by: | University of Erfurt |
| Contact name: | Cornelia Betsch |
| eMail address: | Cornelia.betsch@uni-erfurt.de |

Key messages for Friday, 05 June 2020

Risk perception and acceptance of the measures are at the level before the lockdown and reflect low infection rates and the current developments towards further loosening of the restrictions. Protection behavior remains at a high level, stagnating or in some cases slightly declining. 88% report keeping the distance of 1.5m, 82% wash their hands for 20 seconds, 82% wear masks. People who think measures are exaggerated adhere less frequently to these measures. This group makes up a fifth of the respondents; among them the desire for demonstrations is also larger and they have more existential fears. Younger people under 30 in particular assume that others do not follow the rules. Loosening restrictions: 37% think that lifting restrictions and providing only recommendations would be effective to curb the spread of COVID-19. 33% think that most people would follow the recommendations even if the general restrictions were no longer mandatory. Those who reject measures in general agree more with these two issues; however, they show less protective behavior themselves. Masks: Knowledge that masks primarily protect others is high; if others wear a mask, one's own perceived susceptibility to COVID-19 is reduced. Wearing a mask is perceived as a social contract - those who participate are (socially) rewarded, those who violate the contract are negatively evaluated and seen as less prosocial. A mandatory mask policy was perceived as more fair than a voluntary policy and uptake increased, as evident in the data since April, and in a hypothetical behavioral experiment included in the survey. Pandemic management measures such as a tracing app, vaccinations against COVID-19 or an immunity pass are viewed rather skeptically.

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Covid-19 Social Study (COVID-MINDS-GBR)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Description: | National longitudinal study of the psychological and social impact of Covid-19 |
| Participants: | 70,000 UK adults, online panel study. |
| Country: | United Kingdom |
| Topics covered: | Health during Covid-19, confidence in government, adherence to guidelines, mental health, wellbeing, stressors, loneliness, health and social behaviours, and time use in isolation |
| Start date: | 21 March 2020 |
| Frequency: | Weekly |
| Survey URL: | https://www.covidsocialstudy.org/ |
| Results URL: | https://www.covidsocialstudy.org/results |
| Conducted by: | University College London |
| Contact name: | Daisy Fancourt |
| eMail address: | d.fancourt@ucl.ac.uk |

Key messages for Friday, 05 June 2020

- There is still no evidence of any changes in mental health in response to the first stage of the easing of lockdown two weeks ago in England.
- However, compliance with government advice has decreased yet further, with just 40% of young people in the study now reporting complete adherence to guidelines.
- Confidence in government to handle the pandemic has fallen in England since the easing of lockdown was announced but not in devolved nations, and in particular over the bank holiday weekend (when it was announced a prominent government adviser had broken the rules but was going unpunished).
- Anxiety levels and depression levels remain relatively stable. Both appear higher than usual reported averages.
- Stressors relating to Covid-19 (both catching Covid-19 and becoming seriously ill from Covid-19, accessing food, finance and unemployment remain relatively low and stable.
- Care keyworkers (those working in health and social care) are showing similar experiences to people in lockdown at home, although they are less worried about unemployment.
- Thoughts of death or self-harm, experience of self-harm or abuse, and loneliness remain relatively stable but are higher amongst younger people and also amongst those living in over-crowded households.
- Life satisfaction is still lower than usual levels but is higher than when lockdown started and has plateaued over the past month following an increase after lockdown commenced.
- The majority of people (69%) are not experiencing physiological symptoms of anxiety when thinking about Covid-19 (such as loss of appetite, nausea, dizziness or sleep disturbance). However, 29% are experiencing some physiological anxiety symptoms, and 2% are experiencing symptoms indicative of dysfunctional anxiety. Physiological anxiety is worse in younger adults, people with mental illness, and those living with children.

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COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO-GEO)

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Description: | Serial cross-sectional monitoring of knowledge, risk perceptions, preventive behaviours, trust and other related issues and |
| Participants: | 1000 citizens of Georgia, age group 18 and older, computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI), representative for age and gender. |
| Country: | Georgia |
| Topics covered: | Knowledge, risk perceptions, preventive behaviours, trust, sources of information, acceptance of measures, misinformation, stigma, rumours, health and non-health related consequences |
| Start date: | 21 April 2020 |
| Frequency: | weekly at first, then every other week |
| Conducted by: | Ministry of Displaced Persons from The Occupied Territories, Labour, |
| Contact name: | Ketevan Goginasvhili |
| eMail address: | kgoginashvili@moh.gov.ge |

Key messages for Friday, 05 June 2020

The reality caused by COVID19 has reduced household incomes. Income of 23.3% of the Georgian population after COVID-19 outbreak has decreased, and the crisis mostly affected the poorest population; 55% of those stating to be employed before COVID19 lost their jobs.

The majority of people and their families (more than 90%) take preventive measures and are willing to take the necessary precautions even when the restrictions are gradually lifted.

Information, trust, policies

- Despite satisfaction with received information (Over 90%) respondents are eager to get additional information;
- Emotional perceptions of coping with Coronavirus are moderately optimistic and increasing;
- Most of the respondents of both waves support the implementation of some strict measures. However, a significant proportion of respondents in both waves did not support overly strict/authoritarian measures;
- In general the population trusts stakeholders. Over 85% of respondents trust Clinics treating patients with COVID19, National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), Ministry of Health and COVID State Council. Lowest levels of trust are for private companies/ businesses in relation with COVID19;
- The majority of respondents (59%) agree that the plan presented by the government to lift the restrictions gradually (at 2-week intervals) is in line with the current situation. Attitudes of those who due to COVID-19 have lost their jobs are less positive towards removing restrictions at a slower pace;
- Overall, the anti-crisis plan presented by the government is positively assessed by 53% of respondents; the share of negative evaluators is 17%;
- According to 44% of respondents, the anti-crisis plan is the maximum that the government can do at this stage. Respondents, on the other hand, also realize that the anti-crisis plan does not provide solid guarantees for social protection.

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Behavioural insights on COVID-19 in Moscow (COSMO-Moscow)

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Description: | Survey to assess public perceptions of risk, protective and preparedness behaviours, public trust, acceptance of COVID-19 response measures, knowledge, misinformation, health and non-health related consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Moscow (Russian Federation) |
| Participants: | Random two-base stratified sample of mobile and landline phone subscribers (CATI), in Moscow, representative for age and sex. |
| Country: | Moscow, Russian Federation |
| Topics covered: | Risk perception, knowledge, behaviours, use of sources of information, attitudes toward COVID-19 pandemic response measures applied in Moscow |
| Start date: | 01 May 2020 |
| Frequency: | Every second week |
| Survey URL: | https://s-covid.niioz.ru/ |
| Conducted by: | Research Institute for Healthcare Organization and Medical Management of the Moscow Department of Healthcare |
| Contact name: | Ignat Bogdan |
| eMail address: | BogdanIV@zdrav.mos.ru |

Key messages for Friday, 05 June 2020

1. The commitment to recommended behavior in the context of the pandemic is widespread. There is a concern about a relatively low adherence to such measures as disinfection of mobile phone (66%); the presence of self-medication practices for coronavirus; and the fact that almost 40% of respondents are not restricting physical contact with their family and friends.
2. There is an expression of social motives (caring for others and respecting the law) for self-isolation among the respondents (51%), which indicates towards the importance of using the arguments of a shared common cause of fighting the epidemic and justification of measures in communication rather than strict punishments and sanctions.
3. On average the respondents estimate their knowledge of the coronavirus at the level of "4" on a scale of "5", but a number of test questions showed that the actual awareness of COVID-19 facts differs from the declared one. For example, only half of respondents have a correct idea of the incubation period from infection to disease symptoms. However, the fact that, for example, there is no significant statistical relationship between the correct responses of the length of incubation period and the respondents' support for removing restrictions at two-week intervals demonstrates that the conclusions of the relationship between knowledge and behavior should be taken carefully.
4. On average, the respondents rated their emotional condition at the level of "3+" on a scale of "5"; the pandemic situation beyond their inner circle is seen as more negative. An important resource of psychological support in the period of self-isolation is the closest circle of family and friends. The respondents showed highest trust to actions of doctors in hospitals and volunteers who provide support to populations in need in relation to COVID-19 restrictions.
5. 66 % respondents declared decreased physical activity, and reported higher proportion of risk behaviors compared to prior COVID-19 restrictions, i.e. 8% drank alcohol more frequently, and 20% ate unhealthy food more frequently.
6. There is a tendency for respondents not to support the maintenance of the restrictions.

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