



Press Release

Issued: 31 January 2021

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO until 00:01 GMT Monday 1 February 2021

Teenagers worried about bringing home Covid-19, survey finds

Three out of five teenagers were concerned that returning to school last August would increase the risk of their family contracting Covid-19, research suggests.

The study also found that the vast majority of teenagers are following guidelines on face coverings, handwashing and social distancing.

The findings are part of the TeenCovidLife survey of more than 2,000 young people across Scotland, aged 12 to 18, polled between August and October 2020.

When asked about the impact returning to school would have on their family's chance of catching Covid-19, 59 per cent said they were pretty much, or very worried about this.

This compares with 48 per cent of respondents who said they were pretty much, or very worried, about their own increased risk of contracting Covid-19 after returning to school.

The study, carried out by the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, seeks to gauge how young people have been affected by changes brought about by lockdown.

Of those polled, 88 per cent did not report any Covid-19 infection personally and 84 per cent said there had been no infection within their household.

When asked about face coverings, 94 per cent said they wore a face covering most, or all, of the time in shops and on public transport. And 89 per cent felt that people should wear face coverings in enclosed spaces.

On handwashing, 84 per cent of respondents said that they washed their hands much or a little more now, compared with before the first lockdown.

When asked about social distancing, 65 per cent of those polled said they maintained social distance most, or all, of the time.

Support for self-isolation guidelines was high with 93 per cent saying they were quite, or very, likely to self-isolate after contact with a positive case – even if they felt well.

Covid-19 infections are much higher now than when this study was carried out. These figures could be different now during the current lockdown, the researchers say.

The findings, which also include data on vaccines and exams, will be made available online, and shared with schools and with policy makers.

TeenCovidLife is part of the wider CovidLife research study, which is funded by Wellcome and is part of the long-running Generation Scotland project.



@EdinburghUni



edinburghuniversity



@UniversityOfEdinburgh



@university-of-edinburgh

Dr Chloe Fawns-Ritchie, of the University of Edinburgh, said: “Young people are often criticised for not following the Covid-19 rules, therefore putting the lives of others at risk. Our study found that most young people are indeed following the rules, and are concerned about the health of others.”

Dawn Haughton, Schools Research Network Manager for University of Glasgow’s Schools Health and Wellbeing Improvement Research Network (SHINE), said: “There is no doubt that this generation of young people is shouldering a huge unseen burden of responsibility. As well as having to study more independently and missing out on time with their friends, these findings also show how aware they are of the potential impact of their actions on the health of others. As a result, it is more important than ever that we find ways to protect their mental health and support them through this crisis.”

A third survey will be launched in spring to understand how young people are coping and adapting a year on from the start of the pandemic.

For further information, please contact: Shane Canning, Press and PR Office, 0755 782 0266, shane.canning@ed.ac.uk