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UT researchers study why certain groups don't trust public health information on COVID

by Brittany Ford

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University of Texas at Austin researchers are in the middle of a study looking at where people get their health information, specifically on COVID-19, and if they trust it to be true (File photo: CBS Austin)

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true.

Despite their proven effectiveness, masks continue to be a debated topic.

"I think that's the big key is misinformation, that's out there whether or not this is good or whether or not it is violating someone rights to wear a mask," said Nick Nortin.

University of Texas at Austin researchers are in the middle of a study looking at where people get their health information, specifically on COVID-19, and if they trust it to be true

That's one of the reasons Ken Fleishmann and a group of UT researchers conducted a study looking into why certain groups of people question public health information.

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In July, his department held a nationwide survey, and the results were split between older and younger adults on the topic.

"The older adults had more accurate, factual information about COVID-19 than the younger adults did -- to a significant level," said Fleishmann.

He says not only did older adults differ on their knowledge of COVID-19, but also where they got the information, "Older adults had a higher frequency of use and higher trust in mass media, whereas younger adults more heavily relied on social media."

The survey found that people who prioritized the health of the community to have a better understanding of the virus. People who prioritized themselves were less likely to trust the information.

Fleischmann hopes the results help officials better understand the people they need to convince to follow health recommendations, "Maybe, useful to make sure our public health messaging around covid-19, mask use now, very soon around vaccine is going to reach people who are more focused on themselves."

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