



Allegra
STRATEGIES

**Covid-19
Impact on
the UK
Population**

May 2020

In one of the largest national surveys on the COVID-19 crisis, Allegra Strategies asked over 4,000 people at the beginning of May a range of questions on the personal impact of the crisis, their future concerns, and their views on the UK's handling of the crisis. This is what they had to say...

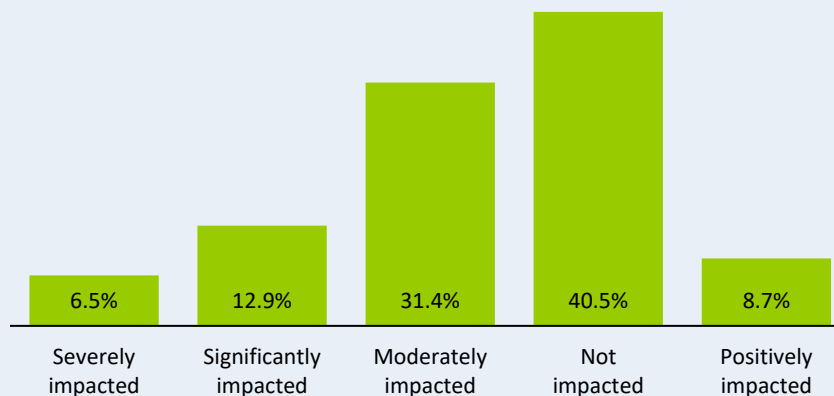
- The majority are worried about their long-term financial implications of the COVID-19 lockdown
- Since the pandemic began, activities such as walking and running / jogging are being done less often by most of the British public, while 38% said they are smoking or vaping more than before
- 23% expect society to return to normal in 4-6 months, although 47% expect it to take between 10-24 months
- The majority of people are not willing to travel abroad before the end of 2020
- 77% disapprove of the Government's lack of PPE for frontline workers, 70% think the Government has done badly with a lack of testing, and 65% say the Government waited too long to enforce lockdown
- A significant proportion feel there should be a public enquiry into the Government's handling of COVID-19
- While there is still a threat to people's health the majority don't think businesses should be reopened soon to preserve the economy
- The majority of people (64%) believe implementing Brexit is either a low, or no priority, with 69% saying that Brexit negotiations should be delayed until the pandemic is under control

The majority of people's financial circumstances have been impacted by COVID-19, although given initiatives such as the furlough scheme, for most people there has been no change in their income. Meanwhile 72% of key workers say they are happy with the support their employer has provided during this period.

Any loss of income may have been offset by factors such as people becoming more price conscious, and a decrease in monthly outgoing finances. For example, most people's total food spend has decreased with eating out and takeaways declining.

Despite this, the majority are worried about their long-term financial implications of the COVID-19 lockdown. With certain businesses starting to reopen, calling into question how the Government plans to operate its furlough scheme, and the Bank of England warning that the UK is set to enter its worst recession for 300 years, it's highly likely that this worry will both continue and grow.

How much have your financial circumstances been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic? (Single Response)



"We have had to start dipping into our savings due to my partner being furloughed at 80% and my job search hindered so have been unable to save."

Female, 25-29, Scotland

"I might change my job as I am a taxi driver as I am not sure how many customers will start travelling again. We look at pay structures."

Male, 55-59, South East

"I think people need to get back to work and out soon! I think this isolation is going to have some bad consequences of mental health and alcohol problems."

Female, 40-44, Scotland

"Since the lockdown began, I am less likely to take life for granted, more conscious about spending, and more likely to appreciate employment a lot more."

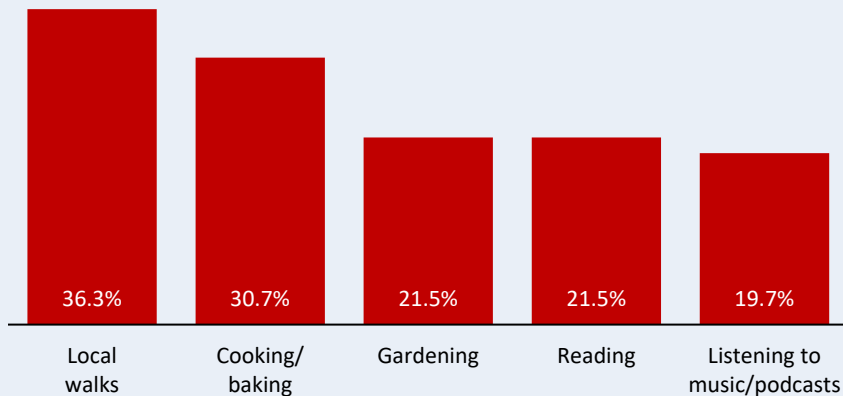
Male, 25-29, East Midlands

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Have you started any NEW hobbies since the coronavirus pandemic lockdown began? (Select All)

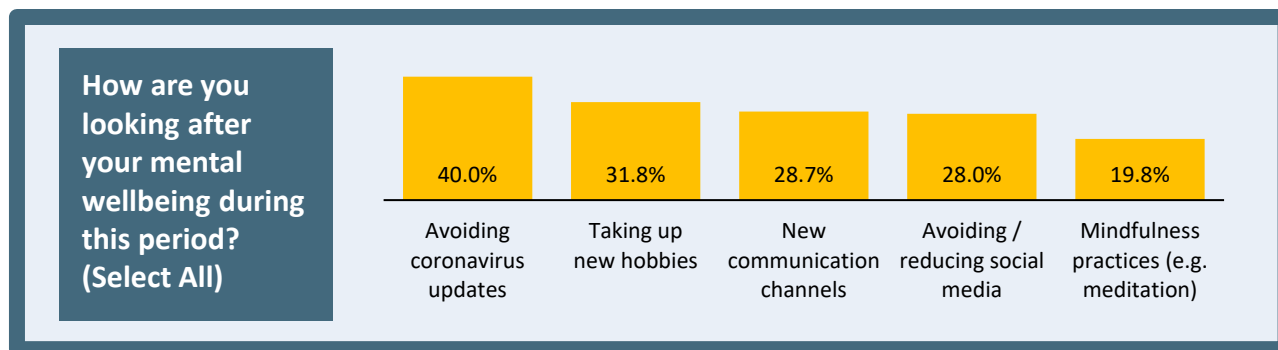


Since the pandemic began, activities such as walking and running / jogging are being done less often by most of the British public. However, a majority (53%) are doing home workouts more than before.

More worryingly, the majority of people reported an increase in their anxiety and stress levels as a result of COVID-19. This could be one of the reasons why a third of people report to now sleeping less than before the pandemic began. To look after their mental health, people have been avoiding coronavirus updates and taking up new hobbies.

Old hobbies and habits remain though, and in the majority of cases have increased... More people report to be drinking more alcohol, and more caffeine, than those who report to be drinking less. Perhaps the most concerning finding surrounds people's smoking or vaping habits. 38% said they are doing more than before, a figure that's much larger than the 10% who say they are smoking or vaping less.

On a more positive note, 35% say the coronavirus pandemic has changed their attitude towards personal health and wellbeing for the better.

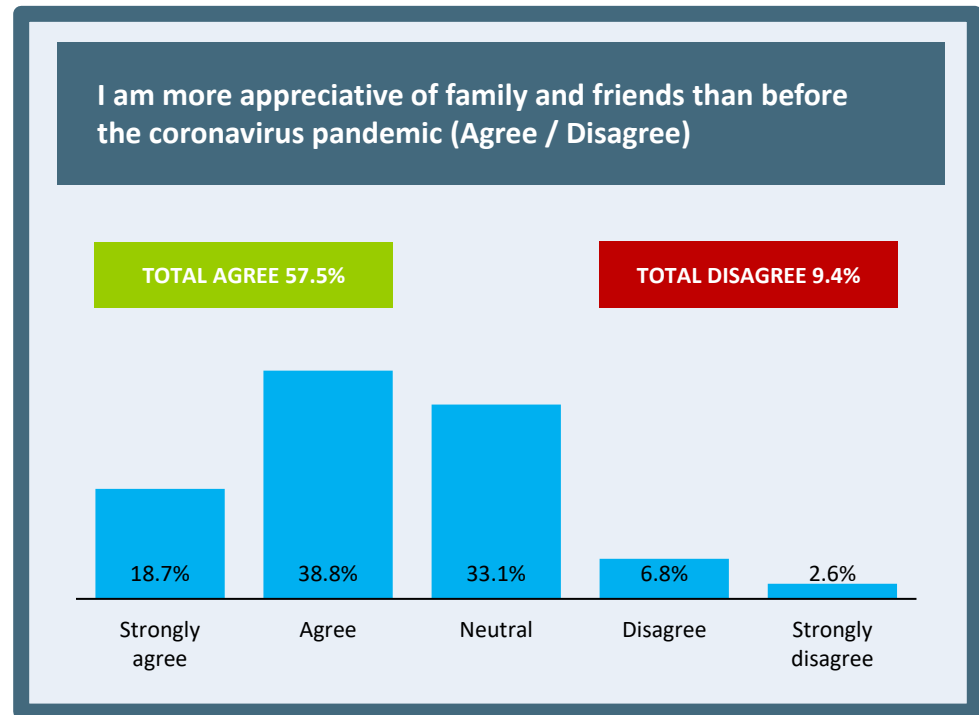


“My mental wellbeing is suffering massively. I haven't been going on my countryside walks that I usually go on to clear my mind from a stressful day at work.”

Female, 35-39, South West

Clearly relationships between families, couples, and individuals are different in lockdown. Some are spending more time together than ever before, albeit in confined conditions, while others have never spent so much time apart from their loved ones. Either way, the majority of people are now more appreciative of family and friends than before the coronavirus pandemic.

In fact people are more worried about their family's and friend's health and wellbeing during this pandemic than their own. 86% presume to have not had COVID-19, while 79% don't think (or suspect) any of their family have tested positive for COVID-19. This figure drops to 70% when people are asked about their friends testing positive for COVID-19.



"I was forced to shelter with my partner and this has caused a major rift in our relationship. We have really grown apart due to being forced to make a choice."

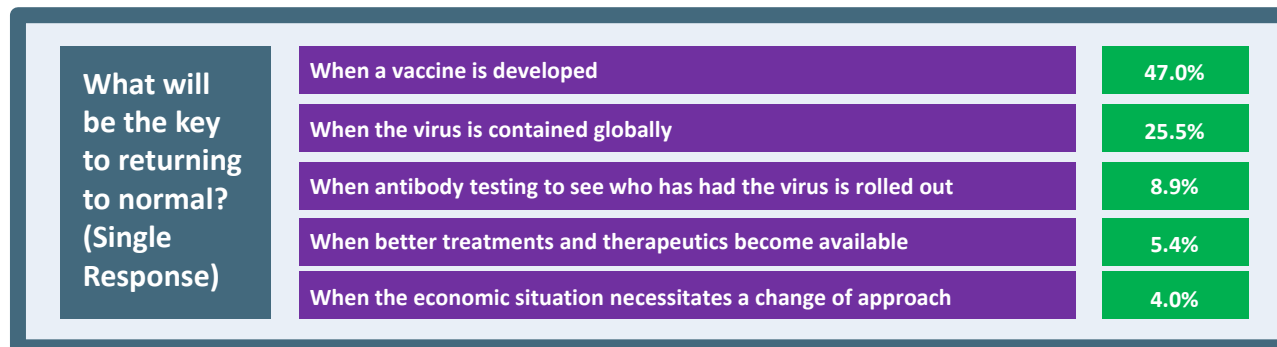
Female, 45-49, South East

"Home-schooling and working is tricky but thoroughly enjoying quality time with husband and son. It has given perspective on what we value most."

Female, 45-49, South West

“People in general will be more aware of how infection spreads and will be more careful with hand washing, using tissues when coughing and social distancing.”

Female, 70+, South West



As the UK Government moves away from its primary message of ‘stay home’, and certain businesses start to reopen, attention has turned towards what the coming months may look like. 23% expect society to return to normal in 4-6 months, although 47% expect it to take between 10-24 months. Most say that developing a vaccine holds the key to returning to normal but, while some trials in the UK are underway, this will take time. Scientists are even concerned that the coronavirus is adapting to humans.

However long it takes to develop a vaccine, it’s clear that social distancing will remain for the foreseeable future. Fortunately an overwhelming majority would be willing to continue performing it, while 36% said they will still limit outdoor activities as much as possible when the lockdown ends. Though most (42%) believe they will be comfortable returning to public spaces and events when the pandemic ends, a notable 35% indicate they’ll be uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

The travel sector has been one of the hardest hit industries in recent months, and the bad news continues... The majority of people are not willing to travel abroad before the end of 2020, and 79% say they’re unlikely (or highly unlikely) to travel to a location which is still reporting new cases of COVID-19.

Since the start of May the Government has faced criticism over its testing strategy and communications with the public. However, the majority of people (51%) are satisfied with the Government's overall response and don't feel the initial lockdown restrictions infringe too much on their civil liberties.

When asked what the Government had done well, the majority of people said: social distancing recommendations, providing updates at daily news conferences, temporary closure of public spaces and businesses, job support schemes, and business support schemes.

Despite this, the majority don't think the UK was well prepared to deal with COVID-19 and that it should have worked more closely with Europe in coordinating its response. More specifically, 77% disapprove of the Government's lack of PPE (personal protective equipment) for frontline workers, 70% think the Government has done badly with a lack of testing, and 65% say the Government waited too long to enforce lockdown.

In light of this, when comparing the UK's response with that of other countries, most people believed South Korea and Germany had handled COVID-19 much better than the UK, followed by China and Sweden. France, Italy and Spain are judged to have performed fairly similar to the UK (although it should be added that this survey took place prior to the UK reporting the highest COVID-19 death toll in Europe). USA was deemed to have dealt with the virus much worse, by a majority of people.

Of most concern to the UK Government might be the fact that a significant proportion feel there should be a public enquiry into the Government's handling of COVID-19.

"People will now appreciate that the UK government is ill equipped to deal with any crisis and has underfunded the NHS for years. Corrections must be made in the future."

Male, 65-69, Scotland

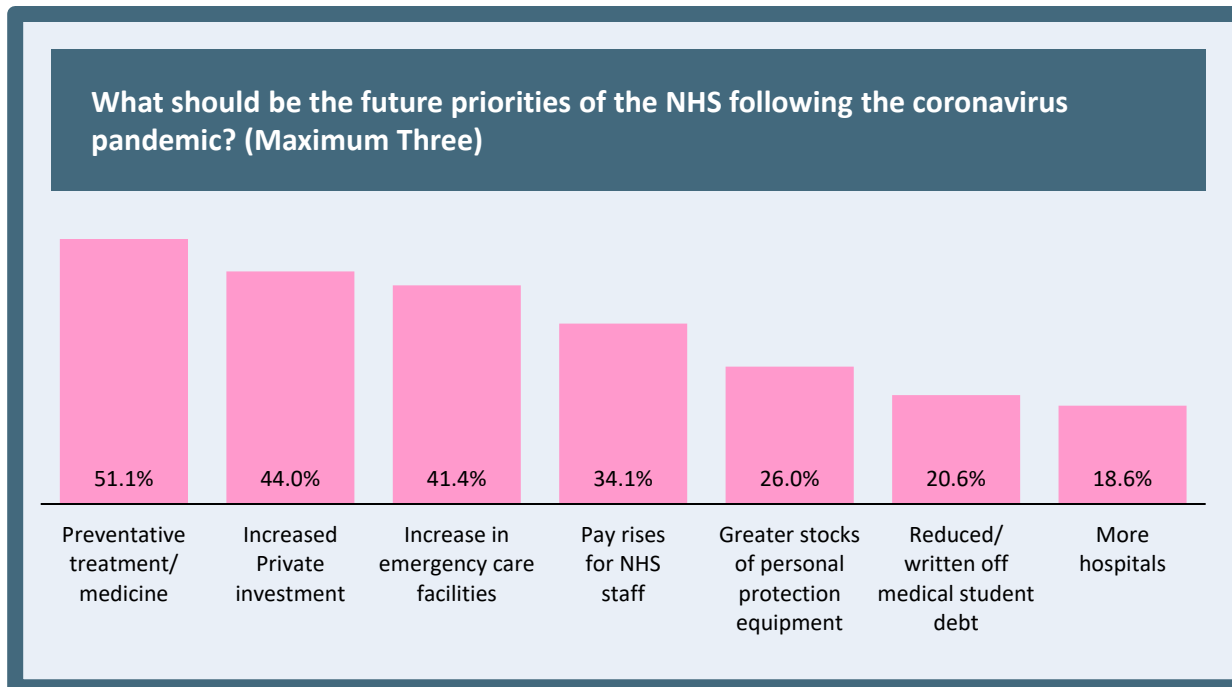
"I worry the government might go back to worrying about the wrong things. More attention needs to remain on our key workers and the vulnerable within our society."

Female, 25-29, South East

AND WHAT ABOUT FEELINGS TOWARDS THE NHS AND FELLOW BRITS?

Given the nation's support for 'clap for carers' and NHS fundraising campaigns, it's perhaps unsurprising that 92% are satisfied or highly satisfied with the NHS' response to COVID-19. This drops to 65% for the Chief Medical Officer's overall response, and 40% for the general public's overall response.

Recognising the Government's pre-COVID-19 proposals to prohibit 'unskilled workers' from entering the UK, it's worth noting that - in light of the pandemic - a significant proportion of people have changed their perception of what represents a skilled or valued job



"The NHS is underfunded and there should be a much better appreciation of NHS workers to prevent something like this ever happening again."

Male, 70+, East Midlands

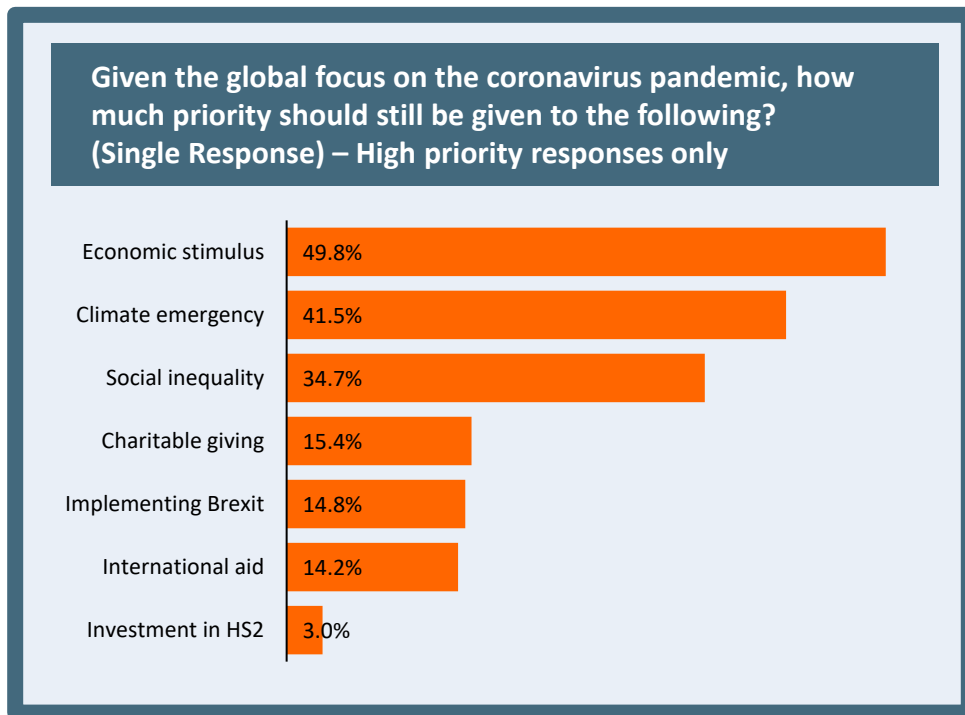
"Clap for Carers is a nice idea but, it helps no one. Instead, people should be writing to their MPs and demanding better salaries for all NHS and key workers."

Female, 65-69, North East

Construction and factory workers, amongst others, are now being encouraged to head back to work. However - in a warning to the UK Government - while there is still a threat to people's health the majority don't think businesses should be reopened soon to preserve the economy.

Looking ahead Government spending, the majority say the Government's economic recovery plan should prioritise spending over austerity measures, and that they would be willing to pay more tax in the future to support the NHS. Despite the global focus on the pandemic, most still believe the climate emergency should be a high priority, while the majority believe investment in HS2 (82% of people) and international aid (50% of people) is either a low, or no priority.

And what about the dreaded 'B' word? The majority of people (64%) believe implementing Brexit is either a low, or no priority, with 69% saying that Brexit negotiations should be delayed until the pandemic is under control.



“Hopefully people will continue to help their neighbours and community; government will have to learn a lot about handling future pandemics or world crisis.”

Male, 60-64, Northern Ireland

“I hope people realise that our very existence on earth is fragile and as a result all people on earth must be valued from the lowest to the highest.”

Male, 70+, South East