

The Real Reason You and Your Neighbor Make Different Covid-19 Risk Decisions

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Some people are comfortable going to concerts and clubs now. Others draw the line at indoor dining. And some are avoiding nearly all gatherings.

People's assessment of what is safe has varied wildly during the Covid-19 pandemic—often leaving us baffled about why [our risk decisions](#) differ so sharply from those of our neighbors, friends and family members. Now, scientists are starting to better understand why.

Recent research shows that, [while politics](#) and geography play a role, other factors are often more important in determining how we make decisions about Covid-19 risks. Personality traits that are shaped by genetics and early life experiences strongly influence our Covid-19-related decisions, studies from the U.S. and Japan have found.

“Personality influences how we value different possible options and their outcomes,” says Kaileigh A. Byrne, an assistant professor of psychology at Clemson University in South Carolina who studies decision-making. How we weigh risks—and the rewards we might gain from them—influences our decisions about everything from whether we exercise, go to college, or wear a mask at the grocery store during the pandemic, she says.

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