



Children's information about COVID-19

Children's Health Literacy and COVID-19

- This study arose from an interest in how children were accessing information about coronavirus and what their understandings were of COVID-19 and the lockdown situation.
- We were also interested in parents views on their child accessing information about COVID-19 and any tensions associated with this.
- Health Literacy is concerned with how people access/obtain information, understand and process information and how this influences the choices and decisions they make about their health.



The survey

- We designed a short online **children's** survey (with the input of 9 children and young people)
 - Short questions (open and closed responses)
 - Word completion questions
 - Draw and label activity ' *Why are we all trying to stay at home during the coronavirus?*
- We designed a short online **parent/caregiver** survey (with the input of 5 parents)
 - Short questions (open and closed responses)
- Launched in the UK on the 11th April 2020 and closed on the 1st June 2020

Information Leaflet/ flyer - v2 - 20/04/2020

Keele University

Edge Hill University

Children and parents we need your help to work out how children get information about coronavirus

We want to work out the best way to give children news, important facts and safety tips about coronavirus. We are a team of child health researchers from Edge Hill University and we are doing a project to find out where children are getting their information from about the coronavirus (COVID-19).

- We want to gather information from children aged 7-12 years and their parents in the UK.
- We will gather this information in a quick simple safe online survey. We will ask a few questions and then ask children to draw a picture and send it to us in the survey.
- It will take about 10-15 minutes to do and we hope you enjoy joining in this project.
- If you submit the survey you will be giving us permission to use your answers as part of our project.
- The survey will not ask for information that will identify you.

The survey link for children is:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/childrencoronavirusurvey>

The survey link for parents is:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/parentscoronavirusurvey>

If you have any questions or would like more information email Professor Lucy Bray at brayl@edgehill.ac.uk



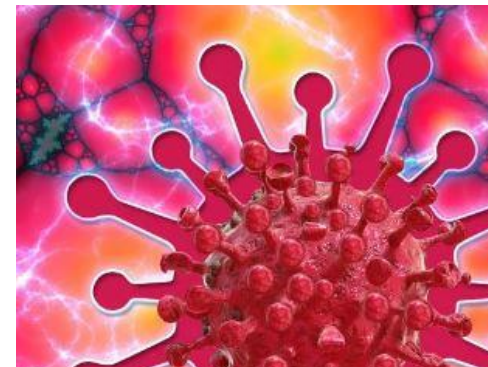
Edge Hill University

The coronavirus information project

Please read this information before starting

Thank you for helping with our project. This survey is for children and young people. Make sure you have checked with your mum/dad/caregiver about this survey.

We are going to ask you to draw, label and send us a picture about 'Why are we all trying to stay at home during the coronavirus'. You



The team



- **UK** – Lucy Bray, Bernie Carter, Lucy Blake, Holly Saron, Jennifer Kirton, Jo Protheroe
- **Spain** – Begonya Nafria
- **Tasmania** – Karen Ford, Andrea Middleton, Andrea Chelkowski
- **Canada** – Fanny Robichaud
- **Sweden** – Maria Forsner, Stefan Nilsson, Janet Mattsson, Anna-Clara Rullander
- **Brazil** – Marla de Avila



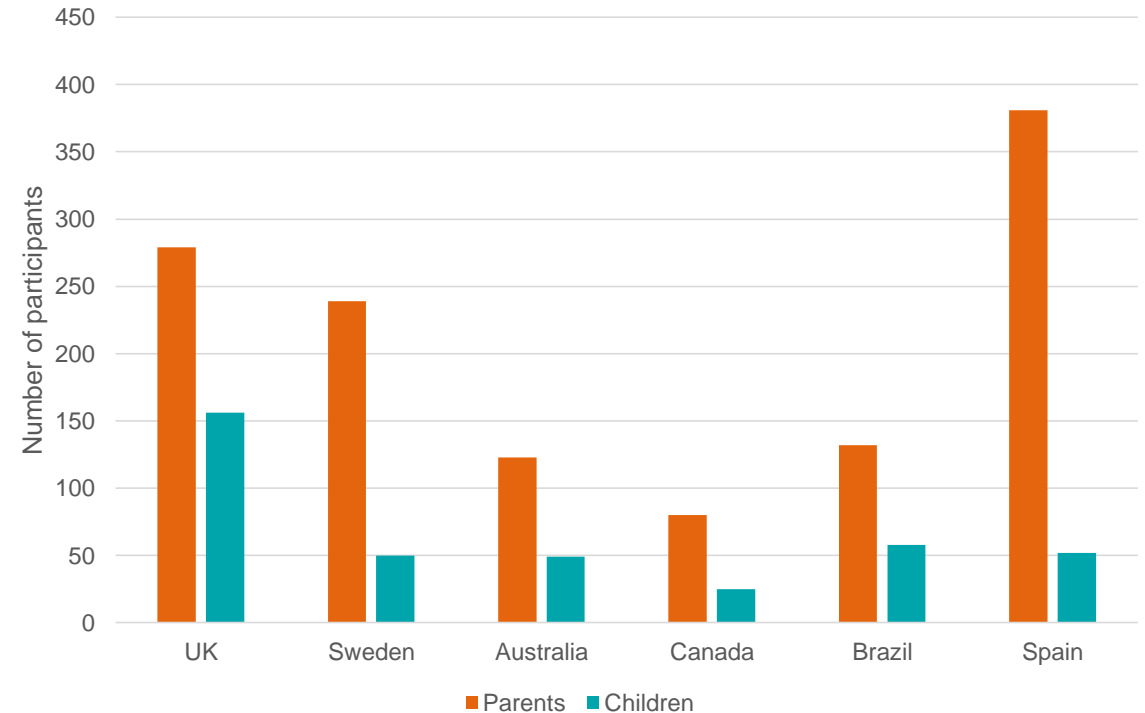
Findings



Participants

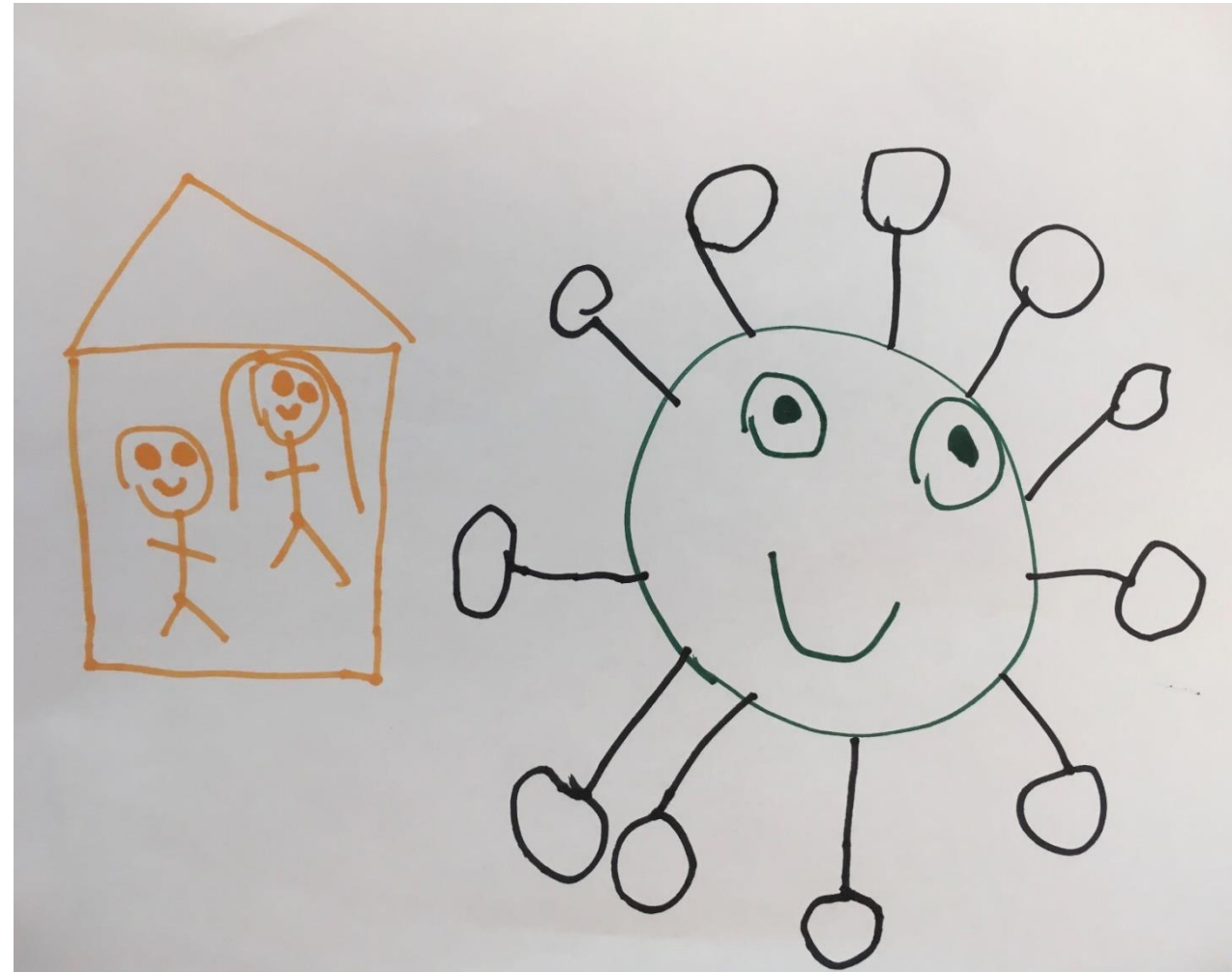


- 390 children (average age 9)
- 1,234 parents
- Most children were being home schooled apart from those in Sweden



Presentation of findings

- Children's access to information about COVID-19
- Children's understanding of COVID-19 and measures to mitigate transmission



Children's **access to information** about COVID-19

There were similarities across the responses from the different countries.

- **Children's** primary source of information was their parents (n=347, 89%) with the exception of children in Sweden who reported that their main source was school.
- **Children's** preference for information was from their parents, children's TV and from school.
- **Parents/caregivers** identified themselves as their child's primary source of information.
- **Parent/caregivers** identified their child's preferences for information to be from animations, TV, Games/quizzes and trusted adults e.g. doctors/scientists.



Children's **access to information** about COVID-19



Parents adopted different approaches to sharing information with their child.

- Many **parents/caregivers** chose to '*shield them from the worst of it*' or filter the information their child heard or saw. They chose to share '*only what is needed to keep them safe*' (wash hands, stay at home) and the majority of parents/caregivers didn't '*talk about the death rates*'.
- Some **parents/caregivers** only provided information in response to their child's questions; '*only when they ask*'.
- In contrast other parents purposefully sought out facts and child friendly resources and reported that it was '*important that they know everything*'

Key points about **accessing information** about COVID-19...

- Many of the resources created for children were not reaching their intended audience.
- Parents are the lynchpin for children accessing information about COVID-19.
- Despite some parents shielding, filtering and limiting their child's access to information – children were aware of death rates and the serious and dangerous situation created by COVID-19.



Children's **understanding** of COVID-19

Children were asked to report three things they knew about coronavirus.

- Children's most frequent responses were that coronavirus '*spreads really quickly*', '*is really dangerous*' and that '*many people around the world are infected or have died*'.
- Other frequent responses were that the virus '*started in China*' and is '*mostly dangerous for old people*',



Children's **understanding** of COVID-19



Children were asked to report three things they wanted to know about coronavirus.

- Children's most frequent responses were that they wanted to know, '*when it will go away*', '*how and where did it start*' and '*when and whether a cure or vaccine will be found*'.
- Other frequent responses included '*how does it make you poorly*', '*when can we go back to school*' and '*what does the coronavirus actually look like*'.
- Some children did not want any more information about coronavirus, '*I am sick of hearing about it*' or '*I don't want to know about it, because it's killing people and that makes me sad*'.

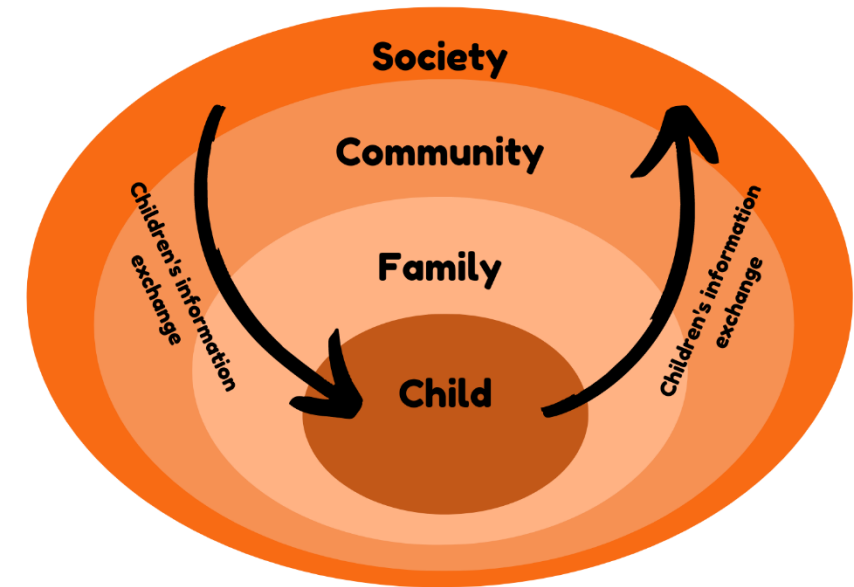
Key points about **understandings** of COVID-19...

- Many of the children's pictures portrayed good levels of understanding around the nature of the virus.
- There were many detailed and accurate portrayals of measures to mitigate the spread of the virus (2m distance, handwashing).
- Children reproduced many 'public health slogans and messages' within their pictures e.g. stay home to save lives
- Children depicted their role as protecting myself, protecting my family and protecting others.



Children's Information Exchange in relation to COVID-19

- Health literacy often focusses on an individual's ability to access, understand and use health information.
- This study shows the important influence of parents, community and society on children's access to and understanding of information.
- Children have played an important role in mitigating the transmission of COVID-19.
- We need to recognise children's right to information which is meaningful to them and responds to their information needs at a individual, community and society level





Children on coronavirus: 'Don't just tell us to wash our hands and say it will be okay'

May 18, 2020 2.18am BST

Pexels

Email

Twitter

63

Facebook

383

LinkedIn

Print

Children's lives in the UK have been changed by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Many are no longer attending school, seeing grandparents or friends and are being asked to stay at home with their families to save lives.

Children are learning, connecting and doing PE remotely, drawing rainbows and clapping every week for key workers. But like the adults in their lives, many will [be experiencing uncertainty, confusion](#) and have questions about COVID-19 and the world they are now living in

Authors



Lucy Bray
Professor in Child Health Literacy,
Edge Hill University



Holly Saron
Research Fellow, Edge Hill
University, Edge Hill University



Jo Protheroe
Professor of General Practice,
Keele University

Thank you

What questions do you have?

brayl@edgehill.ac.uk
[@LucyBray9](https://twitter.com/LucyBray9)