Public perception of scientists as trustworthy experts is likely to be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis

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"The strongest impact is likely to be felt by individuals in their ‘formative years’ (that is, 18-25) a period of life when value systems and opinions are durably formed."

While the individual reputation of scientists is likely to suffer, the paper found that there was no such negative effect seen in the perception of doctors, nurses, and others responding to the pandemic.

Data from all global epidemics since 1970 were merged with the responses to the 2018 Wellcome Global Monitor survey, which covered 70,000 people across 160 countries.

In order to restore trust in scientists, the report suggests those working in public health and in scientific communication need to "think harder" about how they purvey honesty and trustworthiness when speaking to younger audiences.

Dr. Aksoy said: "At a minimum, our findings suggest that scientists working on public health matters and others concerned with scientific communication should think harder about how to communicate trustworthiness and honesty and, specifically, about how the generation currently in their impressionable years ('Generation Z') perceives such attributes. In addition, our results suggest that scientific education will help."


Provided by King's College London