

Just over half of adults strictly sticking to lockdown guidelines as confidence in government falls

June 1 2020



Credit: [MabelAmber Source: Pixabay](#) (CC.2.0) Taken pre-lockdown in 2018

Strict adherence to Government COVID-19 lockdown guidelines and overall confidence in government are at all-time lows, according to UCL's COVID-19 social study of over 90,000 adults during the

coronavirus epidemic.

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 'complete' compliance of following government recommendations (such as social distancing and staying at home) has decreased in the past two weeks—declining from an average of 70% of people who were 'completely' adhering to just over 50%. Compliance levels amongst younger adults were even lower, with only 40% reporting 'completely' complying with lockdown rules.

Respondents were also asked how much [confidence](#) they had in the Government's handling of the COVID-19 epidemic from one (not at all) to seven (lots). The study finds that there has been a further decrease in confidence in government in England over the bank holiday weekend—from around 4 to around 3.5. Confidence is falling most notably amongst those under 30, those in urban areas and those with a mental health diagnosis. Confidence in government is lower in England than in Scotland and Wales, where lockdown easing has not yet taken place.

Other findings from 18-25 May show that keyworkers in health and social care show similar experiences to people in lockdown at home, although they are less worried about unemployment. There has still been no evidence that levels of anxiety and depression have improved since the easing of lockdown. The study also looked at how anxious people are about the virus, finding that 29% of people are experiencing at least some physiological anxiety symptoms including feeling sick or dizzy when they think about it. Physiological anxiety is worse in younger

adults, people with mental illness, and those living with children.

Lead author, Dr. Daisy Fancourt (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "Compliance with government advice continues to fall, but still remains relatively high amongst most groups. Confidence in government also continues to fall in England since the easing of lockdown was announced, dropping most noticeably over the bank holiday weekend."

The figures show that stress about catching COVID-19 or becoming seriously ill from it remain low and stable, with around one in six people reporting worries around the virus and one in 12 saying they are stressed about an employment.

Thoughts of death and self-harm, experience of [self-harm](#) and abuse, and loneliness also remain relatively stable but are higher amongst younger people and those living in overcrowded households.

Cheryl Lloyd, education programme head at the Nuffield Foundation said: "With compliance levels falling, it is increasingly important to know which specific [lockdown](#) measures adults are breaking, and to consider what this can tell us about how public health messages can be communicated more effectively."

The study team has also received support from Wellcome to launch an international network of longitudinal studies called the COVID-MINDS Network. 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 will support launching new mental health studies in other countries and show whether actions taken in specific countries are helping to protect mental health.

Provided by University College London

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