

Hello, I'm Ruth Studley and welcome to the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS)

Newsletter. You will now be aware that the CIS has paused data collection whilst the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) confirms its approach to COVID-19 surveillance. We provide an update on future monitoring activities below, but firstly, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the success of the CIS.



The pandemic is one of the most consequential events in modern history. To better understand the virus, the CIS was launched in April 2020 at great pace.

Since then, over half a million of you have shared 11 million swabs and 3 million blood samples, which we have gathered and analysed. The scale of the survey is truly astounding and is one of the reasons why the CIS is recognised as a **“shining example of random sampling”**.

Frequently cited by the Prime Minister, First Ministers, and Chief Medical Officers, your data helped governments in all four UK nations manage the unprecedented challenges faced during the pandemic.

Known globally as the ‘gold standard’ for infection analysis, the survey has been recognised by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). It has received widespread praise from politicians, academics, and the media alike and is regularly cited as the ‘most reliable measure of the prevalence of coronavirus.’ Furthermore, it has won multiple awards including the **Harding Prize** for Useful and Trustworthy Communication and the prestigious **Campion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics**.

The part you played in one of the greatest challenges our nation has faced in many years must not be underestimated. Your samples helped to provide vital data on virus positivity, new variants, characteristics, and antibody levels; all of which helped us adjust to life with COVID-19.

For most, a version of normal life has resumed. However, we must now consider how we can make COVID-19 and Long COVID surveillance proportionate and balanced alongside emerging healthcare priorities.

The success of the CIS gives us confidence in our ability to conduct wider surveillance activities, and our 2022 Influenza ‘flu’ and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) **pilot study** highlighted an opportunity to use the survey to monitor other respiratory infections in the community.

UKHSA will confirm details of any new surveillance surveys that continue beyond 31 March 2023 in due course. As valued survey participants you

would be uniquely placed to help support any future survey. We will be in touch soon to confirm how this will work and to understand if you would still like to take part.

For now, I would like to extend the thanks and gratitude of everyone at the Office for National Statistics, the UK Health Security Agency, the University of Oxford, IQVIA and all our partners who have worked on the COVID-19 Infection Survey. We have all greatly valued your contribution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Studley', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ruth Studley

Director for Health Analysis and Pandemic Insight