

## Did Young People Already Expect a Pandemic? Surprising Insights from IEA Data

New analysis by IEA has given a fascinating insight into the proportion of young people who thought that an infectious disease, like COVID-19, was a threat to humanity, and how students in some parts of the world were far more concerned than others. These new findings come from the latest round of the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS 2016), the only international study dedicated to assessing civic and citizenship education.

Commenting on the discovery, IEA Executive Director, Dr Dirk Hastedt said,

“As with all IEA studies, ICCS doesn’t just measure student’s knowledge, it also collects data about attitudes and engagement, including student views on what they see as the main threats to humanity.

“When we asked the 13/14 year old students in 2016, whether they thought that infectious disease was a threat to the world’s future, almost 60% of students said that they thought it was “to a large extent”, with an additional 26% saying that they thought it was “to a moderate extent”. Surprisingly, the study shows that students were more concerned about infectious disease than about climate change.

“What I find particularly fascinating are the differences between regions, with an average of 67% expressing a fear of infectious disease across Latin American countries, versus just 39% in Nordic countries. Other researchers may well be interested in exploring any links between these findings, and attitudes towards health and healthcare in different parts of the world; this is of great importance at a time when the world grapples to find a global response to the coronavirus crisis.

“A unique quality of ICCS is that it highlights the importance of civic and citizenship education; a cross-curricular subject that sometimes gets forgotten about. Between the 2009 and 2016 cycles we saw an increase in young people reporting that they took part in activities to help their communities. I hope that when we see the ICCS 2022 cycle results, this trend has continued, boosted by people, young and old, pulling together during this crisis.”

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### Notes to Editors

59% of students viewed Infectious Diseases as a threat to the world’s future. (Standard error = 0.2)  
55% of students viewed Climate Change as a threat the world’s future. (Standard error = 0.2)

### **ICCS 2016 Countries**

Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia), Hong Kong SAR, Italy, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Russian Federation, Slovenia, and Sweden.

More information about trend results between ICCS 2009 and 2016 can be found in the ICCS 2016 International Report [here](#).

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