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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Survey participation would increase significantly, if people were told how they ranked in studies
University of Waterloo

Two Thirds of US Support Study of Genes, Environment and Lifestyle

Three in five US citizens say they would participate in such studies

According to new assessments, some 80 percent of all Americans would support nation-wide studies, aimed at understanding the interactions that form between genes, our environment and everyday lifestyle. In addition, some 60 percent of all respondents of a new survey say that they would also participate in this type of studies. These results show promise for a scheduled, large survey that will follow thousands of people over five to ten years, to study the changes in their DNA, and how their environment affects their genes. The fact that the public so overwhelmingly supports this endeavor is very encouraging for scientists, as finding test subjects can sometimes be very difficult, even for "harmless" researches, like asking questions about people's health and personal life. "The public's eagerness to receive individual research results suggests that the research community may need to reassess its stance of 'protecting' research participants from their data and look for practical ways to return such results," says senior author of the paper, Kathy Hudson, PhD, director of the Genetics and Public Policy Center (GPPC), in Washington.

"Our survey found that widespread support exists in the general public for a large, genetic cohort study. What's more, we found little variation in that support among different demographic groups," said lead author of the paper, David Kaufman, PhD, project director at GPPC.

Study results also showed that people would be far more willing to participate in a survey, if their individual results were to be showed to them after the study was complete. They say that this would motivate them to fill even more questionnaires, in an attempt to learn more about themselves and their heritage.

Some 4,659 U.S. adults were a part of the latest study, including white, Hispanic, African American and Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native populations. While support for the study varied, all ethnic and racial groups showed similar willingness to partake in the study, which made scientists say that the future survey would have great accuracy.