

People who identify as “conscientious” are 31% more likely to follow covid-19 guidelines

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People who describe themselves as having “conscientious” personality traits are 31% more likely to follow covid-19 guidelines, according to new research from emlyon business school.

The research was conducted by Ahmed Nofal, a Professor of Entrepreneurship at emlyon business school, alongside academics from Hankamer School of Business in Texas and Warwick Business School in the UK.

To gather the data, the researchers examined a sample of 8,548 Japanese adults on their compliance with measures designed to contain the spread of COVID-19. The Japanese government has published a set list of very specific covid-19 guidelines that all citizens must adhere to, therefore making it very clear to understand if a citizen has broken these guidelines or not.

They then also assessed respondents' individual personalities using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), a tool designed to identify specific traits and characteristics based on a number of measures. This allowed them to determine which personality traits had an impact on people breaking the rules.

The study also found that people who have strong cooperative values and a preference for positive interpersonal relationships, are 17% more likely to comply with social distancing guidelines. While those "open to experiences" or who value "creativity, innovation and intellectual stimulation", are 19% more likely to comply with measures designed to limit COVID-19 spread than other.

Whilst on the other hand, extroverts who are "assertive, dominant, energetic, active, talkative, impulsive and enthusiastic" are 7% less likely to adhere to control measures than introverts.

Professor Ahmed Nofal says,

“The importance of this study is that it clearly shows people’s differing personality traits are impacting on whether they adhere to guidelines. It is incredibly important for public health and government officials that the maximum number of people follow covid-19 measures, such as wearing masks, avoiding gatherings, washing hands, and our research shows we clearly need to appeal to different people’s personality traits in different ways”

The study suggests that public health officials must use different means of engaging with different personality trait audiences to appeal to citizens to follow rules, and maximise compliance, and that there is no one size fits all approach.

Professor Nofal says,

"Our study clearly shows how important it is for governments to really tailor the messaging of their guidelines towards different personality traits. Government's should look to trigger traits, including conscientiousness, carefulness and diligence in the public, through methods such as boosting their sense of belonging and obligation to their communities, when communicating public health guidelines".

The researchers originally intended on measuring the impact of entrepreneurship and occupation on whether or not a citizen followed the covid-19 guidelines also, finding that fulltime employees are less likely to comply with COVID-19 guidelines compared to entrepreneurs, part-time employees, and unemployed individuals.

Entrepreneurs are known for their high levels of conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and hence, understanding the traits of different occupational groups (i.e. entrepreneurs and full-time employees) might be informative in this respect.

This study was published in the peer-reviewed scientific journal, PLOS ONE.

(<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0240396>)

If you would be interested in speaking with Professor Ahmed Nofal about this research, please contact Katie Hurley at BlueSky PR khurley@bluesky-pr.com +44 (0) 7538 412793.