



Weekly update

Through our research, community outreach and expert commentary, the University of Birmingham is taking an active role in the fightback against COVID-19. You can read our latest statements and follow our research updates at www.birmingham.ac.uk/coronavirus.

Through Birmingham Health Partners, a strategic alliance between the University and two NHS Foundation Trusts, we are working to support frontline healthcare professionals. For the latest updates visit their [website](#).

Research

Community spirit dwindling amongst British public during lockdown says new poll

The UK public feel that any sense of 'community togetherness' that has been built during the coronavirus crisis will disperse as soon as it is over says a new study commissioned by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham.



Findings showed that less than a quarter of the British public have given their time to benefit others during the crisis. Photograph credit: Victoria Dawe

A poll undertaken by Populus of 2,088 adults in the UK found that older generations and women have felt a stronger sense of community togetherness recently, compared with younger generations and men, who have not felt this to the same degree. Conversely, there was the opposite generational gap identified in terms of those who agreed that community togetherness would disappear after the crisis is over, with those

aged 45-64 being most negative (61%), compared with less than half of those aged 18-24 (46%).

This suggests that there has been a marked generational divide in how people have responded to the crisis. This is highlighted further in responses from 18-24 year olds to the valuing of health of older generations today over longer-term economic prosperity. Younger people disagreed with this statement in larger numbers (13%) than those aged over 45 (9%). ([More information](#))

How to sustain SMEs productivity during a crisis

Popular belief has it that Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are a close-knit community, in which the members go over and above their work duties to help their employer.

Yet, the findings of a recent study revealed that during a crisis employees are less likely to go the extra mile unless they work within an environment that encourages information sharing.

During an economic macro-turbulence, such as the Great Recession or the current one instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, SMEs in survival mode may deploy harsh labour measures that lead to what we call adverse working conditions. Employees' job insecurity increases, they have to manage greater workloads (due to staff downsizing) and often deal with negative workplace attitudes. ([More information](#))

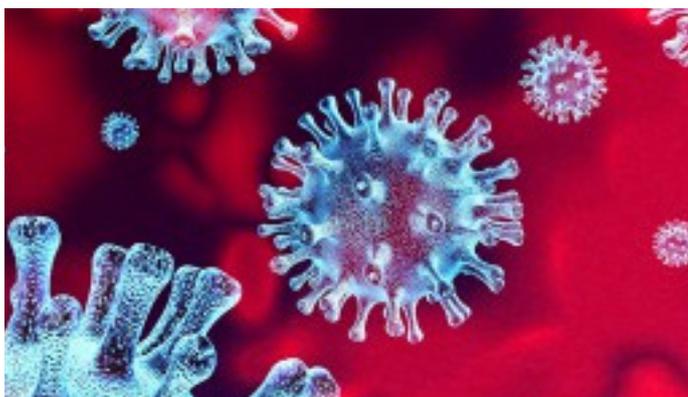
Manufacturers must rethink global operations in face of COVID-19 - study

Manufacturers must redesign and reform their Global Supply Chains or Global Production Networks (GPN) if they want to survive and prosper in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new study reveals. The virus' impact demonstrates that global manufacturing concerns must switch from large production sites in a single location, such as China, to numerous smaller facilities around the world to reduce business risk. Stability, reliability, resilience and predictability are critical in the design of global production networks that balance risk versus reward and harmonise economic value with values related to reliability, resilience and location. ([More information](#))

Antibody tests may help detect COVID-19 infection - if used at right time

Scientists have analysed data from around the world to examine the accuracy of antibody tests for COVID-19, and have shown that the timing of testing is critical. The tests do not work accurately when administered at the wrong time.

In the most comprehensive review of its kind of COVID-19 testing, researchers have examined all available test accuracy evidence for antibody tests published up to the end of April. By combining data from many studies they have shown that the tests are not accurate enough to confirm whether someone has the COVID-19 virus if used in the first two weeks after symptoms appear.



COVID-19 antibody testing - timing is critical

They found that tests are only likely to be useful in detecting previous SARS-CoV-2 infection if used at least 14 days after the onset of symptoms, but say that studies show that the tests will miss 1 in 10 cases of COVID-19. However they caution over reliance on this figure, as the studies were small, poorly reported and done in select patient groups. ([More information](#))

Community

Protecting Apes from COVID-19

Next month, Dr. Steve Unwin from the School of Biosciences will be part of the team leading a virtual workshop for conservation professionals who work with orangutans and gibbons. For this event, there will be particular focus on the risk assessed response and management of the 2020 SARS CoV2 viral outbreak or COVID-19 disease amongst captive and wild populations of apes. ([More information](#))

Air pollution could help London transport planners fight COVID-19

Measuring air quality across London could help fight COVID-19 by providing a rapid means of deciding

whether to reduce public transport movement – given strong links between exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 transmission, a new study reveals.

Analysis of air pollution, COVID-19 cases and fatality rates in London demonstrates a connection between increased levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and higher risk of viral transmission. The research also highlights that using public transport in the UK during a pandemic outbreak has a six-fold increased risk of contracting an acute respiratory infection. ([More information](#))

Comment

Bacterial predator could help reduce COVID-19 deaths

A type of virus that preys on bacteria could be harnessed to combat bacterial infections in patients whose immune systems have been weakened by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the COVID-19 disease, according to an expert at the University of Birmingham and the Cancer Registry of Norway.

Called bacteriophages, these viruses are harmless to humans and can be used to target and eliminate specific bacteria. They are of interest to scientists as a potential alternative to antibiotic treatments.

([More information](#))

COVID illuminates global inequalities in workers' rights and working conditions

Tony Dobbins, Professor of Employment Relations & HR Management writes how COVID-19 and the climate crisis are shining a spotlight on the need to rethink the future global politics of work at a time when the world also faces into an economic slump. ([More information](#))

Research Briefing: Child Protection, Social Distancing and Risks from COVID-19

This briefing shares some emerging findings about the challenges of achieving social distancing during child protection work, especially on home visits, and how children and families and social workers can be kept safe from COVID-19 ([More information](#))

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